

**Thriving in Two Worlds? - Identity and Academic Efficacy:
Yarning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students
Studying on Scholarships at Independent Australian Boarding
Schools**

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Thriving in Two Worlds? – Identity and Academic Efficacy:

Yarning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Studying on Scholarships at Independent Australian Boarding Schools

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Education

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Terminology:

- Unless through quotation of or direct reference to referenced works, or when directly quoting the words of the research participants, throughout this thesis the terminology Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is preferred when referring to Indigenous Australians who identify as Aboriginal or as Torres Strait Islander people.
- I use the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in respect of the more than 500 diverse Aboriginal Nations and Language Groups that have populated the Australian continent for over 60,000 years along with the original inhabitants and custodians of the Torres Strait Islands.
- While I acknowledge different communities and individuals will have preferences in the way in which they refer to themselves and are referred to by others, the terminology I have used in this thesis is acceptable to the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, representative of sixteen Language Groups, with whom I shared this journey.

Abstract

In Australia today, around 2,350 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living in remote, rural, and regional communities are enrolled on scholarships in traditional, urban, independent boarding schools. These scholarships are supported by independent boarding schools and organisations such as the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, Yalari, and the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program. Many of these students have transitioned in Year 7 from membership of the majority ethnic-racial-cultural population to become members of a minority group within an often-conservative Eurocentric cultural community.

250 years after invasion and colonisation, during which time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have faced eradication, dispossession, relocation, segregation, assimilation, integration and, most recently, reconciliation, where on this continuum do these young people find themselves? Are these scholarship programs simply assimilation by stealth? Is it possible for these young people to engage in the primary purpose of adolescence, to explore and establish their sense of identity, including their ethnic-racial-cultural identity as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or must they forgo this in order to develop the academic self-efficacy needed to succeed as scholars in the boarding school communities in which they find themselves? Utilisation of a systematic quantitative literature review process found a gap in the knowledge as illustrated by the questions above that this project therefore seeks to fill.

These questions were interrogated through the engagement of an Indigenist qualitative methodology, Yarning, within a context of a constructivist grounded theory framework. This methodology was employed as it provided a vehicle for the research project that is respectful, responsible, and accountable of and to the young people who agreed to contribute their experiences and stories, allowing for the emergence of knowledge from the

voices of the participants rather than via a priori hypothesis. A deliberate decision was made to privilege the voices of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, seeking to understand their boarding school journey through their lens, particularly in relation to their developing racial-ethnic-cultural identities and their academic self-efficacy. Yarning provides for loosely structured, in-depth conversations guided by the facilitator but driven by the individual and group participants. Thematic analysis of the Yarning conversations held over a 1-week period while participating in the Yalari Biennial Cherbourg Memorial Walk uncovered a number of themes and, through these, a number of findings.

Within the overarching context of boarding were identified four themes: (a) Culture, with sub-themes of Belonging and community, Cultural differences, Cultural ignorance, Kinship, Language, and Regard; (b) Academic Self-Efficacy with sub-themes of Expectations and Inequity; (c) Identity, with sub-themes of Foreclosure, Exploration, Moratorium, Achievement, Bicultural integration, Commitment, Fitting in, and Living in two worlds; and (d) Experiences of Racism with sub-themes of Crabs in the bucket, Stereotype, and Tokenism.

The student participants were confident, intelligent, and eloquent young people, proud of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian heritage and, while recognising the challenges they encountered, were on a clear trajectory towards achievement of their racial-ethnic-cultural identity and educational success. Through the Yarning conversations, these young people have indicated their affinity with dimensions of racial-ethnic-cultural identity described by Indigenous Australian researchers. They are overcoming challenges and obstacles – social, relational, academic, and personal – to balance their sense of identity with a developing academic self-efficacy. They have been challenged by racist behaviours – intentional and unintentional, overt, covert, and casual. Some have faced conflict in their home communities with the breakdown of friendships resulting from their choices to move to

“the city” for a boarding school education that they perceived as being of greater benefit than what was on offer in their communities. Most have learnt to live comfortably in two worlds as young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians without compromising their cultural values or their academic pursuits. Others continue to navigate this journey.

Opportunities for the schools that support these scholarship programs are also identified. These schools have made a commitment to providing a highly efficacious educational experience for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote, regional, and rural communities. Through reflecting on the experiences and stories of these students, these partner schools and, possibly, schools considering participation in one of these scholarship programs, can continue to evolve and improve their pedagogy and residential boarding practice.

Contents

Abstract.....	3
List of Tables	12
List of Figures	14
Statement of Originality.....	16
Acknowledgements.....	17
Acknowledgement of Country	18
Foreword: Positionality of the Researcher	19
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	31
1.1 Historical Context.....	32
1.2 Resistance and Resilience.....	36
1.3 Statement of Purpose	39
1.4 Research Questions.....	40
1.5 Research Significance.....	41
1.6 Conclusion	42
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	44
2.1 Introduction	44
2.2 Method.....	44
2.3 Results	45
2.4 Discussion – Interrogating the Literature	56
2.5 Self-Efficacy	60

2.5.1	Self-Efficacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students	61
2.6	Identity.....	63
2.6.1	Identity Formation in Adolescence.....	63
2.6.2	Significance of the Peer Group	67
2.6.3	Racial-Ethnic-Cultural Identity.....	69
2.7	Boarding Schools.....	78
2.7.1	Indigenous Peoples’ Experience of Boarding Schools	79
2.8	Conclusion	83
Chapter 3:	Research Design and Methodology	86
3.1:	Introduction	86
3.2:	Theoretical Framework.....	90
3.2.1	Grounded Theory	92
3.2.2	Constructivist Grounded Theory.....	94
3.3	Research Participants.....	98
3.4	Participant Demographics.....	101
3.5	The Yalari Student Scholarship Program	105
3.6	The Research Context – Cherbourg Commemorative Walk.....	105
3.7:	Qualitative Research Methodology: Yarning.....	110
3.7.1	Introduction.....	110
3.7.2	Philosophical Constructs.....	112
3.7.3	Methodological Considerations	114

3.7.4	Data Analysis	119
3.7.5	Discussion	121
3.8	Applying the Yarning Methodology to this Research Project.....	122
Chapter 4:	Ethical Considerations	126
4.1	Introduction	126
4.2	Ethical Guidelines.....	126
4.3	Ethical Dimensions of Yarning as a Methodology.....	132
Chapter 5:	Analysis.....	134
5.1	Introduction	134
5.2	Overview of the Data Analysis.....	137
5.3	Perspectives on Boarding	140
5.4	Theme 1 – Culture	143
5.5	Theme 2 – Academic Self-Efficacy.....	146
5.5	Theme 3 – Identity	149
5.7	Theme 4 – Experiences of Racism	152
5.8:	Conclusion:	155
Chapter 6:	Findings.....	156
6.1	Introduction	156
6.2	The Research Question Revisited.....	156
6.3	Emergent Themes	157
6.4	Experiences of Boarding	158

6.4.1	Negative Attributions of Boarding.....	159
6.4.2	Positive Attributions of Boarding.....	167
6.5	Culture	172
6.6	Academic Self-Efficacy.....	194
6.6.1	Inequity	195
6.6.2	Expectations.....	207
6.7	Identity.....	210
6.7.1	Living in Two Worlds.....	214
6.7.2	Identity Exploration and Moratorium	225
6.7.3	Identity Commitment and Achievement.....	234
6.7.4	Dimensions of Indigenous Identity.....	237
6.8	Experiences of Racism	242
6.8.1	Stereotyping	243
6.8.2	Covert and Casual Racism.....	249
6.9:	Conclusion.....	253
Chapter 7:	Discussion.....	254
7.1	Introduction	254
7.2	Boarding	254
7.3	Culture	256
7.4	Academic Self-Efficacy.....	258
7.5	Identity.....	261

7.6	Experiences of Racism	265
7.7	Conclusion.....	267
Chapter 8:	Conclusion	268
8.1:	Introduction	268
8.2:	Outcomes.....	268
8.3	Revisiting the Research Question.....	271
8.4	Limitations and Considerations for Future Research	273
8.5	Considerations for Boarding Schools	278
8.5.1	Developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)	278
8.5.2	School Support for Peer-Led Cultural Programs and Initiatives	280
8.5.3	Formalising an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peer Support Program.....	281
8.5.4	Professional Development in Cultural Competence and Anti-Racism Education.....	283
8.5.5	Understanding the Gap	285
8.6	Endword.....	287
References.....		289
Appendix A:	Information Sheet for the Project – Parents/Guardians	332
Appendix B:	Consent Form – Parent/Guardian.....	335
Appendix C:	Participant Information Sheet – Student Participants	337
Appendix D:	Consent Form – Student Participants.....	340
Appendix E:	Yarning Stimulus Questions	341
Appendix F:	Sample Yarning Conversation: Senior Girls.....	345

Appendix G: Table Summaries of Relevant Research Papers.....	368
Appendix H: Participant Demographics Showing ICSEA Values for Participants’ Community Schools and Respective Boarding School	376
Appendix I: CCCA Certificate of Cultural Competence	378
Appendix J: Statement of Attainment – Course in Aboriginal Cultural Education	379
Appendix K: Coursera University of Sydney Certificate of Cultural Competence.....	380
Appendix L: Permission from the Artist, Floyd Stanton, to use Biddle Artwork.....	381
Appendix M: Permission from Llew Mullins, Managing Director, Yalari, to use Photographs from the Cherbourg Commemorative Walk	382

List of Tables

Table 2.1	Papers Satisfying the Criteria for Inclusion	49
Table 2.2	Accultural Orientations and Models of Adaptation	71
Table 3.1	Research Participant Demographics	102
Table 4.1	Actions Taken to Support Indigenist Research Values	128
Table 5.1	Overall Frequency of Nodes for each Yarning Group	135
Table 5.2	Boarding Nodes and Descriptors	142
Table 5.3	Frequency of Nodes Related to Boarding throughout the Yarning sessions	142
Table 5.4	Culture Nodes and Descriptors	144
Table 5.5	Frequency of Nodes Related to Culture Throughout the Yarning Sessions	145
Table 5.6	Academic Efficacy Nodes and Descriptors	148
Table 5.7	Frequency of Nodes Relating to Academic Efficacy Throughout the Yarning sessions	148
Table 5.8	Identity Nodes and Descriptors	150
Table 5.9	Frequency of Nodes Related to Identity Throughout the Yarning sessions	151
Table 5.10	Experiences of Racism Nodes and Descriptors	153
Table 5.11	Frequency of Nodes Related to Experiences of Racism Throughout the Yarning Sessions	153
Table 6.1	Private and Public Regard and Commitment and Exploration of Identity	180

Table 6.2	Dimensions of Racial-Ethnic-Cultural Identity	238
Table A1	Summary of 35 Published Peer-Reviewed Research Studies Addressing aspects of Boarding School, Identity, and/or Academic Efficacy	368
Table A2	Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students and Boarding School	370
Table A3	Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students and Identity	371
Table A4	Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students and Academic Efficacy	372
Table A5	Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, Identity, and Academic Efficacy	373
Table A6	Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, Identity, and Boarding	374
Table A7	Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, Academic Efficacy, and Boarding	374
Table A8	Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, Academic Efficacy, Identity, and Boarding	375

List of Figures

Figure F1	Outspan Hotel & Zebra Rides, Kenya 1960s	20
Figure F2	Floyd's Painting, Representing his Boarding House	24
Figure F3	Key to Locations in Floyd's Painting	25
Figure 1.1	Perth Native School	34
Figure 2.1	Literature Review – Identifying the Research Focus	46
Figure 2.2	Selection Criteria for Selected Papers	47
Figure 2.3	Marcia's Identity Statuses as a Function of Exploration and Commitment	65
Figure 2.4	Acculturation Orientations and Well-being	73
Figure 3.1	Theoretical Framework: Constructivist Grounded Theory as applied to the Research Project	98
Figure 3.2	Australian Aboriginal Tribes Map (Indymedia Australia, 2008) Indicating the Distribution of Home Communities and School Location	104
Figure 3.3	A Google Map Image of the Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg	107
Figure 3.4	Yalari Students Participating on the Walk	108
Figure 3.5	The Yalari Students Gather at the End of the Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg	108
Figure 3.6	Nan Nellie Thomas' Nulla Nulla Arrives in Cherbourg	110
Figure 5.1	Yarning Session Timings	136
Figure 5.2	Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes	138
Figure 5.3	Total Nodes per Yarning Group	140
Figure 5.4	Boarding Coding Frequencies	143

Figure 5.5	Culture Coding Frequencies	146
Figure 5.6	Academic Efficacy Coding Frequencies	149
Figure 5.7	Aspects of Identity Formation Coding Frequencies	151
Figure 5.8	Experiences of Racism Coding Frequencies	154
Figure 6.1	Year 10 and 11 Have Noticeably Higher Positive Public Regard	181
Figure 6.2	Year 10 and 11 Have Noticeably Higher Positive Private Regard	181
Figure 6.3	Year Level 13 (Alumni) Have Noticeably Higher Positive Difference Between Positive and Negative Regard	181
Figure 6.4	Boarding (Blue) Vs Community School (Orange) ICSEA Values	197
Figure 6.5	Difference in ICSEA Scores Between each Participant's Community School and Boarding School	198
Figure 6.6	Boarding School vs Community School ICSEA Values	200
Figure 6.7	The 4-Status Model of Identity Development from Marcia with the “Searching Moratorium” Status from Crocetti et al.	213
Figure 6.8	Orthogonal Identification Model	214
Figure 8.1	Bringing it Together – Attributes Leading to Thriving in Two Worlds	273
Figure 8.2	Annual Boarding and Tuition Fees – Research Participants’ Schools	276

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted, in whole or in part, for a degree or diploma at this or any other university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis includes no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.



Alan C. Parsons

Acknowledgements

I have read many theses written by a variety of researchers over the past few years as I have (slowly) progressed through the adventure that is completing a Higher Degree by Research. Invariably, the reality is driven home to me that these remarkable researchers are people doing the very best they can to combine their enthusiasm for their projects as postgraduate students with their real lives as partners, siblings, parents, children, colleagues. In common with these individuals, I owe a deep debt of gratitude, in my case to Karen, who encouraged me to commence and to persist through the challenge that is the research process, through the times when the challenge appeared to be insurmountable to times when my obsession would see me locked away for days on end. I thank Karen for reminding me that “it all works out in the end. And if it hasn’t worked out, it isn’t the end.”

I am similarly grateful to my children for their support over the years, allowing me to disappear and focus on my project when I really should have been sharing my time with them.

I am very fortunate to have had the most exceptional of supervisors, Professor Greer Johnson and Dr. Tasha Riley, to guide me through this endeavour. When I commenced this project, Greer, my primary supervisor, an exceptional academic and insightful human, encouraged me to spend some time reflecting on my reasons for pursuing this project, knowing how important it is to be dedicating valuable years to something worthwhile. I am glad I did that. It has been my privilege to benefit from Tasha’s experience and depth of understanding of the challenges faced by Indigenous people universally. I am deeply indebted to Greer and to Tasha for their incisive, genuine, and valuable critique, guidance, and support throughout. I am in awe of their intellect and wisdom. I would like also to express my gratitude to Elizabeth Stevens for her expertise, advice, and professional editing of this thesis.

Waverley Stanley AO and Llew Mullins are the most inspirational people that I have had the good fortune to meet during my career as an educator. As do the participants in this project, I admire and respect them deeply and I extend my most sincere gratitude to them for their willingness to enable this research project.

Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge and pay my respects to the traditional custodians of the land on which this thesis was written, the Awabakal and Woorimi People, and the traditional custodians of the land on which Griffith University Gold Coast Campus is built, the Yugambeh and Kombumerri Peoples and their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

I acknowledge and pay my respects also to all our First Nations People, to whose Country the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who participated in this research project belong.

I acknowledge and pay my respects also to the traditional custodians of the land over which the Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg occurred, which formed the context for this research project: the Waka Waka People and their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

I also acknowledge my deep gratitude to the proud young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student participants in this project for generously giving their time and openly sharing their experiences and journeys. These young people will be our Elders of the future.

Foreword: Positionality of the Researcher

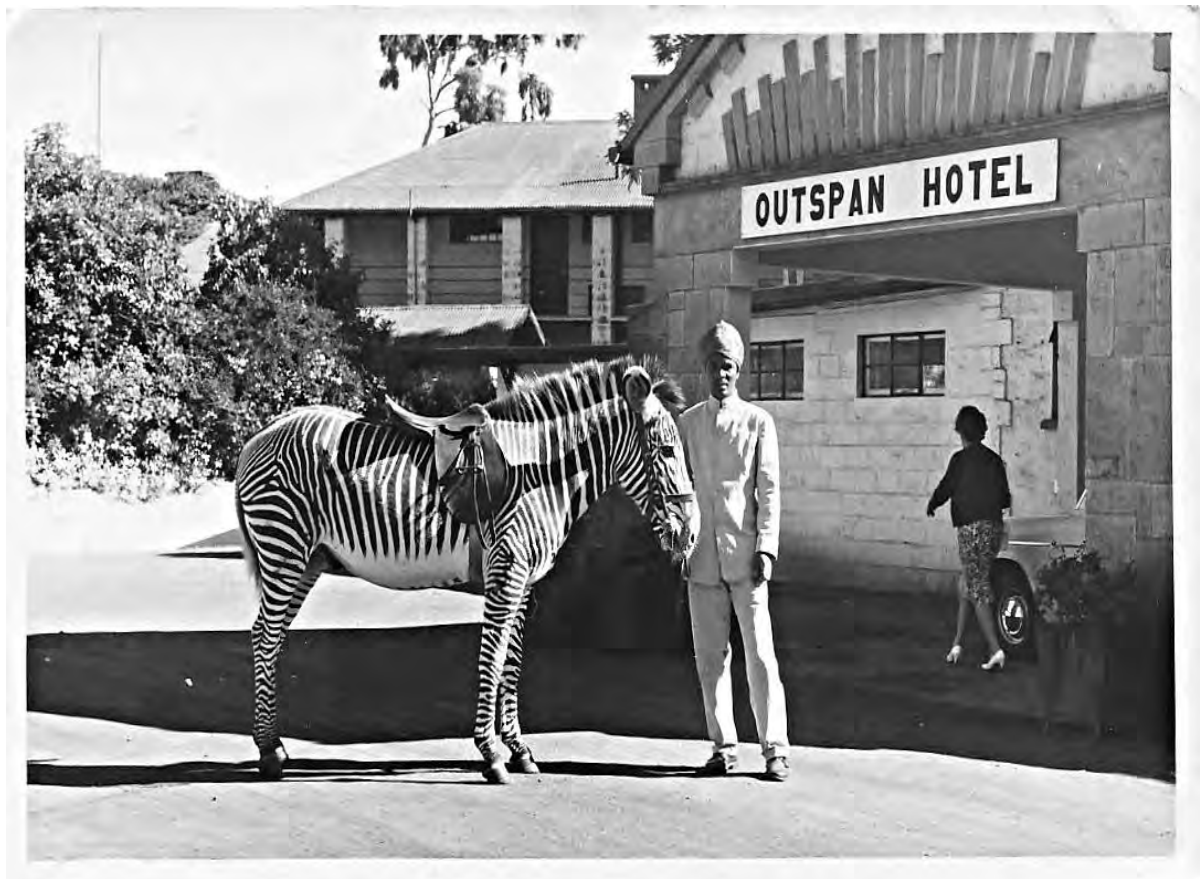
The concept of “race” can be described as a construct of social Darwinism and polygenism that is used to discriminate between peoples of differing origin, with members of the dominant population usually the perpetrators of discriminatory actions. Rigney (1999) states, “the construction of ‘race’ was not simply to differentiate between groups of human beings, but to organize human groups into a series of hierarchies” (p. 112). Lugones’ (2014) description of racialised, diasporic people – that is, people having a history of forced colonisation, removal from their traditional Country, and relocation to mission stations, reserves, and townships – can be seen as reflecting the Australian situation as faced by many Aboriginal people. She makes the observation that, given this history of racialisation and dislocation, there exists the strong possibility that a non-diasporic author may not be in a position to empathise fully with an individual or group from a racialised, diasporic history. A researcher’s social identity will have an impact upon the research as our perception of the social world is largely governed by our perceived place within it. Through understanding our identity and place in our world in comparison to that of the participants in our research, we are better able to address perceived imbalance in power (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). It is incumbent on me then to examine my positionality in relation to the area of research I have chosen to investigate.

I am a non-diasporic, White, male educator, born in British colonial Kenya in the late 1950s; a time of the Mau Mau uprising, with the Mau Mau guerilla army seeking political and economic independence from the British colonial government (Wa-Githumo, 1991). My father was employed by the British Colonial Service as an ophthalmic surgeon. I recall, as a young boy in colonial Kenya, befriending and having conversations with a Kenyan man who had fought as a Mau Mau guerilla in the uprising against the British colonial administration. As with many Mau Mau, this man, whom I knew as a worker at the local Outspan Hotel, was

employed to escort tourists on rides on a domesticated zebra through the hotel grounds (see Figure F1). He was a member of the Kikuyu tribal group and had been captured by the British colonial forces. He had been detained in a re-education camp that used, amongst other techniques and teachings, evangelical Christianity as a deradicalisation tool (Maloba, 2008; Wa-Githumo, 1991; Wa Ngugi, 2009). This Kikuyu man left a deep impression on me as he told me of his detention and a “Christian” re-education that had left him convinced he was an evil person, destined to eternity in Hell. As a young boy at the time, I recall feelings of distress when hearing this. These conversations were my first encounter with the stories of a person who had been displaced from their traditional lands and systematically divested of their identity by a colonial government driven to redistribute traditional native lands to White British colonial settlers.

Figure F1

Outspan Hotel & Zebra Rides, Kenya 1960s (Vintage East Africa, 2020)



My family immigrated to Australia in 1967, coincidentally the year of the referendum that resulted in the inclusion of Australian Aboriginal peoples in the census, thereby recognising Aboriginal peoples as citizens and members of Australia's population (Burney, 2017). We moved to HMAS Creswell, the naval base at Jervis Bay in New South Wales, where I attended Jervis Bay Public School. I struck up a close friendship at the school with an Aboriginal boy of my age. I recall the shock and surprise when I first visited him at his home in the local Aboriginal community at Wreck Bay, living in conditions reminiscent of poor Kenyan families. I had not expected to find this economic, social, and racial-ethnic segregation in Australia (Brown, 1991).

In 1970, my family moved again, this time to what was known at the time as the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, a protectorate under the administration of the Australian Government, with my father again employed as an ophthalmic surgeon. As an expatriate child of an Australian administration employee in the town of Lae, I attended Bulae "A" Primary School – the "A" standing for Administration – a well-resourced school offering the Australian New South Wales curriculum. In contrast, Indigenous Papua New Guinean children attended "T" schools – the "T" standing for Territory – with resources and educational standards well below those on offer at "A" schools, which remained inaccessible to the vast majority of Indigenous Papua New Guinea children (MacLaine, 1968; McKinnon, 1968). These "T" schools had as their focus the narrow vocational training of the Papua and New Guinea nationals rather than any focus on the development of the professions as the Territory moved towards its independence from Australia (Megarritty, 2005). In common with colonial education in Australia and elsewhere, Indigenous culture, customs, and values in "T" schools were de-emphasised while teaching of Christian values and faith "was emphasized because of its value as a means of transmitting Australian culture and ethical standards to a

native people permeated by beliefs in sorcery and with no basic system of morality” (MacLaine, 1968, p. 27). Following my time at Bulae Primary and then one year at Lae High School, a school staffed by teachers from Australia employed by the Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and offering the Department’s curriculum, I then transferred to boarding school in Brisbane, Queensland. Here I boarded for my remaining secondary education, a destination common to White expatriate Australian adolescents living in Papua New Guinea at the time.

As a young person growing up in Kenya, Australia, and Papua New Guinea, and being brought up by parents with strong egalitarian values, my schooling experiences reinforced a sense of entitlement and an expectation of White colonial privilege, an expectation that has sat uncomfortably with me since the conversations I had had with the ex-Mau Mau guerilla I had befriended so many years ago.

Fast forward to 1994. As a young teacher, I was fortunate enough to be selected, along with three other young professional people, to visit South Africa as a member of a Rotary International Group Study Exchange delegation. During this 6-week study tour of South Africa and Namibia sponsored by Rotary International I had the opportunity to visit a number of schools in the Western Cape province of South Africa, known at the time as Cape Province. This was a period of great celebration and optimism in the country with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected President of the Republic of South Africa. My school visits, however, highlighted the legacy of apartheid and the continuing influence the policy of separate development based on ethnicity and racial identity would have on young South African students. Interestingly, the least optimistic outlook expressed about the future of South Africa’s people was from the Principal of a “coloured” school – a school populated primarily by multiracial students and staff with a complex blend of ethnic heritage. The Principal, rightly or wrongly, lamented that, while the end of the

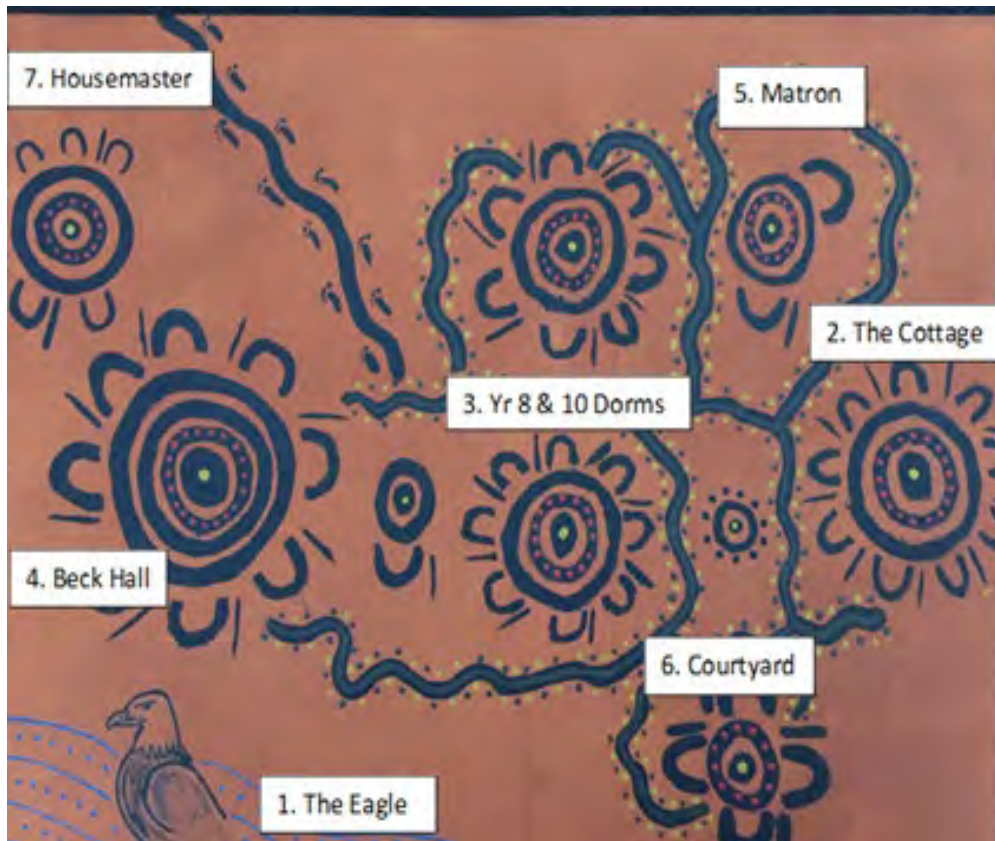
apartheid regime was a moral and ethical imperative, the “Whites” would retain economic power while the “Blacks” would now possess political power, leaving the “Coloureds” in limbo.

In 2004, I accepted the position of Deputy Headmaster at a conservative Anglican day and boarding school for boys. This role included the development of the school’s fledgling Indigenous Education Programme and responsibility for the academic and social-emotional well-being of the 20 or so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys who had been offered scholarships to join the school’s residential community of close to 350 boarding students and 60 staff. During this period, debate ensued, and questions were asked by respected Aboriginal educators about the efficacy of boarding school scholarships. The opposing views of Noel Pearson, an advocate of boarding scholarships, and Professor Chris Sarra and Nicole Major, both of whom have expressed reservations and concerns, have been referred to in the text that follows. Sarra implies that these boarding schools have a fixed and inflexible structure to which the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students must adapt. He is quoted as stating “... the cultures of those elite schools are somewhat remote from what those children experience in communities. And there’s a tendency not to stretch too much in those kinds of schools. It’s either fit in or farewell” (Glanville, 2008a, p. 2).

When I completed my tenure at the school, I was gifted a painting (see Figure F2) that had been created by one of the Aboriginal boys, Floyd, for whom I had responsibility. Floyd has given his permission for his artwork to be used in this thesis (see Appendix J). This painting was his representation of his experiences as an Aboriginal boarding student at the school.

Figure F2*Floyd's Painting, Representing his Boarding House*

Floyd had previously prepared a PowerPoint presentation of his work as an item at the weekly assembly (see Figure F3 for points referenced). In preparation for the assembly presentation, I discussed the artwork with Floyd and asked him to interpret it for me. Floyd's presentation indicated to me that it was possible that these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students could accept scholarships to attend city boarding schools and still maintain, and even develop, their efficacy and identity as students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This led me to the decision to formally research the efficacy of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' scholarship programme. Floyd's presentation follows:

Figure F3*Key to Locations on Floyd's Painting*

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which the school is built, the Yugambeh Nation. I would like to thank Mr. B, Mr. H and Mrs. T for encouraging me to paint my cultural interpretation of the boarding house. Throughout the artwork it can be seen young men gathering in a circle with their spear. This is seen to be young men protecting their educational values and knowledge learnt within the school and boarding house environment.

1. The eagle in my artwork represents the Aboriginal Nation that the school is established on. The totem for the Yugambeh Nation is the eagle. The blue lines and dots represent the river located beside the boarding house dormitories.

2. This is the Cottage that holds the knowledge of the Senior students within the boarding house.

3. This is the Grade Eight and Grade Ten dormitories that again hold educational knowledge and values gained over the years of schooling and boarding.

4. Beck Hall [Grade Nine dormitory] was the School's original boarding dining hall. The walls within the dorm hold many years and generations of stories and learning experiences once shared between old boys, current boys and, one day, future boys entering into the boarding house.

5. The half-circle seen here represents Matron. Mrs. T does not have a spear as she provides us boarders a foundation for us to succeed in a nurturing environment.

6. To me, this [courtyard] is the heart of the boarding house, a place where we share our schooling home with our parents at the boarding house chapel service and a place where we as a House come together to share our knowledge and beliefs while our arms rest on each other's shoulders as we chant our School and our House war cry.

There is no end to knowledge. We all come into the House with knowledge gained from our homes, our Country and our lifetime experiences. The power of knowledge within every House is strong and proud that carries the School spirit.

7. This represents Mr. H's [Boarding Housemaster] gathering knowledge circle with his family. Only Mr. H and his son have a spear [In Floyd's cultural tradition, only males hold spears]. A place where he not only shares and gains his knowledge with his family but also with us as boarding house members. Throughout the artwork is to be seen many tracks that lead to each dorm, room and house. As we complete our schooling years, each and every young man will walk along these tracks at the start of the New Year.

By Year 12 each and every one of us will pass through each dorm with more knowledge and experience than we did the previous year.

As Boarders, we walk the track that leads us to our learning classrooms. As we do this, we leave our footprint on the School's soil for the future boarders to walk on, for them to also gain the learning experiences and knowledge that we have gained while being boarding students here at the School.

Shortly before Floyd's assembly presentation, I had interviewed a young Aboriginal student, Jack (pseudonym), who had been recommended by his Aboriginal Education Officer at Tweed Heads for a possible scholarship to attend the boarding school at which I currently had responsibility for the Indigenous Education Program. Jack attended the interview with his Aunty and was successful in receiving a full boarding scholarship at the school. During the interview I asked Jack if he could tell me a little bit about his Mob. He looked at me quizzically and his Aunty spoke up, informing me that his Grandmother had been stolen, so he really did not know about his Mob nor his Country. While I was intellectually aware of the ongoing impact of the Stolen Generations on next generations, this conversation brought home to me the reality. Research finds that there is "an intergenerational impact on the child, particularly in cases where the primary carer's mother had been forcibly removed" (Silburn et al, 2006, p.15). Following Floyd's presentation, I reflected on these two contrasting experiences; Jack who, up until now, had not been able to explore aspects of his ethnic and cultural heritage and identity, and Floyd, who had brought his ethnic-cultural identity with him to boarding school and had successfully bridged the two worlds of home and school. I felt a need to explore the efficacy of these scholarship programs of which I had been a part.

The culmination of all these events that I have had the good fortune to experience through my childhood and into my professional life have led to this research project. Having Swahili as a first language, along with English, as a consequence of my birth and childhood

in Kenya, through to Tok Pisin (Melanesian Pidgin English, very similar to Yumplatok of the Torres Strait) as my third following my years in Papua New Guinea, in some ways strengthened my connection with the First Nations peoples with whom I mixed in those countries. Now, as an educator, I have had some responsibilities for the delivery of education to a number of First Nations Australian students: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who, following invasion and colonisation, are members of a minority culture in this nation. I felt the need to explore the relationship between the independent boarding school education system in which these young people had become immersed and the development of their identities – the chief psycho-social task of adolescence – and their academic self-efficacy upon which their academic success depends. These experiences ultimately led me to undertake this doctoral study, commencing with my confirmation seminar in 2017.

On Thursday 16 February 2017, I entered the seminar room at Griffith University to present my confirmation of candidature paper to a panel made up of my two supervisors, an external independent assessor, Griffith University's HDR Convener, and a number of interested university academics and research students. As I introduced myself to each of the people present, I was a little taken aback to be asked by a university academic the name of my "Mob". This caused me to reflect upon my own cultural identity, as I would invite the participants in this research project to do in the near future. I responded that I was not an Indigenous Australian, and from there the conversation moved on comfortably as we discussed my interest in this research. Following the seminar which, fortunately, did confirm my candidature, I spent time reflecting on that question and why it is that a non-Indigenous person such as myself would be drawn to this topic.

The answer, on reflection, is straightforward. I had the opportunity over 10 years to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the boarding school environment. Prior to and during these years, significant government inquiries, including the report into the

Stolen Generations, “Bringing them home: Report of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families” (R. Wilson, 1997), Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1992), and the Northern Territory Intervention (Kramer, 2016; Macoun, 2011) were released. Given my role, I became keen to understand the influence of years of immersion in a conservative Western independent boarding school on the identity development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote and rural communities.

The issue is not without controversy, with significant support of boarding from Indigenous leaders such as Noel Pearson and Professor Marcia Langton and equally significant leaders such as Professor Chris Sarra and Nicole Major voicing their concerns (K. Carr, 2015; Gibson, 2008; Guest, 2008; Langton & Ma Rhea, 2009). Nicole Major, a Bundjalung woman from Northern New South Wales, currently the Program Manager for the University of Melbourne’s Institute for Indigenous Development, Murrup Barak, was previously the Australian Education Union Federal Aboriginal Education Coordinator. While in that role, Ms. Major reported that “governments were pouring bucket-loads of money into scholarship programs and building boarding schools without there being any evidence-based research to back up their decisions” (K. Carr, 2015). Carr reports Major as stating, “There’s a Stolen Generation again, in terms of private schools and those scholarships” (K. Carr, 2015). Professor Chris Sarra, author of *Strong and Smart – Towards a Pedagogy for Emancipation* (2011) and founder of the Stronger Smarter Institute, is reported by Janet Albrechtsen in *The Australian* (Albrechtsen, 2012) as being opposed to “[Noel] Pearson’s promotion of sending Indigenous children to prestigious boarding schools”.

As a non-Indigenous (immigrant) educator with responsibility for the social-emotional and academic well-being of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying on scholarship at the conservative, traditional Anglican boys’ boarding school at

which I was employed, I felt drawn to research the efficacy of these Indigenous Education programs. I wished to know whether, as a consequence of this boarding school education, these young people were being stripped of their cultural heritage in exchange for “a good education” or if they were becoming more aware of and committed to identification with their ethnic-racial-cultural heritage while maintaining or improving their academic self-efficacy, benefiting from the educational opportunities in which they were immersed. Were these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students thriving in two worlds?

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA), which represents 95% of Australian boarding schools, reports that from 2012 to 2016 there had been a growth of over 40% in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students – from 2,398 to 3,369 – enrolled in boarding schools across Australia. Of these students, over 75% were classified as being from a “remote” or “very remote” community (Commonwealth of Australia & Department of the Prime Minister, 2017). As the largest provider of boarding places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the independent boarding sector has close to 2,350 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in 121 independent boarding schools (Independent Schools Australia, 2018).

In recent years, several organisations have been formed that assist with the provision of scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary school students to attend these boarding schools. These include the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF), founded in 2007 by the current AIEF Executive Director, Andrew Penfold AM (AIEF, 2021), Yalari, founded in 2005 by Waverley and Llew Mullins (Yalari, 2021), and the Cape York Higher Expectations Program, founded in 2005 by Noel Pearson (Cape York Partnership, 2021). Considering Australia’s past history on Indigenous education (Beresford, 2012; Fletcher, 1989), the impact on Australian Indigenous people of the government policy of assimilation and forced removal of children from their families creating the “Stolen Generations” (R. Wilson, 1997), and the current movement towards reconciliation and “Closing the Gap” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018), a review of the current state of research examining the impact of these relatively new boarding school programs on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people from rural, regional, and remote communities is timely.

1.1 Historical Context

For the 60,000 years that Aboriginal people occupied the Australian continent prior to the arrival of the first colonising Europeans (Ingman & Gyllensten, 2003; R. G. Roberts et al., 1990), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples were able to transmit their values, culture, traditions, and their way of life through a uniquely Aboriginal epistemology that transcends time and space and centres on values and laws formed during “The Dreaming” (P. Hughes & More, 1997). Aboriginal children were educated through their relationships with significant adults and Elders in their various language groups to learn the skills needed to ensure their survival as hunter-gatherers and to understand the intricate complexities of their kinship systems, culture, and social and religious traditions (Reynolds, 2009). This complex and traditional passage of knowledge, skill, and culture through the generations from Elders to children was severely disrupted and almost destroyed by the effects of colonisation (Reynolds, 2009). The subsequent degradation of the traditional Aboriginal people’s way of life for significant numbers of Aboriginal people following dispossession led to the conclusion by the Colonial Office in London that they had responsibility for the education of the Aboriginal people; specifically, an education that seeks to “promote the spread of civilization among them and lead them to the peaceful and voluntary reception of the Christian religion” (Fletcher, 1989, p. 27). The Aboriginal population and their education were now the obligation of the colonial powers. In response, Governor Macquarie established the first school for Aboriginal children in Sydney in 1814. Its purpose was simple – to turn the Aboriginal people away from their land, language, culture, and customs by “civilising” them into accepting and adopting the values and culture of a British Christian tradition (Beresford, 2012).

A declaration was made in the British House of Commons in 1834 that the British Empire had the responsibility of leading the Indigenous peoples of their dominions to the

acceptance of Christianity as the first step in the process of civilising Aboriginal Peoples, hence establishing effective measures of control. This civilising education through the evangelisation by Protestant missionaries clearly sought to replace existing traditional Indigenous cultures rather than to enhance them (Barry, 2008). This followed the approach of education of the working poor in the United Kingdom that was seen as a way to enhance the stability and economic output of the Kingdom and the Colonies.

The operations of the Perth Native School illustrate the Australia-wide colonial response to the policies of the British hierarchy, based in a conviction of racial superiority grounded in Social Darwinism, the application of Darwin's evolutionary theories to societies. European proponents of this Social Darwinism placed White Europeans at the pinnacle of evolution, with cultures markedly different from their own at the evolutionary base: least evolved and destined to extinction (Dafler, 2005). In 1841, the rules and regulations governing the newly opened Perth Native School were published in *The Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal* (Mander, 2012; Shenton, 1841; see Figure 1.1). This school was established as a residential institution for Aboriginal boys and girls currently in the employment of the colonial settlers in the Perth area (Hetherington, 2002). The Aboriginal children enrolled in the Perth Native School attended classes for 2 hours per day in order to master the basic literacy, numeracy, and menial skills necessary for their employment as domestic staff or manual labourers (Green, 2004). The overarching aims of schools and institutions such as the Perth Native School were to remove Aboriginal children from the influence of their families, culture, and traditional way of life and, most importantly, to provide a source of cheap labour and domestic staff to the colonial settlers (Mander, 2012).

Figure 1.1

Perth Native School

*Colonial Secretary's Office, Perth,
August 12, 1841.*
HIS Excellency the Governor is pleased to direct the publication of the following Rules and Regulations, which have been established for the management of the children attending the Native school, and who may be in service among the inhabitants of Perth.

By His Excellency's command,
PETER BROWN.

PERTH NATIVE SCHOOL.

**SUPPORTED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AND THE WESLEYAN SOCIETY,
COMMENCED IN SEPT.,
1840.**

PATRON—His Excellency the Governor.

**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT,
The Committee of the Wesleyan Society,
Perth, viz.—**

**The Reverend John Smithies, Wesleyan
Minister,**

John Wall Hardey,

Joseph Hardey,

Henry Trigg,

George Lazenby,

Michael Clarkson,

James Smith Clarkson,

James Inkpen,

M. Hutton,

Frederick Waldeck,

John Smith,

Richard Rowland,

GEORGE SHENTON, Secretary.

*Visitor on the part of the Government,
CHARLES SYMONS, Esq., Protector of
Aborigines.*

TEACHERS.

**Francis F. Armstrong,
Mrs. Armstrong.**

RULES AND REGULATIONS

**FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CHILDREN
ATTENDING THE SCHOOL, AND WHO
MAY BE IN SERVICE AMONG THE IN-
HABITANTS AT PERTH.**

1. The Boys and girls out at their various situations are expected to wash every morning, and, also, at noon, preparatory to their going to school. School time—two hours per day for the present: in summer from 2 to 4, and in winter from 1 to 3—Saturdays excepted.

2. The children are required to sleep at Mr. Armstrong's, the Native Teacher's House, as they have been specially placed under his care by their parents; and the girls to return at sunset in summer and winter, and the boys at seven o'clock in summer, and at sunset in winter, as the best means of associating and keeping them together, and effectually separating them from the bush. The importance of this regulation, on account of evening instruction, is such, that a departure from it will subject the parties to the loss of the services of the boy or girl; a circumstance that the Committee sincerely hope will not occur. The boys and girls have separate sleeping apartments.

3. On the Lord's Day the children are to remain at Mr. Armstrong's, where they are supported at the joint expense of the Colonial Government and the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and to attend School and Divine Service morning and evening at the Wesleyan Chapel.

4. It is also respectfully requested that the parties employing the children will provide them with week-day garments, washing, &c., those worn during the Sundays being provided by the Government and the Wesleyan Society.

5. Should any of the boys or girls in service not suit their employers, or misconduct themselves, or be found loitering in the streets, it is suggested by the Committee, that complaint be made to Mr. Armstrong, and the matter will be immediately looked into, and the best means employed for their correction and improvement.

6. It will be expected that, in case any of the children are taken sick, they be sent to Mr. Armstrong's, where medical aid is provided by the Government; and, that one shilling be allowed by their owners for their support during their sickness (if not exceeding a fortnight), beyond that time the Committee will provide for them.

7. The children are to be allowed to have one day for a holiday every two months, for recreation and encouragement.

8. Mr. Armstrong will visit their employers once a month, or oftener, to make enquiries as to their general behavior, &c.

**G. SHENTON,
Secretary.**

It is apparent that the Perth Native School and similar institutions controlled by colonial governments and Christian missions had, as their focus, the assimilation of Aboriginal Australians into the dominant European culture, a focus that was to remain central to the aims of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education for more than the next 100 years. In his 1951 Annual Report to the Minister for Native Affairs, Western Australia, Middleton, then the Commissioner for Native Affairs in Western Australia, proclaimed: "In education it can be said that the assimilation process is carried out to its full extent through the excellent cooperation of both the Education Department and individual teachers throughout the State" (Middleton, 1951, p. 36).

Ogbu, in his seminal work, “Minority education and caste: The American system in cross-cultural perspective” (1978), discusses the difference between immigrant minorities and what he describes as caste-like minorities in modern societies. The caste-like minorities he portrays as having to exist and operate within a social hierarchy in which they populate the lowest rungs. He argues that, as a consequence of this, despite claims of equality in educational opportunity, restrictions (perceived or otherwise) on social mobility resulting in a “job ceiling” shape the educational systems, opportunities, and experiences of these minorities. He describes caste-like or involuntary minorities as not having:

the expectations of a better future that characterize immigrant minorities. On the contrary, involuntary minorities resent the loss of their former freedom, regard the past as their “golden age”, and interpret the social, political, and economic barriers erected against them as undeserved oppression. (Ogbu, 1990, p. 47)

While Ogbu refers to minority groups in countries such as the United States, Great Britain, New Zealand, India, Japan, and Israel, it is clear from his descriptions of their circumstances and the similarities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience and past Australian Government policy, that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia could similarly be identified as involuntary or caste-like minorities. Mellor and Corrigan, in their report for the Australian Council for Educational Research reviewing educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians (2004), supported this assertion. They concluded that in Indigenous communities, social poverty, cultural marginalisation, and no self-evident link between education and employment, retention, and achievement in education continues to be the experience of the people. Further support for the caste-like minority situation of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is offered by Herbert (2012) who describes a centre-periphery theory of dominance of Western culture

since the time of colonization in Australia. Describing the purpose of education to maintain the status quo as a tool of the privileged classes, she states that, historically and through to recent times, “the educational provision for Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander minority, those rendered virtually ‘invisible’ under the concept of Terra Nullius, would have been intended to deliberately position them at the periphery” (p. 94) with State Education Departments maintaining this inability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to fully access and benefit from the educational process right through to the 1970s.

1.2 Resistance and Resilience

Kearney (2014) described cultural wounding as the infliction upon an Indigenous people of “such acts as murder, forced relocation, taking of lands and resources and ideologies such as institutionalized racism, denial of citizenry, stigmatization and psychological assault” (p. 598). Despite the impacts of colonisation and imperialism, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples display what Kearney describes as ethnic vitality, striving to heal the cultural wounds inflicted upon them.

Indeed, this resilience in the face of the British invasion was accompanied by resistance. In 1968, anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner presented the Boyer Lectures in which he referred to “The Great Australian Silence” in describing the way in which Australian historians had disregarded Aboriginal resistance (Connor, 2010). He stated that in “the archives of all the States there is ample material to prove that aborigines [sic] fought a very vigorous if unavailing battle” in defending their sovereignty (Connor, 2010, p. 14). The British colonial forces could not acknowledge the armed resistance of the Aboriginal people as war, as to do so would recognise the sovereignty of Aboriginal people defending their country. The British did not negotiate treaties, nor did they recognise Aboriginal ownership of land. Aboriginal people were considered by the colonial forces to be British subjects.

Hence, by arguing that Aboriginal people were British subjects, acts of violent resistance by them were considered to be criminal acts (Connor, 2010). Illustrative of this resistance is the guerilla war waged by the Aboriginal populace of Van Diemen's Land, now known as Tasmania, from 1829 to 1832 against the colonial forces of Governor Arthur as the colonists continued to forcibly acquire Aboriginal land. With a population estimated at between three and four thousand in 1803, the population of Aboriginal people in Van Diemen's Land had been decimated by 1832, leaving around 300 survivors. Ultimately, collaboration by Aboriginal leaders such as Trugananna with the British was driven by the need to ensure their survival rather than being a capitulation of their cultural identities and practices (Burrows, 2014). Ironically, the long-term consequences of culturally and personally devastating assimilationist policies such as the forced removal of children – the Stolen Generations – has led to a revitalisation of the search for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity accentuated by common experience (Moran, 2002).

Moving forward 160 years after the formation of the Perth Native School, and 70 years beyond Middleton's (1951) report, what has the literature to report on the progress of education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians? In a report to the Centre for Independent Studies, H. Hughes and Hughes (2009) stated that, for at least the past 20 years to 2009, there had been no improvement in the literacy and numeracy capabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living in remote and rural communities.

NAPLAN, the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, is an annual assessment task performed by Australian students in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9. Its purpose is to test "the sorts of skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life, such as reading, writing, spelling and numeracy" (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014a). It should be noted here that success in the standardised NAPLAN assessments is dependent upon the students' level of competence in standard

Australian English (SAE) and that, for Aboriginal students living in remote communities, SAE is not their first language, a factor leading immediately to disadvantage in these standardised assessment instruments (Macqueen et al., 2019). H. Hughes and Hughes (2009) noted that, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in mainstream schools in Tasmania, Victoria, and the Australian Capital Territory achieve results in NAPLAN commensurate with their peers, 75% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the Northern Territory failed to achieve accepted thresholds of literacy and numeracy. By 2019, in the Northern Territory, NAPLAN results continued to indicate a significant disadvantage for Aboriginal students. In Year 9, for example, 82.1% were below the threshold for writing, 66.4% for reading, and 42.8% for numeracy. While the national figures do not reflect such a large dichotomy in results, at Year 9 Indigenous students lagged non-Indigenous students by 31.5% in writing, 21.4% in reading, and 12.7% in numeracy (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2019). In agreement with Macqueen et al. (2019), H. Hughes and Hughes asserted that this is not a failing on the part of the students; rather, it is evidence of a failing of the education system in place for students living in remote communities. They further conclude that “If they [Aboriginal students] cannot be taught by distance education, like other small groups of Australian children, they will have to be bussed, boarded Monday to Friday, or boarded during term time” (p. 18) to alternative schools.

Ma Rhea (2015) discussed the implementation in 1814 of a 14-point plan by Governor Macquarie. This plan, through the education of Aboriginal children, was intended to improve the lives of the Aboriginal people. Unsurprisingly, there is no indication in the records that the Aboriginal people themselves were included collaboratively in any discussion leading to the implementation of this plan. Nor, Ma Rhea contends, has there been any significant deviation from Macquarie’s model with its focus on improvements in basic

literacy and numeracy at the expense of traditional language, culture, and knowledge over the last 200 years. She argues for “a recognition that the current dominant model of education fails to recognise the rights of Indigenous Peoples and is therefore oppressive to Indigenous children as well as being limiting for non-Indigenous settlers” (p. 96).

1.3 Statement of Purpose

The past colonial emphasis on assimilation and low-level training of Aboriginal students in boarding schools, combined with the more recent impact of the Stolen Generations upon Aboriginal families and communities, has resulted in the construction of a caste-like minority (Ogbu, 1978) and an understandable wariness of entrusting and immersing Aboriginal children into traditional urban Australian boarding school environments. However, there are now considerable numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attending these schools. While a number of schools have their own Indigenous Education scholarship schemes (Samengo, 2016; Wright, 2016), organisations such as Yalari, with more than 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars in 2020 (Yalari, 2020), and the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) currently supporting over 1,000 secondary and tertiary Indigenous scholars (AIEF, 2019), support significant numbers of these students. The work of these individual schools and larger organisations has been supported by influential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and academics alike (Guest, 2008; Langton & Ma Rhea, 2009; Pearson, 2011; Slattery, 2008). Given this, the need now exists to examine and evaluate the cultural implications and educational outcomes of these scholarship programs.

Vinson’s third report into public education in New South Wales concluded that the challenge facing successful educational experiences for young Aboriginal Australian peoples was “to engage Aboriginal students, strengthen their identity and increase their level of

success” (Vinson, 2002). The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore, describe, and understand, through privileging the voices of Aboriginal students, the significance of and relationship between academic self-efficacy and racial ethnic identity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian secondary school students studying on scholarships at independent Australian urban boarding schools.

1.4 Research Questions

In Australia today, around 2,350 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, many living in remote, rural, and regional communities, are enrolled on scholarships in traditional, Eurocentric, urban, independent boarding schools. This is at a time in their lives when they will engage in the primary psycho-social purpose of adolescence, that is the exploration of their identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 2009).

This research has been designed to gain an understanding of the central question:

- *Is it possible for these young people to explore and establish their sense of racial-ethnic-cultural (REC) identity as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or must they forgo this in order to develop the academic self-efficacy needed to succeed as scholars in the boarding school communities in which they find themselves?*

Further sub-questions to refine an understanding of the central question include:

- What coping mechanisms have these students developed to manage the cultural transitions to and from school and home?
- In what way do these students identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the environment of the boarding school?

- To what extent have these students commenced an exploration of and a commitment to their racial and ethnic identities, using as a framework the four identity statuses paradigm proposed by Kroger and Marcia (2011)?
- How has their academic self-efficacy and REC identity been impacted on by membership of the school boarding community?
- What support mechanisms are in place and how successful have these been in enabling the students' academic self-efficacy and the exploration of their REC identity?

While these questions indicate the proposed direction of the research, as the project is a qualitative study using a semi-structured Yarning methodology within a constructivist grounded theory (CGT) framework, these questions evolved over the period of the study, reflecting the direction of the Yarning conversations and the nature of CGT (Charmaz, 2017a; Creswell, 2012).

1.5 Research Significance

It is intended that the findings of this research project will provide some benefit to the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are recipients of boarding scholarships to independent urban boarding schools. These young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people embark on the journey that is the primary task of adolescence, to explore their sense of who they are – their identity – while striving for academic success in an environment far removed physically and culturally from their experiences of their home, families, and communities. These students are the key stakeholders in the Indigenous Education programs currently offered by organisations such as the AIEF, the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP), and Yalari, the organisation that sponsors the student participants in this project. These organisations, along with the teaching and boarding staff at

their partner schools, may benefit through reflecting on the findings of this study as they relate to current practice. Such reflective practice may continue to enhance the educational opportunities these organisations and schools provide for the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students entrusted to their care by their parents, their families, and their communities.

1.6 Conclusion

In the past, government policies of amalgamation, protectionism, absorption, and assimilation were enacted (Mander, 2012). In the current atmosphere of reconciliation, there is recognition that assimilationist policies lead to negative well-being outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Dockery (2010) found that “Strong cultural attachment is associated with better health” (p. 329) and that “isolation, confusion and the feeling of loss of control and self-esteem ... often beset people trying to live between two cultures” (p. 329). Through reconciliation, there is a desire to “improve intercultural relations, and redress the extreme disadvantages Indigenous people currently suffer in Australia” (Halloran, 2007, p. 15).

The purpose of this study is to:

- a) investigate the efficacy of the boarding school scholarship programs in the context of the racial-ethnic-cultural identity formation and academic self-efficacy of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student participants.
- b) Consider whether the concerns identified by Hughes and Hughes (2009), Ma Rhea (2015), Mander (2012) and Dockery (2010) and raised in this chapter have been successfully addressed through these boarding school initiatives.

Questions have been formulated to interrogate the efficacy of scholarship programs for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people considering the historical background described in this chapter.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature related to this study, interrogated through the utilisation of the systematic quantitative literature review process (Pickering and Byrne, 2014). This approach is useful in a project such as this as it is an explicit and reproducible process that quantifies not only current relevant research but also assists in identifying gaps in knowledge (Pickering and Byrne, 2014). Chapter 3 examines the design framework for the study, constructivist grounded theory, and the methodological approach, Yarning, selected following the guidance of key Indigenous scholars (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2014; Nakata et al., 2012; Rigney, 1999; S. Stewart, 2009; Walker et al., 2014). Embedding Yarning as the methodological approach set within a Grounded Theory framework has been selected as this process privileges the voices of the participants without comparisons with an a priori hypothesis formulated by a non-Indigenous non-diasporic researcher. Chapter 4 reflects on the ethical considerations inherent in a study involving a non-Indigenous researcher and young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. While this Chapter could be incorporated into Chapter 3, as the researcher is a non-diasporic, non-Indigenous individual, in order to help enhance the trustworthiness of this research, ethical considerations require a high visibility within the thesis document. Chapter 5 then examines the data, identifying the themes and sub-themes that emerged through the coding process. These themes and sub-themes are then discussed in detail in Chapter 6: Findings, with a strong emphasis on the privileging of the participants' voices. Chapters 7 and 8 then summarize and consolidate the findings, describe the outcomes, and identify limitations and considerations for boarding schools, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This review will critically examine the literature pertaining to the following three themes, particularly as they apply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Australia studying on scholarships in boarding schools today:

- a. Racial-ethnic-cultural (REC) identity and the academic self-efficacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian students;
- b. The interplay between academic self-efficacy and boarding schools; and
- c. REC identity and international Indigenous and Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences of boarding schools.

A discussion of the systematic quantitative literature review process follows. Through this process, 24 grey papers and theory papers along with 42 peer-reviewed research papers with relevance to the current project were identified. Following a general discussion in broad terms of current educational outcomes for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the literature review explores self-efficacy and identity formation through adolescence, specifically investigating racial-ethnic-cultural (REC) identity. These constructs are then investigated within the context of the experiences over time of Indigenous young people attending boarding schools.

2.2 Method

A systematic quantitative literature review has been undertaken to ascertain the current level of academic literature with relevance to the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in boarding schools and the interaction between these experiences and the students' academic efficacy and REC identity (Parsons, 2019). The

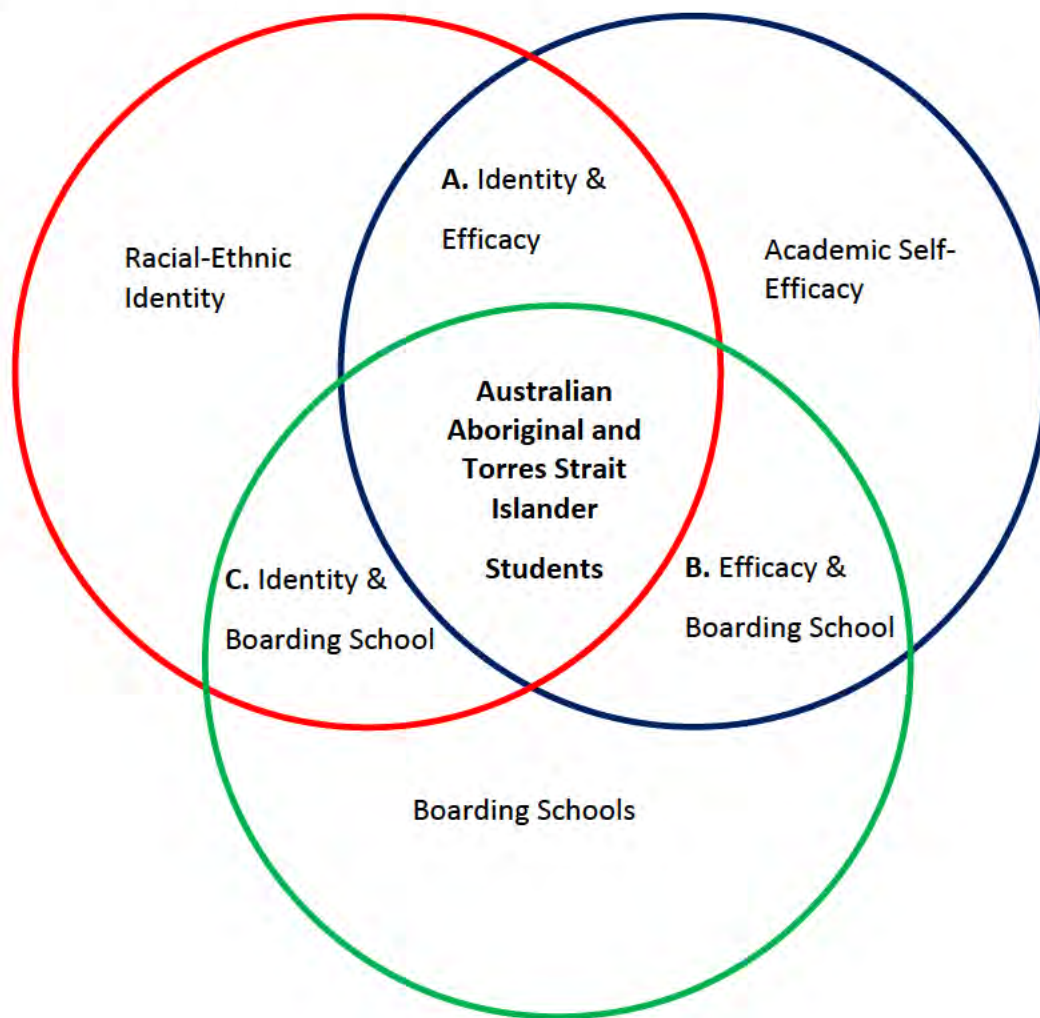
development of this literature review follows the methods described by Pickering and Byrne (2014) through which a systematic, 15-step process is followed that involves quantitatively surveying and assessing the literature, producing a database, and hence identifying gaps in the research.

Research papers were identified through searches of electronic databases including Informit, ProQuest, JSTOR, Google Scholar, Taylor and Francis Journals, Sage Publications, Ovid, Science Direct, ERIC, and Web of Science. Other papers were identified through examination of these papers' reference lists and records of citations of these papers.

Keywords used in the search through the databases were a variety of combinations of the following: Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Indigenous, identity, acculturation, assimilation, academic self-efficacy, academic efficacy, academic self-concept, boarding, residential, education, Australia, Australian, and scholarship. It became clear very early in the process of searching the literature that restricting keyword searches to include Aboriginal OR Indigenous AND Australian in a variety of combinations with the other keywords related to boarding schools, identity, and academic efficacy would return very few results. For this reason, research papers were sought that examined REC identity and academic self-efficacy, REC identity and boarding/residential school, and academic self-efficacy and residential/boarding schools, in addition to papers that included these terms as they relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian students (see Figure 3.1).

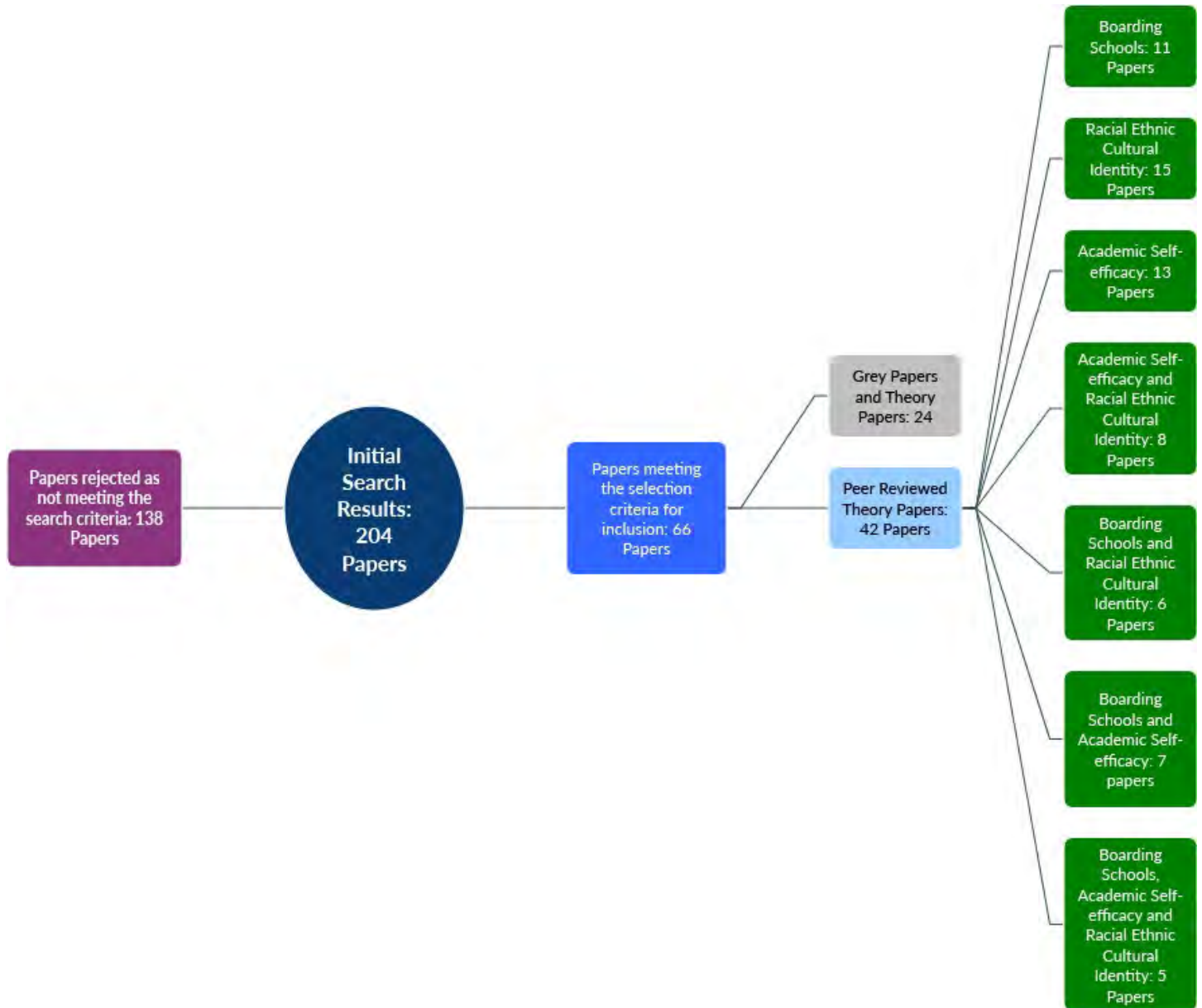
2.3 Results

In total, 204 papers were examined for relevance after original keyword searches across the databases were conducted (see Figure 3.2). Following a review of abstracts and discussion sections of these papers, 66 papers were identified as having sufficient relevance to the proposed area of research to be included in the literature review database created for

Figure 2.1*Literature Review – Identifying the Research Focus*

this purpose and summarized in Table 3.1 (Parsons, 2019). Details for each paper included in the review appear in the database along with the database through which the paper was identified, the university or institution associated with the author(s), continent and country in which the research was conducted, and whether the research involved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Of the selected 66 papers (see Figure 3.2 and Table 3.1), 43 are qualitative (24) or quantitative (19) research reports published in peer-reviewed journals with some emphasis on one or more aspects of the educational experiences of Indigenous or First Nations people –

Figure 2.2*Selection Criteria for Included Papers*

REC identity, academic self-efficacy, and boarding (see Appendix G Table A1). Following further refinement identifying those papers that specifically referred to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, further tables were developed illustrating those papers that corresponded with the categories identified in Figure 3.1.

- Boarding school – 11 papers (Appendix G Table A2)
- REC identity – 15 papers (Appendix G Table A3)
- Academic self-efficacy – 13 papers (Appendix G Table A4)

- REC identity and academic self-efficacy – 8 papers (Appendix G Table A5)
- Academic self-efficacy and boarding school – 7 papers (Appendix G Table A6)
- Boarding school and REC identity – 6 papers (Appendix G Table A7)
- Boarding school, REC identity, and academic self-efficacy – 5 papers (Appendix G Table A8)

Of the papers selected for inclusion that did not specifically consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, only two consider students in boarding schools and factors relating to their sense of identity. A. Martin et al. (2014) investigated the psychological well-being, motivation, and engagement of students in Australian boarding schools compared with day students, but without distinguishing REC backgrounds. Boyce and Boyce (1983) investigated the health of Navajo boarding school students enrolled in a reservation boarding school. This study found a relationship between the acculturation orientation of the students and the frequency of their visits to the school's medical clinic, with students exhibiting an integration acculturation orientation having fewer health issues than those experiencing marginalisation.

While the results of this review indicate reasonably substantial research into the individual areas of interest, there is a paucity of scholarly literature available that examines Indigenous experience of efficacy, identity, and boarding school. While mentioning cultural identity, none of the papers examined specifically refer to independent Australian boarding schools, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, or any measure of identity or academic efficacy.

Duncan's monograph (1990), distributed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit of the University of Queensland, makes some examination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students boarding in independent schools; however, this is not a peer-

reviewed paper. Edwards-Groves and Murray (2008) did consider aspects of cultural identity and efficacy, ([Appendix G](#), Table A8), however, this is in the context of Aboriginal male youth at risk of entering the juvenile criminal justice system and hence boarding in a short-term residential facility known as Tirkandi. While the authors suggest “their voices offer a powerful insight into the situated construction of agency and identity in classroom life, culture and learning among Aboriginal students” (Edwards-Groves & Murray, 2008, p. 165), this needs to be understood within the situational context of the facility.

Table 2.1

Papers Satisfying the Criteria for Inclusion

Author	Year	Title	Journal	Location	Nature	Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander	Independent Boarding School	Academic Efficacy	Racial, Ethnic or Indigenous Identity
Australian Government DEST	2014	What Works. The Works program. Core issues 6: Boarding	What Works. The Works program	Australia	Theory Paper	X	X		
Barnes, R., Josefowitz, N., & Cole, E.	2006	Residential schools' impact on Aboriginal students' academic and cognitive development	Canadian Journal of School Psychology	Canada	Theory Paper			X	
Battiste, M.	1998	Enabling the autumn seed: Toward a decolonized approach to Aboriginal knowledge, language, and education	Canadian Journal of Native Education	Canada	Theory Paper				
Benveniste, T., Guenther, J., Dawson, D., & Rainbird, S.	2014	Out of sight, out of mind? Bringing Indigenous parent-boarding school communication to light	AARE-NZARE 2014 conference	Australia	Theory Paper	X	X	X	X
Benveniste, T., Dawson, D., & Rainbird, S.	2015	The role of the residence: Exploring the goals of an Aboriginal residential program in contributing to the education and development of remote students	The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Australia	Qualitative	X			X

Beresford, Q.	2012	Separate and unequal: An outline of Aboriginal education 1900 - 1996		Australia	Theory Paper	X		X	
Berry, J.	2005	Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	Canada	Theory Paper				
Bobongie, F.	2017	Ngoelmun Yawar, Our Journey: The transition and challenges for female students leaving Torres Strait Island communities for boarding schools in regional Queensland, Australia	The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Australia	Qualitative	X	X	X	X
Bobongie, F.	2017	What is the key to a successful transition for Indigenous girls moving from Torres Strait Island communities to boarding colleges in regional Queensland, Australia?	International Journal of Technology and Inclusive Education	Australia	Qualitative	X	X	X	X
Bodkin-Andrews, G., O'Rourke, V., & Craven, R.	2010	The utility of general self-esteem and domain-specific self-concepts: Their influence on Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' educational outcomes	Australian Journal of Education	Australia	Qualitative	X		X	
Bodkin-Andrews, G., Dillon, A., & Craven, R.	2010	Bangawarra'gumada - Strengthening the spirit: Causal modelling of academic self-concept and patterns of disengagement for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian students	The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Australia	Qualitative	X		X	
Bodkin-Andrews, G., Dillon, A., & Craven, R. Yeung, A.	2012	Engaging the disengaged? A longitudinal analysis of the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian students' academic self-concept and disengagement	Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology	Australia	Qualitative	X		X	
Bodkin-Andrews, G., & Carlson, B.	2014	The legacy of racism and Indigenous Australian identity within education	Race Ethnicity and Education	Australia	Theory Paper	X			X

Bong, M., & Clark, R.	1999	Comparison between self-concept and self-efficacy in academic motivation research	Educational Psychologist	USA	Theory Paper			X	
Bong, M.	1999	Personal factors affecting the generality of academic self-efficacy judgments: Gender, ethnicity, and relative expertise	The Journal of Experimental Education	USA	Quantitative			X	
Boyce, J., & Boyce, W.	1983	Acculturation and changes in health among Navajo boarding school students	Social Science & Medicine	USA	Quantitative				
Carroll, A., Houghton, S., Wood, R., Unsworth, K., Hattie, J., Gordon, L., & Bower, J.	2009	Self-efficacy and academic achievement in Australian high school students: The mediating effects of academic aspirations and delinquency	Journal of Adolescence	Australia	Qualitative			X	
Chapman, J.	1998	Learning disabled children's self-concepts	Review of Educational Research	New Zealand	Theory Paper			X	
Duncan, B.	1990	The integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary and secondary students within non-government boarding schools in Queensland	Monograph - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit, University of Queensland	Australia	Quantitative	X	X	X	X
Edwards-Groves, C., & Murray, C.	2008	Enabling voice: Perceptions of schooling from rural Aboriginal youth at risk of entering the juvenile justice system	The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Australia	Qualitative	X		X	X
Ellinghaus, K.	2006	Indigenous assimilation and absorption in the United States and Australia	Pacific Historical Review	Australia USA	Theory Paper	X			X
Evans-Campbell, T., Walters, K., Pearson, C , & Campbell, C.	2012	Indian boarding school experience, substance use, and mental health among urban Two-Spirit American Indian/Alaska Natives	The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse	USA	Qualitative				

Ferla, J., Valcke, M., & Cai, Y.	2009	Academic self-efficacy and academic self-concept: Reconsidering structural relationships	Learning and Individual Differences	Belgium	Quantitative			X	
Gfeller, B., & Armstrong, H.	2012	Ego development, ego strengths, and ethnic identity among First Nation adolescents	Journal of Research on Adolescence	Canada	Quantitative				X
Gfeller, B.M., & Armstrong, H.D.	2012	Racial-ethnic identity and adjustment in Canadian Indigenous adolescents	Journal of Early Adolescence	Canada	Quantitative				X
Gonzalez, J., & Bennett, R.	2011	Conceptualizing native identity with a multidimensional model	American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research	USA Canada	Quantitative				X
Gummadam, P., Pittman, L., & Ioffe, M.	2016	School belonging, ethnic identity, and psychological adjustment among ethnic minority college students	The Journal of Experimental Education	USA	Quantitative				X
Heyeres, M., McCalam, J., Langham, E., Bainbridge, R., Redman-MacLaren, M., Britton, A., Rutherford, K, & Tsey, K.	2018	Strengthening the capacity of education staff to support the wellbeing of Indigenous students in boarding schools: A participatory action research study	The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Australia	Qualitative	X	X		
Kickett-Tucker, C.	2008	Moom (black)? Djardak (white)? How come I don't fit in Mum? Exploring the racial identity of Australian Aboriginal children and youth	Health Sociology Review	Australia	Qualitative	X			X
Klenowski, V.	2009	Australian Indigenous students: Addressing equity issues in assessment	Teaching Education	Australia	Theory Paper	X		X	

Kvernmo, S., & Heyerdahl, S.	2003	Acculturation strategies and ethnic identity as predictors of behavior problems in Arctic minority adolescents	Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	Norway	Quantitative				X
Lambert-Pennington, K.	2012	"Real Blackfellas": Constructions and meanings of urban Indigenous identity	Transforming Anthropology	Australia	Qualitative	X			X
Langton, M., & Rhea, Z.	2009	Indigenous education and the ladder to prosperity	Perspectives	Australia	Theory Paper	X	X		
Luszczynska, A., Scholz, U., & Schwarzer, R.	2005	The general self-efficacy scale: Multicultural validation studies	The Journal of Psychology	Poland Germany	Quantitative			X	
Mander, D , & Fieldhouse, L.	2009	Reflections on implementing an education support programme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary school students in a non-government education sector: What did we learn and what do we know?	The Australian Community Psychologist	Australia	Theory Paper	X	X		X
Mander, D , Cohen, L., & Pooley, J.	2015	'If I wanted to have more opportunities and go to a better school, I just had to get used to it': Aboriginal students' perceptions of going to boarding school in Western Australia	The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Australia	Qualitative	X	X	X	X
Mander, D , Cohen, L., & Pooley, J.	2015	A critical exploration of staff perceptions of Aboriginal boarding students' experiences	Australian Journal of Education	Australia	Qualitative	X	X	X	
Macdonald, M. A., Gringart, E., Ngarrtjan-Kessarar, T., Cooper, M., & Gray, J.	2018	A 'better' education: An examination of the utility of boarding school for Indigenous secondary students in Western Australia	Australian Journal of Education	Australia	Qualitative	X	X	X	X

Mander, D.	2015	Enabling voice: Aboriginal parents, experiences and perceptions of sending a child to boarding school in Western Australia	The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Australia	Qualitative	X	X		X
Martin, A., Papworth, B., Ginns, P., & Liem, G.	2014	Boarding school, academic motivation and engagement, and psychological well-being: A large-scale investigation	American Educational Research Journal	Australia	Qualitative		X	X	
Martinez, K	2006	Problems of ethnic and cultural differences between teachers and students: A story of a beginning teacher of Australian Aboriginal children	Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy	Australia	Theory Paper	X			X
Mooney, J., Seaton, M., Kaur, G., Marsh, H., & Yeung, A.	2016	Cultural perspectives on Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian students' school motivation and engagement	Contemporary Educational Psychology	Australia	Quantitative			X	
Moran, J., Fleming, C., Somervell, P., & Manson, S.	1999	Measuring bicultural ethnic identity among American Indian adolescents: A factor analytic study	Journal of Adolescent Research	USA	Quantitative				
Multon, K., Brown, S., & Lent, R.	1991	Relation of self-efficacy beliefs to academic outcomes: A meta-analytic investigation	Journal of Counselling Psychology	USA	Quantitative			X	
Nekby, L., Rödin, M., & Özcan, G.	2007	Acculturation identity and educational attainment	Thesis	Sweden	Quantitative				X
Neville, H.A., Oyama, K.E., & Huggins, J.G.	2014	Dimensions of belonging as an aspect of racial-ethnic-cultural identity: An exploration of Indigenous Australians	Journal of Counselling Psychology	Australia	Qualitative	X			X
Parekh, B	2009	Logic of identity	Politics, Philosophy and Economics	United Kingdom	Theory Paper				
Pirbhai-Illich, F.	2011	Aboriginal students engaging and struggling with critical multiliteracies	Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy	Canada	Qualitative				X

Purdie, N., Tripcony, P., Boulton-Lewis, G., Fanshawe, J., & Gunstone, A.	2000	Positive self-identity for Indigenous students and its relationship to school outcomes	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	Australia	Quantitative	X		X	X
Purdie, N., & Buckley, S.	2010	School attendance and retention of Indigenous Australian students. Issues Paper No. 1	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare	Australia	Theory Paper	X			X
Purdie, N., Reid, K., & Buckley, S.	2011	Literacy learning: What works for young Indigenous students? Lessons from the longitudinal literacy and numeracy study for Indigenous students	Literacy Learning: The Middle Years	Australia	Qualitative	X		X	
Rahman, K.	2010	Addressing the foundations for improved Indigenous secondary student outcome: A South Australian qualitative study	The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Australia	Qualitative	X		X	X
Reynolds, R.	2009	Clean, clad and courteous revisited: A review history of 200 years of Aboriginal education in New South Wales	The Journal of Negro Education	Australia	Theory Paper	X			X
Riley, T. , & Ungerleider, C.	2012	Self-fulfilling prophecy: How teachers' attributions, expectations, and stereotypes influence the learning opportunities afforded Aboriginal students	Canadian Journal of Education	Canada	Quantitative			X	
Roberts, R.M., & Ali, F.	2013	An exploration of strength of ethnic identity, acculturation and experiences of bullying and victimisation in Australian school children	Children Australia	Australia	Quantitative				X
Rogers, J.	2017	Photoyam: Aboriginal and Maori girls' researching contemporary boarding school experiences	Australian Aboriginal Studies	Australia	Qualitative	X	X		X
Russell, D	1999	The importance of identity in the retention and attainment of Aboriginal students at secondary school: Some research findings	Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Australia	Qualitative	X			X
Schwartz, S., Unger, J., Zamboanga, B., & Szapocznik, J.	2010	Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research	American Psychologist	USA	Theory Paper				X

Sellers, R , Smith, M., & Shelton, J.	1998	Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity	Personality and Social Psychology Review	USA	Theory Paper				X
Sheffield, J., Ralph, A , & Hodges, J.	2013	Home away from home? Boarding in Australian schools	Australian Journal of Education	Australia	Theory Paper		X		
Tompkins, M	2013	Enhancing self-efficacy to achieve competence	Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy: An International Quarterly	USA	Theory Paper			X	
Ward, C.	2006	Acculturation, identity and adaptation in dual heritage adolescents	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	New Zealand	Quantitative				X
Weaver, H.N.	2001	Indigenous identity. What is it, and who really has it?	American Indian Quarterly	USA	Theory Paper				X

Mander’s thesis (2012) provides an in-depth qualitative study of the transition to boarding school of Aboriginal male students in Western Australia and the issues involved. He has referred to this study as the source of the three papers published subsequently (Mander, 2015; Mander et al., 2015a, 2015b). While Mander mentions identity and academic self-concept in this qualitative study of Aboriginal boys’ experiences in the transition to boarding schools, these are not constructs that are deliberately investigated through his research. Similarly, while mention is made of identity and academic efficacy in the studies by Bobongie (2017b, 2017c) and Macdonald et al. (2018), the authors do not focus on these constructs.

2.4 Discussion – Interrogating the Literature

Pearson, in his essay “Radical Hope – Education and Equality in Australia”, states, “In Australia the under-achievement of disadvantaged students and disadvantaged schools

has been an intractable problem for just as long as it has been considered unacceptable” (Pearson, 2011, p. 16). In educational terms, Australia, in common with the United States of America, has been depicted educationally as a “high quality – low equity country” (Klenowski, 2009, p. 77). There is a correlation between socioeconomic background and academic achievement, school retention, and tertiary participation, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children consistently achieving at the lowest end of the academic scale (Klenowski, 2009). These findings are supported by the results of the international study, Programme for International Student Assessment, or PISA, a survey of the academic knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students. Significantly, a key finding of PISA 2000 was that “Australia’s Indigenous students performed at a lower level than the non-Indigenous students in the three assessment areas – reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy” (De Bortoli & Cresswell, 2004, p. 36). Showing a continuing trend, PISA 2018 found that:

The performance of Indigenous students was lower than for non-Indigenous students in all assessment domains. In reading literacy, the difference in the mean score was 76 points (or the equivalent of around two-and-a-third years of schooling). In mathematical literacy, the difference in the mean score was 69 points (or the equivalent of around two-and-a-half years), and in scientific literacy, the difference in the mean score was 75 points (or the equivalent of around two-and-three-quarter years). (Thomson et al., 2019, p. 20)

While there is some evidence that retention rates have improved slightly in recent years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in secondary schooling, (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, 2018), the validity of these findings is questionable as there is no compulsion at school for students to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Moves towards self-identification tend to increase with age and confidence

(Herbert, 2002), hence artificially inflating apparent retention rates. In investigating continuing high levels of absenteeism prevalent amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Herbert (2002) reported that Indigenous students experience two to three times the number of serious disciplinary consequences experienced by non-Indigenous students. In a Catch-22 situation, already disengaged Indigenous students are further disengaged through suspensions and exclusions. There is a significant difference in school completion rates for Australian students dependent upon their socioeconomic status (SES). Students from a low-SES group are 23% less likely to complete their schooling compared with students from a high-SES group (Polidano et al., 2013). The authors of this research indicate the two most significant factors in non-completion to be lower test scores across numeracy and literacy skills along with lower educational aspirations of students and their parents from lower SES groupings. Given this empirical relationship between SES and educational attainment and the well-documented disadvantage across a range of social factors faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, it is unsurprising that Indigenous Australian students experience appreciably lower school completion rates than non-Indigenous Australians.

It is important to note that Indigenous Australians have been recognized as one of the most disadvantaged of Indigenous peoples throughout the world, the inequities they endure today extending across physical and mental health, varying socioeconomic indicators, and education itself. (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2012, p. 180)

Confounding the extra challenges faced by Aboriginal students from low-SES homes can be the possibly unintentional actions of teachers who inadvertently perpetuate the very stereotype they purport to oppose. In a study examining the effect of a student's race, gender, and SES on teachers' perceptions, Riley and Ungerleider (2012) found that some teachers had lower expectations of Aboriginal students, which may lead to inequalities in the standard

of education provided. Despite the focus through development of government policy on the reduction of absenteeism and improvement in school retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2014), to date there has been little significant progress in this area (Mander, 2015). With a government benchmark set at 90% for attendance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at school, in 2014, Australia wide only 48% of metropolitan schools, 44% of provincial schools, 21% of remote schools, and 14% of very remote schools were able to meet this target, while in the Northern Territory the benchmark was met by only 10% of schools (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015). Since 2014, “there has been no meaningful improvement in Indigenous attendance rates across any of the states and territories. The largest change has been in the Northern Territory, where the attendance rate fell by 4 percentage points from 2014 to 2017” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018).

Given that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in general fall below both national and international standards in literacy and numeracy (De Bortoli & Cresswell, 2004; H. Hughes & Hughes, 2009), there is a clear need to arrest the increasing gap in achievement levels and national benchmarks. In 2008, the Commonwealth Government set a target of halving the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students across numeracy and literacy as measured by the national NAPLAN testing regime for Year 3, 5, 7, and 9 students across Australia. The Closing the Gap – Prime Minister’s Report 2018 reports, “the target to halve the gap for Indigenous children in reading and numeracy within a decade [by 2018], is not on track” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018, p. 58). Indicative of the relationship between meeting national standards and remoteness, the report indicates a correlation between a fall in standards and increasing remoteness of Indigenous homes. For example, while 88% of Indigenous Year 3 students in major urban centres are meeting the national

standards in reading, this falls to only 46% of Year 3 students living in remote areas (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018).

Through investigating the development of numeracy and literacy skills of 152 Indigenous students compared with results for non-Indigenous students over the first 6 years of schooling via a longitudinal study (Purdie et al., 2011), the following findings became clear: While many Indigenous students achieved at a high level, the average levels of achievement for Indigenous students remained lower. The schools attended by the Indigenous students in the study had a significant effect on their achievement levels. Indigenous students enrolled in schools that had developed engaging academic programs were found to have positive academic self-efficacy. School climate again was found also to have a significant effect on engagement and retention.

2.5 Self-Efficacy

Research indicates that those individuals with positive beliefs about their own competencies and abilities are most likely to develop the motivation, skill, and persistence needed to overcome difficulties and succeed in life (Bandura, 1986, 1995b). That is, there is a causal relationship between self-efficacy and success. Bandura (2000) defined self-efficacy as the belief individuals hold that they have the capability to successfully complete a task or perform a function such that they have control over their lives.

In a research project designed to examine the connection between self-efficacy beliefs and academic persistence and performance through a meta-analysis of the data (Multon et al., 1991) it was found that there is a strong association between positive efficacious beliefs and advantageous academic outcomes. Multon et al.'s (1991) research concluded further that self-efficacy is especially significant in raising the academic attainment of those students with lower academic achievement.

More recently, a group of Australian researchers examined academic, self-regulatory, and social self-efficacy in Australian high school students (Carroll et al., 2009). The research was directed at investigating the relationship between academic aspirations, delinquency, academic achievement, and self-efficacy. In common with previously referred to research, there was found to be a strong association between academic self-efficacy and academic achievement and, significantly, an inverse relationship between self-efficacy and both delinquency and substance abuse. Low self-regulatory self-efficacy was found to lead to an increase in the probability of participating in delinquent behaviour and, consequently, to a corresponding increase in the probability of school failure.

Research supports the notion that, across cultures, lower levels of depressive disorders and anxiety along with enhanced health and intellectual outcomes are associated with strong general self-efficacy (Luszczynska et al., 2005). These researchers, through their cross-cultural investigations, found advantages enjoyed by individuals with a high general self-efficacy to include persistence in the pursuit of ambitious goals, an optimistic attitude towards the future, and a high level of self-discipline. There is a strong relationship between academic self-efficacy and advantageous characteristics such as intrinsic motivation, persistence, and lowered anxiety (Ferla et al., 2009), characteristics identified by Duckworth and Dweck as those possessed by people most likely to succeed (Duckworth, 2006; Dweck, 2009; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

2.5.1 Self-Efficacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within Australia are confronted with greater educational disadvantage than most other Indigenous people across the world (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2012). Evidence of this is the gap in rates of retention of non-Indigenous compared with Indigenous students of 31% (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2012; Purdie

et al., 2000). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the retention rate is close to 40% as compared with close to 71% for non-Indigenous students (Bodkin-Andrews, Dillon, & Craven, 2010).

In view of the clear evidence that retention and attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students lag significantly behind those of non-Indigenous Australians, Rahman (2010) undertook a qualitative study through face-to-face interviews with 36 Indigenous students, each determined to complete Year 12, across 15 schools representing the public and independent education sectors of South Australia. The findings of this study reinforce the findings of Multon et al. (1991) referred to earlier, that there is a strong correlation between high academic self-concept and academic success. Rahman further identified the positive effect of teachers who are concerned for their students, have high expectations, and convey belief in the capacity of the students to succeed, on student self-concept and hence enhanced engagement, attendance, levels of achievement, and retention. These students further identified the importance of an optimistic outlook, persistence, and commitment as keys to academic success, along with supportive families that shared the high expectations of the teachers.

Through a qualitative research investigation exploring the effect of self-identity constructs on schooling outcomes for Indigenous students, Purdie et al. (2000) found that, of the related self-identity constructs of self-concept, self-esteem, self-regulation, and self-efficacy, it is in fact self-efficacy beliefs that impact most significantly in enhancing the probability of advantageous educational results. The report refers to the importance of “positive conceptions of themselves both as Indigenous people [social self-efficacy] and as students [academic self-efficacy]” (Purdie et al., 2000, p. ix) as significant influencers on school engagement and hence success.

Further, it was found that, while many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students hold strong sporting self-efficacy beliefs, these do not translate to academic self-efficacy. Respondents in the surveys indicated the importance of the school climate regarding academic outcomes and identified the role of the teacher in valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as crucial to their self-efficacy and success. Negative influences on self-efficacy include lower teacher expectations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in comparison with non-Indigenous students, disciplinary consequences such as suspensions that were simply exacerbating school disengagement, and rejection by peers based on racism.

2.6 Identity

Identity formation is a pivotal, fundamental task through an individual's period of adolescence (Albareello et al., 2017; Crocetti et al., 2009; Erikson, 1968; Klimstra et al., 2010). Adolescence and identity formation is a period of preparation for the roles assumed in adulthood, such as parenthood and career and becoming a constructive contributing member of society (Marcia, 2002). Personal identity can be considered as "the extent to which a person has adopted a clear and internally consistent set of goals, values and beliefs" (Schwartz et al., 2011, p. 373).

2.6.1 Identity Formation in Adolescence

Adolescent identity formation occurs in a number of domains which can be differentiated to some extent as open or closed, dependent upon the opportunities available in each domain to freely explore and choose. For adolescents, two significant domains are the educational and interpersonal. The educational domain can be regarded as largely closed, with few options available for consideration and hence adoption or rejection. The

interpersonal domain, by contrast, has available a greater number of options for adoption, rejection, or reconsideration (Albarelo et al., 2017).

Marcia's Identity Status Paradigm (Klimstra et al., 2010; Marcia, 2009) is a conceptualisation of Erikson's (1968) identity theory. This model consists of two dimensions – exploration of developmental alternatives and subsequent selection of those seen as relevant and significant to the individual – followed by the commitment by which the individual engages in activities to implement the selected alternatives. The combination of these two dimensions leads to the individual occupying one of four identity statuses, as illustrated in Figure 2.3, described from the least to the most adaptive and optimal condition (Klimstra et al., 2010; Phinney, 1989):

1. *Diffusion*, characterised by low identity exploration and a low commitment to available alternatives.
2. *Foreclosure*, characterised by low exploration but high commitment.
3. *Moratorium*, indicating high exploration but low levels of commitment.
4. *Achievement*, resulting from high levels of exploration and the achievement of self-identity.

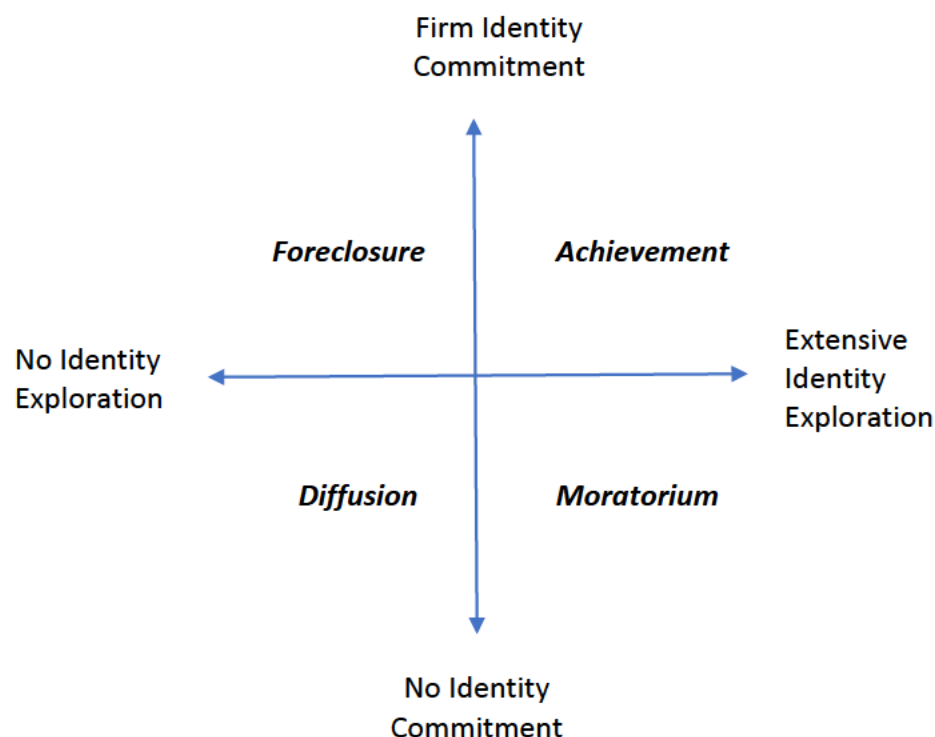
Klimstra et al. (2010) described the fundamental developmental hypothesis of identity formation thus: “movement from adolescence to adulthood involves changes in identity that can be characterized as progressive developmental shifts” (p. 315). These progressive developmental shifts follow a pathway from less adaptive to more adaptive status, from diffusion through to achievement. Achievement of identity is correlated with positive life consequences such as improved self-esteem and purpose in addition to acting as a protective factor against anxiety and depression (Schwartz et al., 2011). Identity exploration and commitment reflect a movement forward incorporating a set of relevant and independent

values, beliefs, and goals acting as a protective factor against high-risk behaviours (Dumas et al., 2011).

Identity formation can be described as a journey and, for some, a struggle. “The psychosocial crisis of late adolescence. Identity broadly defined refers to a sense of who one is, based upon who one has been and who one can imagine oneself becoming” (Marcia, 2009, p. 671). Identity formation during adolescence commences with foreclosure as young people unquestioningly adopt the identity values and characteristics of their family (Marcia, 2002). Following foreclosure, adolescents who do progress enter into a period of moratorium, a time during which they are no longer the child they once were and have not yet developed into the adult they will eventually be. High levels of exploration during this period ideally lead to identity achievement (Marcia, 2002). Through adolescence, early identity commitments may be challenged through a process of selection and reconsideration of identity constructs (Becht et al., 2016).

Figure 2.3

Marcia’s Identity Statuses as a Function of Exploration and Commitment



Crocetti et al. (2009) discussed a three-factor identity process – commitment, in which strong choices are made regarding developmental domains, in-depth exploration by adolescents of their current level of commitment, and reconsideration through which adolescents compare current and alternative commitments. The authors noted that identity formation in Western societies has been complicated through diminishing guidelines leading to increasing options for consideration. Further, while anxiety may stimulate exploration of identity commitments, at high levels anxiety may lead to a negative impact upon adolescent development. “Adolescents with high anxiety levels had more difficulties in dealing with the identity formation task than adolescents with low anxiety levels” (Crocetti et al., 2009, p. 847). Reconsideration, leading to a decrease in identity commitment, may contribute to higher levels of anxiety and depression. While a measure of identity confusion is needed for a healthy development of identity, in early adolescence this confusion may result in a level of distress. For this reason, individuals are best off finding a balance between identity commitment and reconsideration (Schwartz et al., 2011). This is evidenced by Crocetti et al.’s (2009) findings that stronger levels of identity commitment were achieved by adolescents with corresponding lower levels of anxiety with a high commitment status correlated to lowered anxiety.

While many adolescents do enter into a period of identity experimentation, a large proportion of young people have already adopted a commitment to identity. Those with a high degree of certainty and little doubt around their identity formation show positive psychosocial outcomes, while high levels of uncertainty in identity formation lead to distress in adolescents, including higher levels of school anxiety (Becht et al., 2016).

F. Grant and Hogg (2012), in discussing uncertainty-identity theory, stated that uncertainty of an individual’s values, attitudes, and perceptions is an uneasy condition that individuals are driven to diminish. Through a process described as self-categorisation, these

individuals identify with a group following examination of the characteristics that define the group and differentiate it from other groups. Through membership of the chosen group, notions of uncertainty are reduced, and an impression of greater predictability is created. Those groups that exhibit more distinct boundaries and structure with common goals provide for a clearly defined social identity. Groups described as highly entitative, that is, having a clear and distinct entity with clearly defined characteristics, are attractive to individuals in the uncertain state: “From uncertainty-identity theory we know that self-uncertainty motivates people to identify more strongly with a focal group, particularly when that group is highly entitative and thus furnishes a distinctive and well-defined social identity” (p. 539).

2.6.2 *Significance of the Peer Group*

Social identity formation during adolescence is characterised by an emotional commitment to a social group and determines the importance of the group to the individual. Social identification with two or more groups leads to increased levels of self-esteem in comparison to identification with a single group (Albarello et al., 2017). Two significant peer groups to which an adolescent belongs are classmates (that cannot be chosen) and friendship groups outside of the school context (formed through mutual choice). As they progress through adolescence, young people develop cognitive abilities during their teenage years that enable them to differentiate between groups and ultimately select the group that is most salient to them. While their educational identity formed within the school context is a relatively closed domain with a restricted range of identity options, interpersonal identity formed through association with mutually agreeable friendship groups is relatively open, with greater access to identity choices and alternatives (Albarello et al., 2017). This exploration of identity can only be more complex for the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in this research project as they navigate surviving and thriving in two culturally contrasting worlds.

Throughout the period of adolescence, the peer group provides an opportunity to move outside the family into a supportive environment, aiding the adolescent to cope with the developmental changes occurring in their lives. This identification with the peer group provides a significant resource for adolescents as they continue the process of exploration and commitment to their social identity (Albareello et al., 2017). Group members tend to develop similar propensities towards substance abuse, school drop-out, delinquent behaviours, and unsafe sexual practices, with potentially consequent poorer academic outcomes and increased consumption of alcohol and tobacco. These risk behaviours may be engaged in by adolescents as they seek to gain favour with those in the group perceived to be the leaders or those with greatest perceived power (Dumas et al., 2011).

Given these choices and alternatives, adolescents tend to exhibit a higher inclination towards high-risk behaviours than do adults. While their knowledge and understanding of risk is similar to that of adults, adolescents' peer group sensitivity and sensation seeking encourages risk taking (Dayan et al., 2010). Dayan and colleagues (2010) hypothesised that, in order to determine for themselves the value of life, adolescents need to explore experiences available to them and, in doing so, abandon some safety structures available to them, such as parental protection. Personal identity development is characterised by the incorporation of culturally accepted values, beliefs, and future goals. Adolescents who have progressed to a commitment to identity tend to have a greater capacity to resist the influence of their peer group than those with lower levels of commitment (Dumas et al., 2011; Sarra, 2011). As Dumas stated, "adolescent identity development is fostered within supportive families that encourage teen individuality and who, through conversation, encourage open opinion-sharing and expose youth to different perspectives" (Dumas et al., 2011, p. 925).

Identity negotiation during the adolescent life stage is critical. Through the construction of a strong personal identity, an adolescent person develops the resources that

can be called upon as an alternative to the norms of the peer group (Dumas et al., 2011). High identity commitment status corresponds with lowered anxiety (Crocetti et al., 2009), hence resulting in a greater likelihood of beneficial behavioural decisions being followed.

2.6.3 *Racial-Ethnic-Cultural Identity*

A major task faced during the period of adolescence is one's exploration and understanding of identity; a period through which "fidelity is the developmental task associated with adolescence" (Gfeller & Armstrong, 2012, p. 230). It is a normative human drive to seek out and join a group with which we can connect as central to our sense of identity; to develop a sense of belonging to a segment of society in which we feel valued and significant (Neville et al., 2014). For adolescent young people, it is this sense of belonging, particularly in the school setting, that has been found to be associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression, improved health, and positive educational outcomes (Neville et al., 2014).

Educational research in Australia has found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a positive viewpoint of both their racial identity and their identity as a student have improved educational outcomes in terms of attendance, retention, engagement, and academic success (Purdie et al., 2000). This embracing of their racial identity acts as a significant protective factor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students when confronted with experiences of racism and prejudice (Kickett-Tucker, 2009). The Canadian experience suggests that, as a consequence of the historical colonial policies of assimilation, the challenges facing young Indigenous people in forming their identity are far greater than those faced by the majority of Canadian youth (Gfeller & Armstrong, 2013). In examining the formation of identity within adolescent Indigenous peoples in Canada, Gfeller and Armstrong (2013) defined racial ethnic identity (REI) as the sense of attachment to a

particular racial group and the associated implications for the individual that arise from this. Their study highlights the supportive nature of Indigenous communities in the formation of REI where adolescents are exposed to appropriate role models in the form of Elders, teachers, and family and where cultural events occur in which the adolescents can be engaged.

R. M. Roberts and Ali (2013) undertook research in which they examined relationships among ethnic identities, acculturation, and the effects of bullying and victimisation on students in Australian schools. The authors recognised the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem, indicating that school students with low self-esteem are more likely to identify as victims or perpetrators of bullying. Through their investigation, the significance of acculturation became pivotal in affecting the bullying or victimisation experienced by the students. Acculturation is defined as a “phenomenon which results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous firsthand contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (p. 8) and results in individuals maintaining either a weak or strong affiliation with their own culture while exposed to the dominant cultural values of the communities with which they engage. Four different accultural orientations described by Berry (1997) and referred to by Roberts and Ali are defined as:

- Integration, in which one’s culture of origin is retained while the dominant culture is incorporated;
- Assimilation, in which one’s culture of origin is surrendered, and the dominant culture is adopted;
- Separation, in which the host culture is rejected in favour of total immersion in the culture of origin; and
- Marginalisation, in which identification with both the host culture and the culture of origin is lost (see Table 3.2).

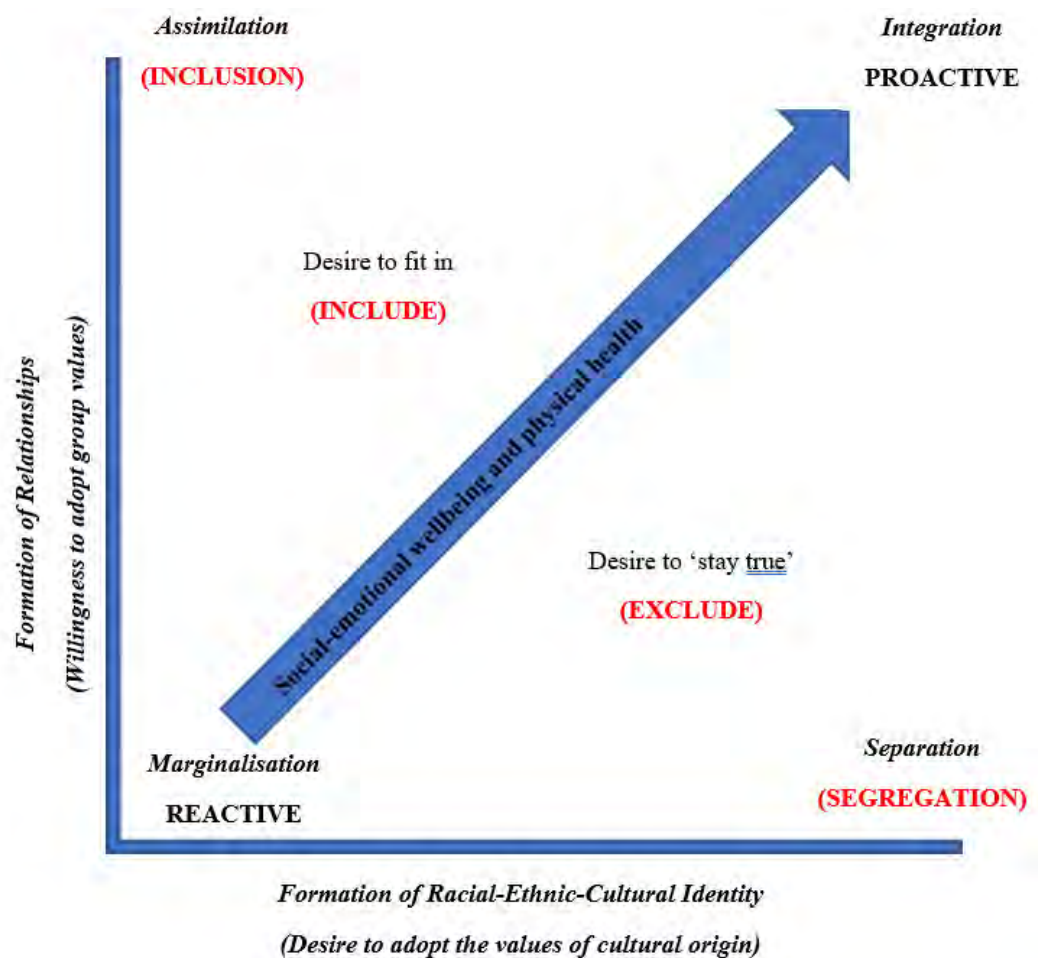
Table 2.2*Accultural Orientations and Models of Adaptation*

Accultural orientations and adaptations of minority culture individuals immersed in an unaccustomed majority cultural context		
<i>Level of efficacy and adaptive benefit</i>	<i>Accultural orientation:</i> <i>Berry (1997)</i> <i>R. M. Roberts and Ali (2013)</i>	<i>Process models of adaptation:</i> <i>Oetting and Beauvais (1991)</i>
Most efficacious and adaptive 	Integration: Bicultural orientation	Orthogonal identification: Individuals identify with dominant culture and culture of origin independently of each
		Bicultural/Transcultural identification: Connections with both cultural contexts
	Assimilation: - Dominant culture adopted - Culture of origin rejected	Multidimensional model: - Transitioning to dominant cultural context - Maintain some values of culture of origin
		Dominant majority model Dominant culture is superior leading to assimilation
	Separation: - Culture of origin adopted - Dominant culture rejected	Transitional model: Stress-inducing process of separation from culture of origin to dominant culture
Least efficacious and adaptive	Marginalisation: Identification with neither culture	Alienation model: Some individuals without support structures in place become alienated from both origin and dominant cultures

Of these four accultural orientations, integration, or biculturalism, has been recognised as the most psychologically beneficial adaptation (Schwartz et al., 2010), while separation and marginalisation are correlated with negative psychological consequences. In the study undertaken by R. M. Roberts and Ali (2013) referred to earlier, it was found that those students who had adopted an assimilation orientation were subjected to higher rates of bullying and victimisation than students who had maintained an integration orientation:

ethnic minority children in this study who adopted the cultural behaviours of the Australian [sic] culture at the same time as taking part in the cultural behaviours of their own ethnic group were less likely to be victimised than children who only adopted the Australian culture while rejecting their cultural origins (p. 11).

Figure 3.4 illustrates the relationship between the physical and social-emotional health and well-being of individuals transitioning into a cultural community in which they form a minority cultural group, and their accultural orientation. Through this journey of transition and adaptation, movement away from a reactive orientation and marginalisation towards the strongly proactive orientation of integration shows a corresponding improvement in social-emotional and physical health. These accultural orientations described by Berry (1997) and R. M. Roberts and Ali (2013) are not discrete, and individuals at different stages throughout their identity development may find themselves across the continuum represented by this cartesian plane.

Figure 2.4*Acculturation Orientations and Well-Being*

A desire to fit in with the majority cultural group as one's greatest priority leads to assimilation into the majority culture and inclusion by the members of that majority, illustrated in red in Figure 3.4. In contrast, a desire to stay true to the values of one's culture of origin with a disregard for the majority culture in which one is immersed leads to a separation orientation and possible segregation by the majority cultural group. An unwillingness or inability to reconcile these opposing tensions leads to the reactive orientation of marginalisation. When members of a minority cultural group possess the desire and ability to reconcile these opposing tensions of their cultural values and traditions with

those of the majority culture through proactive strategies, they tend towards an integration accultural orientation.

Oetting and Beauvais (1991) described six process models of adaptation undertaken by minority culture members immersed in a dominant majority cultural context. There are parallels between the accultural orientations described by Berry (1997) and these six process models, as shown in Table 3.2. The six process models are:

1. **Dominant majority models.** The dominant majority culture is seen as superior with assimilation into the dominant culture seen as inevitable. Failure to assimilate indicates inadequacy and weakness. This model of adaptation was at the core of Australia's Stolen Generations assimilation policies of removal of Aboriginal children from their families (Ellinghaus, 2006). It reflects the assimilationist educational policies through the 19th and much of the 20th centuries designed to separate Aboriginal youth from their traditional culture and assimilate them into the dominant Western culture (Brooks, 2007; Mander, 2012; Middleton, 1951).
2. **Transitional model** (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991). This model differs from the Dominant Majority model in that the minority culture is valued. Movement from the minority culture to the majority is, however, still seen as inevitable. Individuals in this transition are under stress as they lose the supports available to them from their traditional minority culture but have not yet been able to draw on the support mechanisms of the dominant culture. This model assumes the inevitability of transitioning from a minority to a majority culture.
3. **Alienation model** (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991). Individuals belonging to the minority culture experience anomie, a situation in which they receive little guidance from the majority culture in which they find themselves (Spencer, 2000). The consequence of this is that, while some minority individuals are able to operate effectively within the

dominant cultural environment, others cannot. Those individuals who felt they were equipped with the means to achieve goals valued by the dominant culture were able to manage transition successfully. Those individuals, however, not so equipped found themselves alienated from both cultures (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991). There is an implication in this Alienation model that transition from membership of the minority culture to the majority culture must occur in order to achieve equilibrium and a sense of cultural well-being.

4. **Multidimensional models.** Matsumoto (2007, p. 1291) defines culture as:

the set of ways that emerges when a group uses the basic tools inherent in its members to address the problems presented by the larger ecological context in which the group exists in order to meet biological needs and social motives. Culture is a solution to the problem of how to survive, given the problems in the environment, the physical and social needs that must be addressed, and the tools available.

In multidimensional models, individuals are viewed as transitioning from minority to majority culture; however, the transition is multidimensional, involving a variety of constructs such as the attitudes, behaviours, values, and beliefs referred to above (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991). The individual may transition to the majority values, for example, but continue to profess the values of their minority ethnic group. Individuals from minority cultures are, however, still placed between cultures, belonging to neither in their entirety.

5. **Bicultural or Transcultural models.** Oetting and Beauvais (1991) described this model as recognising that individuals are able to maintain strong connections in both their minority ethnic culture and the majority culture in which they are immersed.

Bicultural models do not, however, support a continuum of identification by individuals with either their traditional ethnic culture or the majority culture.

6. **Orthogonal Identification.** This model posited by Oetting and Beauvais (1991) states that identification by any individual with any culture need not impact on the individual's identification with any other culture. Individuals in this model may be experiencing cultural anomie, alienated from both their traditional ethnic culture and the culture in which they exist. Moving on from this, however, the Orthogonal Identification model accepts that any pattern, from strongly bicultural to unicultural, can exist with the possibility of movement between stages of cultural identification always open.

As representations of cultural transitions, both the Acculturation Orientations and the Process Models of Adaptation move from a least efficacious to most efficacious orientation as individuals belonging to a minority cultural group integrate their own cultural heritage with the cultural imperatives of the majority group in which they find themselves immersed. This successful integration of the individual's culture of origin with the dominant culture of immersion enables individuals to successfully navigate their way within their two worlds.

This efficacy from successful integration is well illustrated by Rogers (2017) who, in a qualitative study utilising a “photoyarning” methodology, addressed the experience of Indigenous girls from the Torres Strait attending independent boarding schools. The students reported facing a dilemma of family and cultural obligations drawing them home in opposition to their perceptions that the greatest opportunity for success required leaving their communities, homes, and families to study.

These students voiced concerns that their sense of cultural identity was reduced as a consequence of separation from community and home. As Macdonald et al. (2018) stated, “it is insufficient for boarding schools to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

with scholarships for the purpose of social justice, but then not to provide a culturally safe environment for those students” (p. 207). A supportive environment that values cultural diversity needs to exist in these independent boarding schools attended by young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The environment needs to be such that these students are able to integrate the new cultural imperatives of these schools while maintaining fidelity with their cultural roots in order to provide the most positive platform on which to build success. This imperative on the part of these boarding schools to provide an environment that values, supports, and enables continuing affiliation with the culture of origin while encouraging participation and integration of the new culture of immersion is reinforced by Oetting and Beauvais who found that:

High cultural identification is related to positive psychosocial characteristics.

Anomic youth show the lowest self-esteem and the weakest links to two of the major socialisation systems, the family and the school. Strongly bicultural youth have the highest self-esteem and the strongest socialisation links.

(Oetting & Beauvais, 1991, p. 674).

This conclusion by Oetting and Beauvais is supported by researchers such as Berry (2005) who found that following a process of acculturation, that is, adaptation to successfully incorporating one’s host culture with one’s culture of origin, leads not simply to surviving but to thriving; identifying new opportunities and achieving their goals. Through ensuring a supportive environment that values the culture of origin of these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, schools can promote the acculturation process leading to the bicultural youth discussed by the researchers. This sits very comfortably also within the context of the first goal enunciated by all Australian Ministers for Education in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (A. Barr et al., 2008). This goal declares that

Australian schools will provide an education that delivers both excellence and equity, specifically referring to the cultural experiences and understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

2.7 Boarding Schools

A noteworthy difference between the Australian boarding school experience and that of countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom is a consequence of the geographic isolation of many rural and remote families and communities in Australia. For many of the children living in these communities, the transition to boarding school is seen as a necessity rather than simply a tradition. For this reason, while there are significant costs involved in sending a child to boarding school, the motivation is more than providing an opportunity to attend an elite private independent school with the ongoing networking opportunities these offer (K. Mason, 1997).

While geographic isolation and a perceived advantage of a boarding education does account for a significant proportion of students in Australian boarding schools, it is recognised that there are a number of reasons in addition to this that lead to the decision to enroll students. These include international students enrolling in Australian boarding schools, parents' employment overseas, perceptions, accurate or otherwise, of inequity in opportunities offered by rural secondary schools, increased options and opportunities offered by highly resourced independent schools, changes in family circumstances including the breakdown of parental relationships, and convenience in meeting academic and extracurricular commitments (Sheffield et al., 2013). While some of the situations described above, such as geographic isolation and perceptions of inequity, may resonate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, as described in the following section, the situation for First Nations people is more complex than this.

2.7.1 *Indigenous Peoples' Experience of Boarding Schools*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' self-perception regarding their academic self-efficacy and their racial-ethnic-cultural (REC) identity impacts their academic outcomes (Purdie et al, 2000). A strongly positive perception corresponds with academic success and social -emotional wellbeing and serves as a protective factor when faced with experiences of racism (Kirkett-Tucker, 2009). A review of the historical through to the current experiences of boarding schools for Indigenous students will provide a window into the potential impact of this transition from their home communities to a euro-centric traditional conservative boarding school environment on both their academic efficacy and the REC identity.

Historically, the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians of attending boarding schools is not dissimilar to the experiences of Indigenous peoples across the globe. According to a report to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (A. Smith, 2009), the historical purpose of placing Indigenous people in boarding schools was to assimilate them into the predominant colonial culture. In the United States, in the second half of the 19th century, American Indian children were forcibly removed from their home communities to attend boarding schools in which they were trained to fill the lowest rungs of the economic ladder as manual labourers or domestic staff. The Canadian experience was similar, with children removed to residential schools where boys were trained in agricultural trades and girls in domestic work (A. Smith, 2009). As Neegan stated regarding the Canadian experience, "the separation of home and school life in residential schools would lead to a dislocation of Aboriginal children from Aboriginal culture that would have deep and long-lasting effects" (2005, p. 6).

The Australian experience in many aspects mirrors the experiences of First Nations peoples in America and Canada, with Aboriginal children removed from their homes again as a source of cheap labour (Shenton, 1841; A. Smith, 2009; R. Wilson, 1997). In describing the experience of Aboriginal communities in South Australia, R. Wilson (1997) described the establishment in 1839 of the Native Location School for Aboriginal Children followed by several other schools, all of which were boarding schools, to enable the greatest influence over the development of the children in such a way as to deny their cultural beliefs and traditions by attempting to assimilate them into the dominant European culture.

Considering this historical backdrop, it is noteworthy to find now the promotion in Australia from several influential Indigenous Australians for children from remote and rural Indigenous communities to enroll in and attend private, independent, urban boarding schools. Advocates include Dr. Sue Gordon ("NIC head supports indigenous boarding schools plan," 2004), the former Chair of the National Indigenous Council and herself a member of the Stolen Generations, having been forcibly removed from her mother and community at age 4 in 1947 (Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships, 2010). Dr. Gordon has supported the calls by Noel Pearson, an Aboriginal Australian lawyer, academic, activist, and boarding school graduate of St Peter's Lutheran College, Brisbane, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to leave their remote communities and enroll in city boarding schools (Guest, 2008; Hagan, 2004). In his report to the Prime Minister, "The Forrest Review: Creating Parity", Andrew Forrest refers to the success of current boarding interventions.

Improving access to, and potentially the number of places for remote First Australian students in boarding schools, with accommodation and mentoring support to help these children connect to and stay in school, will mean that children get a quality high school education. Existing boarding school models such as the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation and the Cape York

Higher Expectations Program were commended in submissions to the review.

(Forrest, 2014, p. 93)

Opposing viewpoints and controversy continue, however. Terry Mason, Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Committee of the National Tertiary Education Union, states that the Forrest Report appears to have limited credibility and “seems to be responding to age old prejudice and the desire to assimilate Aboriginal people” (T. Mason, 2014, p. 17). This viewpoint is supported by a number of academics including Emeritus Professor Jon Altman of the Australian National University who suggests the Forrest Review “philosophically, blends 1961 assimilation policy ideas with 21st century neoliberalism focusing on the individual and the family as if policy can be removed from the community and society and operating on the basis of economic rationalism alone” (Klein, 2014, p. 3).

A project called The Works Program designed to improve outcomes for Indigenous students (Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training, 2014) found, through interviews with Indigenous parents, that many from remote rural Indigenous communities identify factors such as the absence of equitable educational resources and opportunities as reason to support the enrolment of their children in city boarding schools. They see greater advantages in their children being removed from the social problems confronting their home communities and have a strong desire to enable them to maximise their educational opportunities in order to lead a productive and influential life. Mander (2012), through a qualitative research project, examined the transition of male Aboriginal secondary school students from remote Western Australian communities to city boarding schools. His findings support those of The Works Program project in that the crucial deciding factor for parents in sending their children to boarding schools was the perceived lack of quality schooling available in the community setting. One of the tensions discussed by Mander in his thesis (Mander, 2012) is the realisation and hence inner conflict of some of the

students that they would miss participating in important cultural events at home during their time in boarding.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students recently attending boarding schools did so with the expectation that a boarding school education would improve their life outcomes, particularly by broadening their career options. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents living in rural, regional, and remote communities, boarding is seen as the only viable option for their children to receive a quality education away from the challenges faced by some communities, possibly including exposure to poor health outcomes, high suicide rates, low school attendance and retention rates, alcohol abuse, and domestic violence (Macdonald et al., 2018; Mander et al., 2015a; Osborne et al., 2018).

In investigating the perceptions of boarding school staff regarding the experiences of Aboriginal boys in five Western Australian boarding schools, Mander et al. (2015b) reported that teachers recognise the challenges, both social and academic, faced by these students from remote Aboriginal communities as they adjust to their new boarding school environment. Despite these challenges, several boarding staff members “believed that Aboriginal students just needed to learn, adjust and accept the expectations and value system of their respective boarding school” (Mander et al., 2015b, p. 319). In this study, staff stated that many Aboriginal students experienced “culture shock”, feeling isolated from Country, home, and culture. Some teachers reported that “learning how to feel comfortable and negotiate different environments, cultural contexts and social settings was an important life-skill offered by boarding schools to Aboriginal students” (Mander et al., 2015b, p. 319). Such viewpoints expressed by teaching and boarding staff at independent urban boarding schools imply the requisite adoption of the bicultural ethnic identity as described by Gfeller and Armstrong (2013), Chee et al. (2019), R. M. Roberts and Ali (2013), and Moran et al. (1999), and may go some way to explaining the finding in the Cape York experience that a substantial number

of Indigenous students return home before the conclusion of their first year attending boarding school. For example, a report by Commonwealth of Australia (2012, p. 242) found that, “50 per cent of secondary age students from Aurukun who are supported to attend boarding school return to Aurukun as a result of a de-enrolling event”; evidence of Dr. Chris Sarra’s assertion that these boarding schools are insufficient in terms of providing for these Aboriginal students or, as stated by Glanville (2008b), “it really comes down to probably less than two per cent who have any scope to access success or access any benefit from that kind of strategy” (p. 2).

2.8 Conclusion

Many private boarding schools, either in partnership with organisations such as Yalari, The Cape York Institute’s Higher Expectations Program (HEP), the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP), and the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF), or through their own foundations, provide bursaries and scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and girls to attend their schools. Currently, across Australia, there are close to 2,350 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from regional, rural, and remote communities attending, through scholarships, 121 independent boarding schools across all mainland states (J. Barr, 2009; Independent Schools Australia, 2018).

While such programs do provide opportunities for these boarding schools to make a meaningful contribution to reconciliation, they are not without pitfalls. Waverley Stanley, founder of the Yalari Organisation, has drawn attention to the difficulties of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students fitting back into their home communities after having left for boarding school. Some scholarship students have reported being ostracised by peers, including being labelled as “coconuts”, a derogatory term implying black on the outside but white on the inside; in other words, having forsaken their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

identity. Also reported is the term “flash blackfellas” in what Stanley has called the “crabs in the bucket” syndrome, that is, the tendency to pull back individuals who are managing to climb their way out of communal disadvantage. Scholarship programs, including his own Yalari Foundation, he contends, need to work together to actively assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with these cultural transitions (J. Barr, 2009, p. 28).

With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship programs, either through organisations such as Yalari, the AIEF, HEP, IYLP or through individual school foundations now well ensconced in independent boarding schools, there is a clear need for research into the effects of these programs on the REC identity and academic self-efficacy of the students participating. One hundred and fifty years ago, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were placed in boarding and other residential institutions primarily to fulfil the government policies of assimilation, maintaining colonial control of the Indigenous population and leading to the economic benefit of the dominant European society. Now, the motivation is quite different. Scholarships provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attend independent boarding schools are intended to benefit individuals and their families and communities, ultimately for the benefit of Australian society.

While this benefit may well be the motivation behind these scholarship programs, not all Indigenous Australians accept this without reservation. Nicole Major’s concerns, for example, regarding the lack of an evidence-based approach by governments to these scholarship schemes has been noted earlier. As evidenced in this literature review, although a number of recent research projects have examined the transition to boarding schools of Indigenous students from rural, regional, and remote communities and the associated challenges these students face, there is a dearth of research that has been directed at the impact of these scholarship programs on the academic efficacy and construction of the REC identity of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students involved. There is a need

for research to investigate the validity of these programs as vehicles for the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, enabling participants to flourish in modern Australian society while maintaining a strong sense of identity and cultural affiliation as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To flourish in two worlds.

The research design and methodology through which the questions that have been identified are interrogated are discussed in the following chapter. Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) is discussed as the conceptual and analytical framework as it “focuses on privileging the voice of research participants” (Farragher and Logan, 2020, p.38). CGT as the analytical framework for this project is explained and described. The methodology employed, Yarning, sits comfortably as an Indigenist methodological approach within this theoretical framework.

The context within which the Yarning sessions occurred, the Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg, is explored as are the demographics of the participants and the Yalari scholarship program, of which all participants are recipients.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1: Introduction

Following discussions with my supervisors and reflecting on the feedback received following my Confirmation of Candidature seminar, I re-evaluated my initial intentions to employ a mixed-methods approach as my preferred methodology. As a non-Indigenous person planning research that would involve and impact young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, I determined that I needed to ensure the theoretical framework and research methodology employed unambiguously supported Indigenous epistemology that is centred on the importance of relationship and mutual benefit. On reflection it became clear that, in order to maintain its integrity, this research project required the implementation of a qualitative Indigenous methodological approach.

Consequently, the research methodology adopted followed the guidance set out by key Indigenous scholars within Australian Indigenous society (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2014; Nakata et al., 2012; Rigney, 1999; S. Stewart, 2009; Walker et al., 2014). Bodkin-Andrews discussed the “constructions of a pan-Indigenous identity (simply Indigenous or not) within research [that] has been formulated largely from the foundations of biased Eurocentric epistemologies” (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2014, pp. 785-786). She emphasised that, in order to appreciate more fully the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, there is a need for the researcher to move beyond a Western lens and to acknowledge the unique contribution of “insider knowledge and research that has been traditionally discarded due to its alleged lack of methodological rigour” (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2014, p. 786). To facilitate this acknowledgement, the researcher must situate themselves within the context of the research and must be prepared to share their story with the participants (Steinhauer, 2002). Martin & Mirraboopla described post-invasion Aboriginal people as being portrayed as powerless and hopeless in the face of

inevitable acculturation and assimilation (K. Martin & Mirraboopa, 2001, K. Martin 2006).

Considering this, they described four qualities or conditions to which the research must conform. By extension, the qualities and conditions help define the positioning of the researcher within the current research:

- Respectfulness in the light of constant change and evolution;
- Responsibility to maintain the ontological understanding that all things exist in relatedness;
- Accountability in protecting and maintaining relatedness; and
- Reciprocity, that is, the understanding that one cannot receive without contributing.

Rigney further argued that “the legacy of racialization and its ideology continue to reshape knowledge construction of Indigenous People via colonial research ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies” (1999, p. 114). These observations underline the importance of ensuring the research methodology employed for a project such as this is centred in the Indigenous paradigm and therefore resists a colonialist research tradition as far as possible.

Kurtz (2013) noted that researchers involved in Indigenous research projects have frequently employed methodologies that pay insufficient regard to the well-being and interests of the participants. As this research project involves students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, the research design must be sympathetic to Indigenous research methodologies. The design should reflect an Indigenous paradigm rather than simply an Indigenous perspective (S. Wilson, 2001). Ontologically, from an Indigenous paradigm, knowledge is relational and shared with all creation. An Indigenous epistemology “acknowledges the interconnectedness of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of individuals with all living things” (Lavallee, 2009, p. 23); hence, the development of relationships has a greater degree of importance when commencing an Indigenous research project than simply an attempt to focus purely on an objective reality that fails to place an

Indigenous epistemology at its core. It is not the object that is important but rather the individual's relationship with the object.

Epistemological racism ensues when the dominant Western cultural norms define ways of knowing that negate the perspectives of the minority group at the focus of the research. While this may well be unintentional, Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2014) viewed the dismissal of Indigenous epistemologies as a significantly detrimental practice of racism. Research methodologies that support Indigenous research, then, need to overtly appreciate and build the relationship between the participants and the researcher. The data gathered through an Indigenous research project belong to the Indigenous people by whom the data were shared. The research outcomes must benefit the Indigenous communities at the centre of the research, and it needs to be accepted that the research findings may not be generalisable outside of the Indigenous communities partnering in the research project (Huaman, 2019).

Indigenous research methodologies are resistance movements to imperial discourses and colonial oppression. They represent postcolonial, decolonial and anticolonial counter-narrative productions that privilege Indigenous epistemologies and local, community-based and global concerns, which together hold research and researchers accountable with regard to research impact, including what is compromised and what is gained in the process. (Huaman, 2019, p. 11)

Lester-Irabinna Rigney, Professor of Education at the University of South Australia, made clear his expectations as an Aboriginal Australian that “from an Indigenous perspective, my people's interests, experiences and knowledges must be at the centre of research methodologies and construction of knowledge about us” (1999, p. 119). Through the employment of an Indigenist research paradigm, the researcher is able to ensure cultural

respect and safety of the participants partnering in the research through the ontological understanding of relatedness theory; that is, all things exist in relatedness, described by Martin as depths of relatedness with people, ancestral or friends and colleagues, but no unrelatedness (K. Martin, 2006). She goes on to define the concept of storywork within an Indigenist methodology as a “culturally relevant and respectful set of processes for sharing experiences, making meaning and learning. Storywork must acknowledge the historical, social, physical, intellectual, spiritual and emotional dynamics of relatedness” (K. Martin, 2006, p. 95).

Steinhauer, a member of the Saddle Lake Cree First Nation and Associate Professor, Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada, described the 3Rs of Indigenous research as respect, reciprocity, and relationality, and emphasised the centrality of these to the Indigenous paradigm in which knowledge is not viewed as something that can be owned by an individual but rather is seen as relational and shared (Steinhauer, 2002). While Steinhauer does not identify a single methodology as being Indigenous, she contends that, by grounding the methodology in an Indigenous worldview, most Western research methodologies can be adapted and reframed to be implemented in Indigenous research, a view that is shared by Rigney (1999) who asserts that Indigenous research is not characterised by a unique strategy or methodology, but is supportive of Indigenous peoples’ struggle to overcome postcolonial oppression. Steinhauer (2002) identified three fundamental characteristics of Indigenous research methodologies:

1. They are emancipatory, supporting both the cultural and political aspirations of Indigenous people;
2. They display political integrity, moving in the direction of self-determination; and
3. They privilege Indigenous voices, recognising that, in Australia, Indigenous people do not form a homogenous whole.

As Simonds and Christopher asserted:

Decolonizing research is a process for conducting research with Indigenous communities that places Indigenous voices and epistemologies in the centre of the research process. It critically examines the underlying assumptions that inform the research and challenges the widely accepted belief that Western methods and ways of knowing are the only objective, true science. Holding Western beliefs and methods as ‘the’ true science marginalizes Indigenous methods and ways of knowing by denigrating them as folklore or myth. (Simonds & Christopher, 2013, p. 2185)

Again, given the nature of the current study as an Indigenous research project, the methodology employed needs to have a decolonising focus clearly showing a separation from the dominant Western worldview and “doctrine of discovery” that emphasises European Christian superiority over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, races, and religions (Elston et al., 2013). The research design and methodology have, as their aim, a decolonising focus, applying conversational methods utilised in, in particular, Yarning.

3.2: Theoretical Framework

It was clear from the start of this study that impact of the findings demanded an alignment between the theoretical framework, “the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed” (C. Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 12), and the ontological and epistemological philosophical values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Ontologically, from an Indigenous paradigm, knowledge is relational and shared with all creation. An Indigenous epistemology “acknowledges the interconnectedness of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of individuals with all living things” (Lavallee, 2009, p. 23). One significant impact of the colonising of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations was the silencing of their voices and stories through the imposition of Eurocentric colonial values and

assimilationist government policies designed to provide for the elimination of Indigenous languages and culture (Herbert, 2012; Ma Rhea, 2015; Middleton, 1951). Subsequent Western Eurocentric research studies involved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as subjects of research rather than as equal participants in the research. These “exclusionary research practices have silenced many [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander] people and rendered their stories invisible” (Geia et al., 2013, p. 13), leaving a residue of distrust.

Respect, reciprocity, and relationality, as described earlier in this chapter, require a theoretical framework, the “blueprint” for the research, that scaffolds, guides, and provides structure for a methodology that values and reflects Indigenous ontological and epistemological standpoints (C. Grant & Osanloo, 2014), privileging the voices of the participants as equal partners and holders of knowledge and wisdom. For example, Edwards-Groves and Murray (2008) studied adolescent Aboriginal boys living in regional New South Wales communities who were at risk of becoming embroiled in the juvenile justice system. Within an ethnographic framework, the researchers employed a methodological approach which involved semi-structured photo-interviews, focus groups, and individual interviews. This framework and methodology enabled “the voices of the participants to be positioned as the authoritative voice, enabling them to be both the speaker and the authority of [their] experiences” (p. 167). Kickett-Tucker (2008) similarly utilised an ethnographic framework in a research project investigating the influence of participation in sports on the construction of the participants’ identity as young Aboriginal people. In a 2009 study, she investigated the factors contributing to the development of racial identity of young Western Australian Aboriginal people living in the Noongar area of Perth (Kickett-Tucker, 2009), again utilising an ethnographic framework supporting a methodological approach that employed focus groups and individual interviews. Other researchers in this area include Macdonald et al. (2018) who investigated the utility of boarding as a pathway to improving Year 12 retention

of Aboriginal young people in Western Australia, again employing an ethnographic framework and narrative enquiry methodology. In privileging the voices of the participants and recognising an Aboriginal ontological and epistemological approach, these researchers, along with Neville et al. (2014), Russell (1999), and O'Bryan (2016), have approached their research from within a constructivist paradigm through which knowledge is constructed and within which researchers and participants are acknowledged as co-creators of knowledge.

3.2.1 *Grounded Theory*

In common with the frameworks described above, grounded theory “emphasises the importance of developing an understanding of human behaviour through a process of discovery and induction” (Lazenbatt & Elliott, 2005, p. 49). A qualitative grounded theory approach, more broadly, focuses on the realities experienced through the lives and lenses of the participants (Elliott & Higgins, 2012), hence warranting consideration as an appropriate theoretical framework to underpin the methodological approach used in a research project such as this.

A strengths-based rather than deficit approach to research encourages partnership relationships between the researcher and the participants. Such an approach mitigates against any propensity towards consciously or unconsciously employing paternalistic colonial practices and, as Bainbridge et al. (2013, p. 278) noted, “The practice of grounded theory involves analytical open-ended inquiry and is thus ideal as a tool of decolonisation for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers”. Grounded theory is characterised by a cyclical approach that sees the process of data collection, interrogation, and analysis through to saturation as an integrated and continuous cyclical process (Lazenbatt & Elliott, 2005). This methodological approach contrasts sharply with methodological processes that separate data collection and analysis into discrete entities through the course of the research project. The essential characteristics of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) consist of:

- Concurrent collection and analysis of data;
- Coding and categories emerging from the data rather than from pre-established hypotheses;
- Evolving theory as data are collected and analysed;
- Keeping memos as reflexive tools to help identify gaps and to lead data collection to saturation;
- Participant selection being made with the construction of theory rather than through representation of the population as the priority; and
- Collection and analysis of data preceding the review of the literature.

This last dot-point is often viewed as the most contentious, particularly in the production of a research dissertation, the requirement of which is the prior completion of the literature review as the crucial stage of identifying the gap in knowledge. Glaser and Strauss, in their seminal text, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), recommended that, initially, the researcher should not refer to the theoretical literature that pertains to the area of research. Understanding the sentiment underpinning the timing of the literature review justifies its conduct in the current study at the commencement of this project, along with the ongoing reference to the literature to assist in informing the analysis of the data. Keeping in mind Glaser's (2001) edict that "all is data" (p. 145), Glaser and Strauss expressed concerns that deliberate familiarisation with the literature may lead to the researcher adopting preconceived notions and biases rather than relying on the emergence of theory from the lived experience of the participants as exposed by the analysis of the research data.

An effective strategy is, at first, literally to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas.

Similarities and convergences with the literature can be established after the analytic core of categories has emerged. (Glaser & Strauss, 2004, p. 37)

An awareness of this rationale for avoidance of a review of the literature prior to initial data collection and analysis, and the adoption of constructivist grounded theory (CGT) as championed by Charmaz (Charmaz, 2014, 2016, 2017a) as the theoretical framework, mitigates these concerns.

3.2.2 *Constructivist Grounded Theory*

Charmaz (2009) defined constructivism as a perspective that explains the construction of reality, working from an assumption that individuals construct their own realities. She contended that, rather than the researcher remaining outside of the research as a neutral observer, any theories constructed by them have been influenced by their life experiences (Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014). As a revision of classic grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (2004), CGT “assumes a relativist epistemology, sees knowledge as socially produced, acknowledges multiple standpoints ... and takes a reflexive stance toward our actions, situations, and participants in the field setting” (Charmaz, 2009, p. 129). Constructivists do not view their interpretation of data or their formation of theory as neutral acts. The methodological procedures followed, the data collected, and the conclusions drawn are not divorced from the reality and life experiences of the researcher. At the core of CGT is the assumption that, as the processes of data analysis and theory formation proceed, the researcher respects the themes that emerge from the data that have been generated. For the current project that deliberately privileges the voices of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, CGT emerges as the preferred theoretical framework through its “potential to produce novel and valuable outputs, often based on a deep understanding of the experiences of a specific group of people” (Dunne & Buse, 2020, p. 7).

This focus on the centrality of relationships that need to be respected, privileged, and nurtured, particularly where the researcher may initially be considered an outsider, is supported and enabled by the integration of CGT as an appropriate theoretical framework. Describing her desire to build a strong and trusting rapport with the participants in her research thesis examining their recovery and rehabilitation following drug and alcohol addiction, Tallon discussed her choice of CGT. She asserted that “grounded theory is essentially an inductive approach, asking participants about the way they think about an issue, rather than using a priori hypothesis to make assumptions about how they may think” (2013, p. 91). In enabling the participants to share their story and experiences without imposing preconceived hypotheses, the researcher respects and privileges their voices.

The utilisation of CGT as the theoretical framework underpinning this research project sits comfortably within an Indigenous ontological and epistemological foundation. Stewart discussed focus groups as a methodological approach that, situated in a grounded theory framework, ensures a mutually respectful approach to research involving a non-Indigenous researcher and Indigenous participants (J. Stewart, 2007). She went on to discuss her adaptation of the focus group methodology that moved away from a highly structured approach seeking definitive and unambiguous answers to specific questions towards a more conversational experience. By utilising this less structured style guided by prompts, the contributions to the discussions by the participants were neither restricted nor overly controlled, reflecting more of a Yarning approach as utilised in the current research project.

As implemented in this project, a Yarning approach invites a largely inductive analytical process leading to the emergence of theory from the consequent rich data. Specifically, Stewart stated that through implementing CGT, “depth and richness of dialogue was necessary for revealing deep meanings in Indigenous students’ life experiences” (2007,

p. 35). Given these considerations, CGT emerges as an ideal theoretical framework to scaffold the current research project that employs Yarning as its methodological approach.

Continuing connection to traditional Indigenous worldviews and epistemologies has been instrumental in keeping alive Indigenous knowledges. A decolonising approach to research that invites participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ought to reflect “the pluralism of Indigenous worldviews” (Kandasamy et al., 2017, p. 2). In this way, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants are empowered through a decolonising process to be creators of new knowledge. A CGT approach has the inherent flexibility and accessibility to provide an investigative environment in which the participants are empowered to interrogate the themes that evolve through the ensuing Yarning conversations. Employing a CGT approach through which “loosely structured interviews gave the opportunity for [participants] to share their knowledge in a comfortable manner” (Kandasamy et al., 2017, p. 6) ensured a commitment to honouring the participants as co-creators of knowledge in alignment with Indigenous epistemologies.

Much research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been approached methodologically from a deficit standpoint, seeking to identify, investigate, and resolve the “Aboriginal problem” within the constructs of a White Eurocentric cultural context (Bainbridge, 2009). Bainbridge’s thesis, *Cast All Imaginations*, exemplifies a strengths-based approach to research, offering a narrative that speaks to the agency of Aboriginal women as they transcend the social, emotional, and physical reality in which they find themselves, to live a flourishing life. In common with Bainbridge, rather than having the deficit mindset of identifying problems that require outsiders to provide solutions, this research deliberately privileges the voices of the Yalari student participants. This strength-based approach, inviting the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to offer their stories, experiences, perspectives, and strategies, is enhanced through the application of

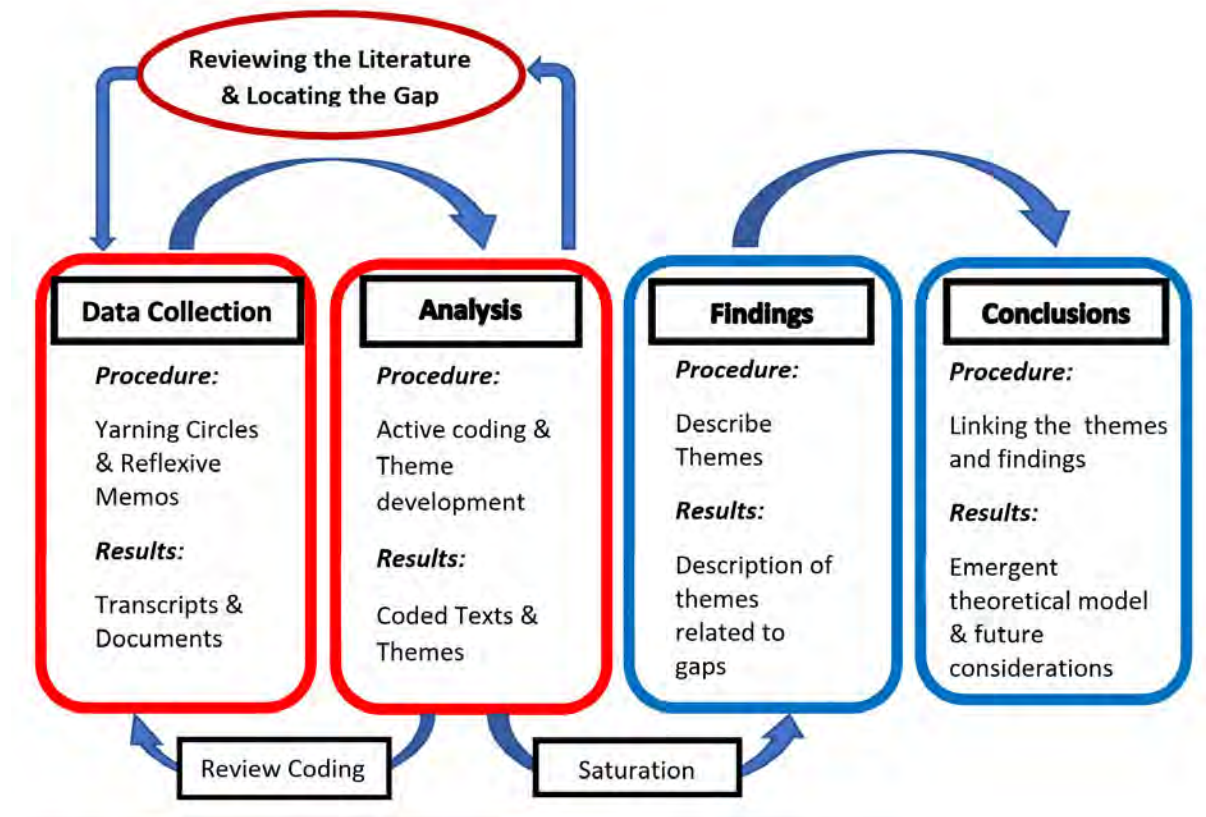
a theoretical framework such as CGT that looks to the data for the emergence of theory rather than fitting the data to preconceived hypotheses. Further, in common with Bainbridge (2009, p. 130), “I did not wish to distance myself from the participants and the data, so Charmaz’s Constructivist Grounded Theory approach was most compatible with my epistemological standpoint”.

CGT extends the pragmatist approach of Strauss and Glaser, evolving as a social constructivist qualitative method that emphasises reflexivity and invites the researcher to implement a critical inquiry approach (Charmaz, 2017b). As a theoretical approach to the critical analysis and interpretation of data, CGT is a primarily inductive, iterative method. Data are collected, interrogated, coded, categorised, and revisited. New data collection is conducted having been informed by the analysis of the initial data. Following collection of the data for analysis, the theoretical literature is further reviewed as an additional source of data to inform and provoke further interrogation. This iterative, inductive process is illustrated through Figure 4.1 as applied to the research project. Throughout this primarily inductive process, analysis of conversations, observations, and field notes leads to the unearthing of patterns. From the interrogation of these patterns, hypotheses are formed and, following the cyclical process illustrated in Figure 3.1, theory emerges (Hadley, 2017).

Acceptance of the comprehension of extant literature by the researcher leads to an understanding that CGT is not purely inductive: It can be influenced through prior knowledge and hence analysis is influenced at least slightly by deductive processes (Thornberg, 2012). Data in CGT are co-constructions of the participants and the researcher. Thornberg (2012) argues that the positionality of the researcher potentially colours the construction of these data further, hence the need for a deep reflection by the researcher on their positionality, as illustrated in the foreword to this dissertation.

Figure 3.1

Theoretical Framework: Constructivist Grounded Theory as Applied to the Research Project



3.3 Research Participants

A substantial number of independent boarding schools in Australia offer scholarships for secondary studies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from regional, remote, and rural communities. In addition to individual programs offered by schools, other organisations exist that provide scholarship opportunities. The two largest of these organisations are the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF), founded by Andrew Penfold with 31 partner schools across Australia (Aurora Education Foundation, 2017), and Yalari, founded by Waverley Stanley with 30 partner schools across Australia (Yalari, 2016). Both Mr. Penfold and Mr. Stanley were approached with regard to the possibility of including AIEF and Yalari in this project. While the AIEF was not able at the time to commit to participating, following discussions with Yalari, the organisation was able

to identify the possible benefits of the research project and made itself available as a research partner.

Research participants for this study are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from Year 7 through to Year 12 as well as alumni enrolled or, in the case of the two young alumni, having been enrolled in private and independent Australian boarding schools on scholarships provided by the Yalari organisation and supported by their 30 partner schools across Australia. Currently, there are over 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled as Yalari scholars across the 30 partner schools (Yalari, 2020). In consultation with their families and Yalari Founding Director Waverley Stanley, an Aboriginal man of Barunggam heritage from Murgon in rural Queensland, these Yalari scholars who participated in the 2017 Cherbourg Commemorative Walk were invited to participate in this research. Parents and guardians received information regarding the potential participation of their children in the research via an information letter (see Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B) sent with the information and permission forms for their children's participation in the Cherbourg Commemorative Walk (Appendices C & D). I was given the opportunity to participate in the walk as a volunteer, along with four other adults outside of the Yalari organisation. Our responsibilities included setting up meals, rostering the cooking and cleaning teams, providing morning and afternoon tea breaks along the walk, and generally assisting with the logistics involved in running the program. Through this role, I was ideally situated within the research project to meet and build relationships with the participants in an informal setting.

Once the walk had commenced, on the second evening during the evening gathering, I had an opportunity to speak with the potential participants. The Yalari students whose parents had given permission were given a letter explaining to them the nature and purpose of the research project; the purpose and nature were then explained to the scholars with an

opportunity provided for questions. Representatives of Yalari were present at this information session, including the Founding Director, Waverly Stanley, Managing Director, Llew Mullins, Student Support Officer, Barry Lee, and Student Development Officer, Garry O'Brien. The Yarning format of conversations was explained and students were informed that, during the conversations, they would have an opportunity to share their story as Yalari scholars and to make suggestions as to how Yalari and their host schools could improve their programs to ensure the best possible outcomes for Yalari scholars. Both Yalari representatives and the researcher made it clear to the students that participation was entirely voluntary and that there would be no questions asked of, nor any consequences for, any students who, for any reason, preferred not to participate. Following the information session, consent forms were left in the meeting room for students wishing to participate to collect in their own time. Completed forms were then placed in a box left in the otherwise empty room by those Yalari scholars who elected to participate in the Yarning conversations.

All but one of the Yalari students participating in the Cherbourg Commemorative Walk did elect to become participants in this research, satisfied that the outcomes of the project may assist in overcoming current inequity in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people relative to the majority Australian student population. The student who chose not to participate was a particularly shy young female student who was not comfortable sharing her thoughts with a group or with an adult male (the researcher).

The letter of invitation to participate in this research project provided to parents and current Yalari students explained the central research question that investigates the impact of boarding on academic efficacy and REC identity of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The invitation further informed both parents and students that the outcomes of the research may be used by Yalari for reflection and in implementing improvements to their current practice. Open to the benefits of feedback from the research, the leadership team

at Yalari are aware that, while their programs have garnered the support of significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and educators, others are yet to be persuaded. Amongst others, Professor Chris Sarra, for example, has voiced his opposition to Noel Pearson's strong support for the enrolment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at "prestigious boarding schools" (Albrechtsen, 2012; Calma, 2008; Gibson, 2008).

3.4 Participant Demographics

In total, 23 female students and 10 male students participated in the Yarning sessions, with 15 from Queensland schools, eight from New South Wales, four each from South Australia and Western Australia, and two from schools in Victoria. Yalari does not currently partner with any schools located in Tasmania or the Northern Territory. Northern Territory students mostly attend schools in Adelaide, while students from the Torres Strait generally attend Brisbane schools. Participant demographics are provided in Table 3.1. An indicative view of the geographical distribution of participants' home communities and their schools across the continent is illustrated in Figure 3.2 (Indymedia Australia, 2008).

Two participants were young alumni; there were four Year 12 students, ten Year 11 students, seven Year 10 students, six Year 9 students, one Year 8 student, and three Year 7 students. The participants organised themselves in groups with numbers ranging from one to six people per group, as demonstrated in Table 4.1. Students had the tendency to group themselves according to gender, friendships, and school year. Two of the older boys, Harry and Jack, participated in two Yarning conversations – the first with a mixed group of female and male students and the second with their older male friends. Sophia and Ella participated in that same mixed group, but then asked if they could have a second conversation to share other aspects of their experiences. Real names have been replaced with pseudonyms in order to protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality. The two alumni students, Olivia and

Katie, along with one of the female students, Millie, preferred to participate in a one-on-one conversation with the researcher rather than in a group situation.

All the Yarning sessions took place in an informal setting, often outdoors, and in close proximity to the remainder of the walk participants. While this at times caused distractions, it was a deliberate decision intended to help facilitate an environment for the conversations that resembled as closely as possible the informal way in which people will gather around a picnic table, for example, to have a conversation. This informal outdoor relaxed environment contrasts with the more controlled alternative – a closed room with a circle of chairs occupied by the participants with the researcher directing the conversations, a scenario reminiscent of the school classroom in which the teacher is in control and asking the questions, with the compliant students responding in turn, hoping to be giving the “correct” answer.

Table 3.1

Research Participant Demographics

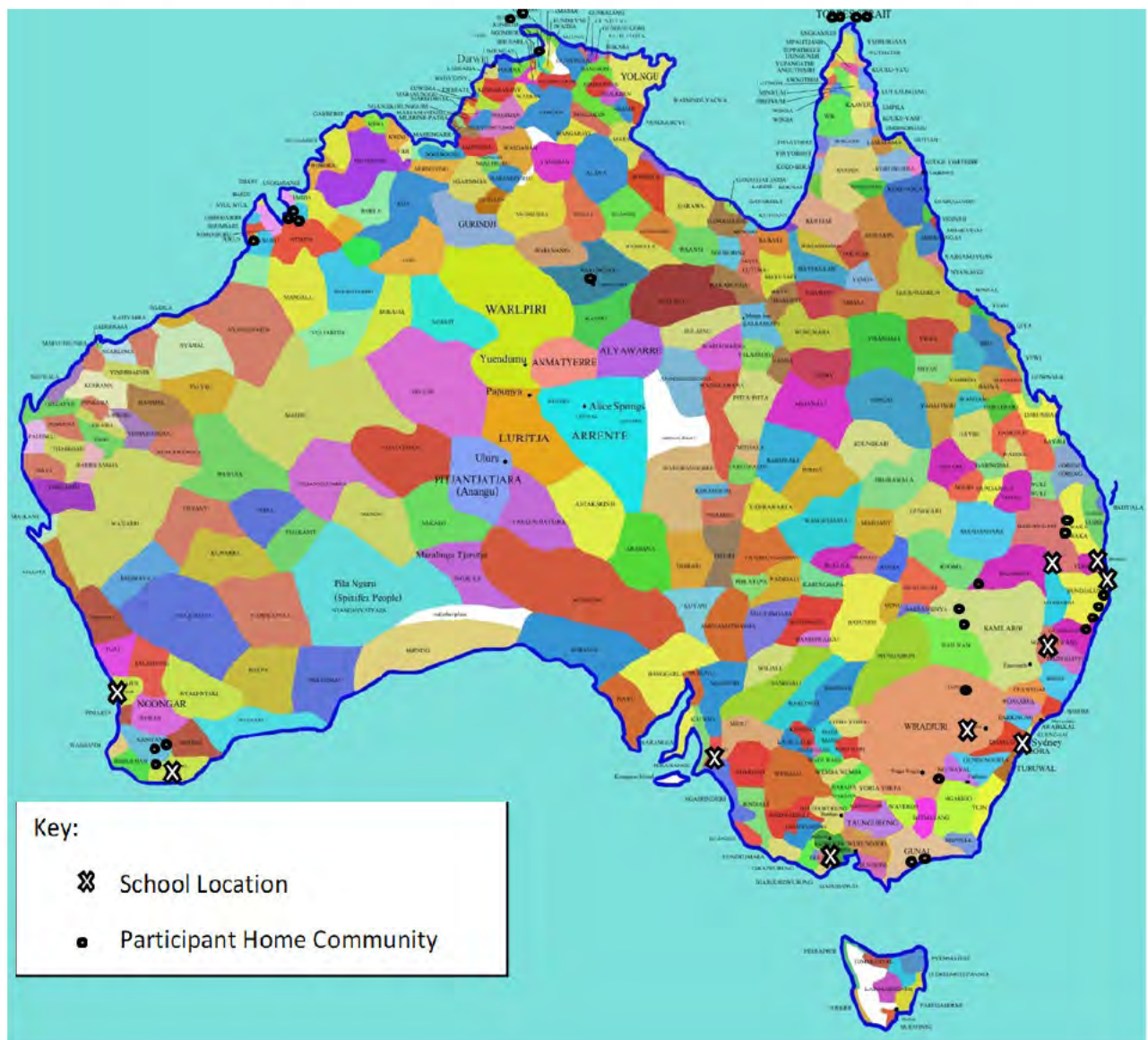
Yarning group	Participant	Pseudonym	Gender	School year	School location	Home community
1	1	Olivia	Female	alumnus	Toowoomba, Queensland	Murgon, QLD
2	2	Amelia	Female	Year 9	Southport, Queensland	Grafton, NSW
	3	Lily	Female	Year 9	Albany, Western Australia	Cranbrook, WA
3	4	Mia	Female	Year 10	Toowoomba, Queensland	Thursday Island, QLD
	5	Harry	Male	Year 11	Albany, Western Australia	Broome, WA
	6	Sophia	Female	Year 10	Sydney, New South Wales	Darwin, NT
	7	Isabella	Female	Year 10	Brisbane, Queensland	Thursday Island, QLD
	8	Ella	Female	Year 10	Sydney, New South Wales	Mungindi, NSW

	9	Jack	Male	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	Darwin, NT
4	6	Sophia	Female	Year 10	Sydney, New South Wales	Darwin, NT
	8	Ella	Female	Year 10	Sydney, New South Wales	Mungindi, NSW
5	5	Harry	Male	Year 11	Albany, Western Australia	Broome, WA
	9	Jack	Male	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	Darwin, NT
	10	Charlie	Male	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	Derby, WA
	11	Noah	Male	Year 12	Geelong, Victoria	Lakes Entrance, VIC
	12	Jacob	Male	Year 11	Albany, Western Australia	Kununurra, WA
	13	Archie	Male	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	Derby, WA
6	14	Sabrina	Female	Year 11	Albany, Western Australia	Katanning, WA
	15	Jessica	Female	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	Thursday Island, QLD
	16	Sienna	Female	Year 12	Geelong, Victoria	Bairnsdale, VIC
	17	Ivy	Female	Year 12	Sydney, New South Wales	Cranbrook, WA
	18	Ruby	Female	Year 12	Adelaide, South Australia	Bathurst Island, NT
	19	Phoebe	Female	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	Thursday Island, QLD
7	20	Scarlett	Female	Year 10	Orange, New South Wales	Gundagai, NSW
	21	Chloe	Female	Year 10	Orange, New South Wales	Dubbo, NSW
8	22	Millie	Female	Year 11	Sydney, New South Wales	Yamba, NSW
9	23	Matilda	Female	Year 10	Toowoomba, Queensland	Cherbourg, QLD
	24	Theo	Male	Year 8	Southport, Queensland	Katanning, WA
	25	Rosie	Female	Year 9	Armidale, New South Wales	Lismore, NSW
	26	Erin	Female	Year 9	Toowoomba, Queensland	Cherbourg, QLD
	27	Bella	Female	Year 9	Toowoomba, Queensland	Wondai, QLD
10	28	William	Male	Year 7	Adelaide, South Australia	Melville Island, NT
	29	Ethan	Male	Year 7	Adelaide, South Australia	Derby, WA
	30	Daniel	Male	Year 7	Southport, Queensland	Yamba, NSW

11	31	Emma	Female	Year 11	Sydney, New South Wales	Lightning Ridge, NSW
	32	Hannah	Female	Year 9	Adelaide, South Australia	Tennant Creek, NT
12	33	Katie	Female	alumnus	Brisbane, Queensland	Coen & Thursday Island, QLD

Figure 3.2

Australian Aboriginal Tribes Map, Illustrating Home Communities and School Locations



3.5 The Yalari Student Scholarship Program

Waverley Stanley, the Founding Director of the Yalari program, is a Barunggam man from Murgon, Queensland. As a Year 7 student at Murgon State School, Waverley was identified by his teacher, Mrs. Rosemary Bishop, as a student with significant potential who would succeed in a boarding environment that offered a high level of education. After approaching Toowoomba Grammar School, Mrs. Bishop was able to secure for Waverley a scholarship for his high school education at the school, which he completed in 1984. In recognition of this educational opportunity afforded to him, in 2005 Mr. Stanley with his wife, Llew Mullins, founded Yalari.

Through its scholarship program, Yalari identifies primary-aged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in regional, rural, and remote communities whom they believe would benefit from an education at an urban private boarding school. The criteria applied for scholar selection is discussed on the Yalari website, <http://www.yalari.org/pages/rosemary-bishop-scholarship.php>, and include the desire to complete secondary schooling, past performance and work ethic in primary school, participation outside of the classroom in areas such as leadership, sport, and community involvement, supportive references from teachers, performance in an interview with Yalari staff, and family support for attending boarding school (Yalari, 2016, 2018).

3.6 The Research Context – Cherbourg Commemorative Walk

From the late 19th century, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian people lived under the control of government-sponsored missionaries and managers of missions, stations, and reserves. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were subject to laws different from those applied to White Australians (Moreton-Robinson, 2009) and lived in conditions of relative poverty with a lack of access to quality services of a

standard expected and enjoyed by most non-Indigenous Australians in areas such as housing, health, and education. The authority assumed by the White governments that facilitated this discriminatory treatment “are predicated on a myth of Terra Nullius ... which functioned as a truth within a race war of coercion, murder and appropriation carried out by White men in the service of the British Crown” (Moreton-Robinson, 2009, p. 64).

Established in 1904 and originally known as Barambah Aboriginal Reserve, Cherbourg was handed over from the Ipswich Aboriginal Protection Society to the Queensland Government in 1905 (Queensland Government, 2015; Yalari, 2017). In February of 1905, 61 Aboriginal Australians were forced to walk from Durundur Aboriginal Reserve near Woodford in South East Queensland to Baranbah. Nellie Thomas, a teenage girl at the time and Waverley Stanley’s great grandmother, who lived to the age of 106, was one of these 61 displaced people. By 1939, there were 2,079 documented removals of Aboriginal people to what became known as Cherbourg, living in sub-standard conditions with inadequate health and educational facilities resulting in outbreaks of contagious diseases and high death rates (Blake, 2001; Queensland Government, 2015). Sarra (2011) identified that the reason for the forced relocation of Aboriginal people from their Country to Aboriginal reserves such as Cherbourg “was to ensure separation of Aboriginal people from White people” (p. 52). Sarra goes on to explain the reasons for this separation as including a belief by White authorities at the time that Aboriginal people were an inferior people who offered no value and presented a risk to the health and well-being of White settlers.

Every 2 years, Yalari organises the Biennial Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg (see Figures 3.3, 3.4, & 3.5) to honour the memory of the original relocations and to provide a culturally and historically focused team-building, leadership opportunity to a maximum of 50 Yalari students who must nominate for a place (Yalari, 2017). Nominees are required to complete an application form that is designed to have the students understand the rigours of

the walk and reflect on its origins and purpose. Unless there are more than the maximum 50 nominations, all students who wish to participate are given the opportunity to attend. In the event of more nominations than places, students in higher year levels are given priority as younger students will have an opportunity to participate in future years.

Figure 3.3

A Google Map of the Commemorative Walk from Kilcoy to Cherbourg

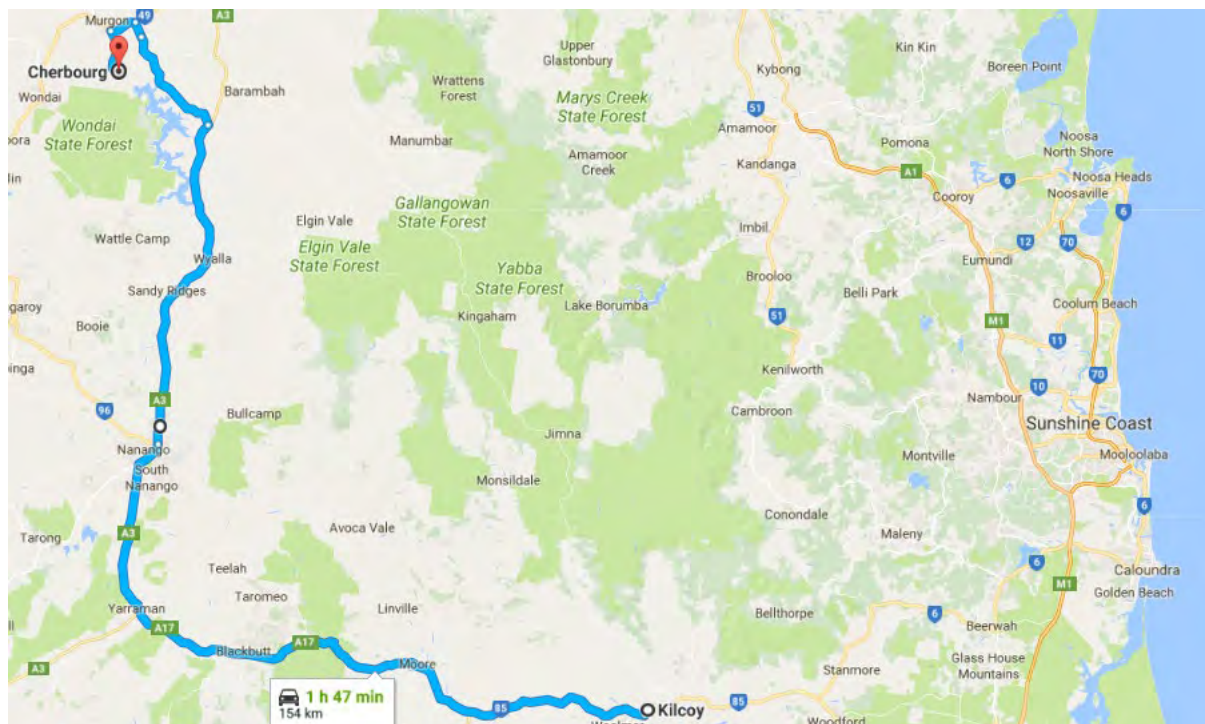


Figure 3.4

Yalari Students Participating on the Walk (Llew Mullins, Yalari Ltd. Used with permission – see Appendix K)



Figure 3.5

The Yalari Students Gather at the End of the Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg (Llew Mullins, Yalari Ltd. Used with permission – see Appendix K)



While the Yalari organizers of the Cherbourg Commemorative Walk acknowledge the forced relocation of Aboriginal people in areas of Queensland to the Cherbourg Reserve in 1905, the walk itself

provides an opportunity for our students to experience the qualities of resilience, strength, courage, leadership and endurance in an event that not only takes a strong commitment from them to complete, but also provides the cultural backdrop of those who have gone before them and walked to Cherbourg in 1905. (Yalari, 2017)

Martin does not hesitate to describe the forced relocation to missions and reserves from their traditional lands as a form of colonial violence that disrupted the relatedness of the people and left many traumatised from the experience, hence also causing disruption to the Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing (K. Martin, 2006).

Nevertheless, during their orientation to the walk, Waverly Stanley placed emphasis on the celebration and commemoration of the resilience, determination, strength, and leadership of the Aboriginal people forced off their traditional Country and made to travel to the government Aboriginal reserve that was then known as Barambah Aboriginal Reserve, now known as Cherbourg. This orientation to the walk placed the participants in a position of strength as they commemorated the courage and tenacity of the people forced on this march from their homelands. This courage and tenacity are symbolised on the walk through the nomination of a walk leader each day who would be responsible for carrying Nellie Thomas's nulla nulla at the front of the walk (see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6

Nan Nellie Thomas's Nulla Nulla Arrives in Cherbourg (Llew Mullins, Yalari Ltd. Used with permission– see Appendix K)



This context of the Commemorative Walk as a celebration of the fortitude, resilience, and courage of the Aboriginal people forced on the first walk in 1905 helps ensure that the student participants in the research project view themselves in a strong and positive light such that their engagement in the research project is as equal partners with the researcher.

3.7: Qualitative Research Methodology: Yarning

3.7.1 Introduction

Within this research project investigating the REC self-identification and academic self-efficacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students attending traditional urban Australian independent boarding schools, a qualitative methodology, Yarning, that respects Indigenous ontology, epistemology, and axiology was employed. Rennie (2017) stated that, “Yarning circles have been used for thousands of years by Aboriginal people to discuss and work through important issues in a collaborative and

cooperative way” (p. 84). The employment of a decolonising methodology such as Yarning enables participants who may have suffered oppressive events in their lives leading to a sense of marginalisation to express themselves from their perspective (Leeson et al., 2016). Yarning circles value every voice equally, commence with a basis of mutual trust, and proceed with the assumption that the words spoken by every participant will be equally respected (Rennie, 2017). As a decolonising methodology, Yarning reflects an epistemology that is centred on the belief that all knowledge is relational, developed through the sharing of traditions and stories (Simonds & Christopher, 2013; B. Wilson, 2014). Yarning is a methodology that “reflects a formal process of sharing knowledge that is reliant upon relationships, expected outcomes, responsibility and accountability between the participants, Country and culture” (Dean, 2010, p. 6).

This methodology, while being a deliberately decolonising research process, has some basic structures in common with focus group and talking circle research, and hence an examination of these processes is relevant to this project. This is particularly so in light of observations by a number of Indigenous researchers that, rather than there existing only one Indigenous research method, Western research methods can be adapted to honour Indigenous worldviews (Rigney, 1999; Simonds & Christopher, 2013; Steinhauer, 2002).

The focus group is a qualitative research design that follows a postmodern view of the world in which individuals’ perceptions are shaped by their personal viewpoints (Babbie, 2016). Within the broad scope of focus groups can be located the talking circle, otherwise described as a sharing circle, a method centred within an Indigenous research paradigm that has as its emphasis the primacy of relationships, and Yarning, a process that assumes a basis of equality with participants in which the researcher takes on the role of learner as an equal on the journey to discovering knowledge (Leeson et al., 2016). The talking circle, through

which processes and outcomes of Indigenous research can be derived, is described by S. Wilson as “a life-changing ceremony” (2003, p.175).

Structurally, talking circles and Yarning are similar to focus groups, with participants taking turns to contribute. While there are clear similarities between the focus group, the talking circle, and Yarning, there are notable if subtle differences. Lavallee (2009, p. 29) clarified thus:

In a research setting, although both the sharing circle and the focus group are concerned with gaining knowledge through discussion, the principles behind the sharing circle are quite different. Circles are acts of sharing all aspects of the individual – heart, mind, body and spirit – and permission is given to the facilitator to report on the discussions.

Far from being an informal research methodology, Yarning is a formal process that privileges cultural conversations that are based in mutual respect and accountability, ensuring the imparting of knowledge through trusted relationships (Dean, 2010). In contrast to focus group research, the researcher utilising the Yarning methodology cannot place themselves outside of the research as this implies an imbalance in which the researcher seeks to gain and own knowledge while the participants are merely the conduits through which the knowledge is transferred (Leeson et al., 2016).

3.7.2 *Philosophical Constructs*

Critical theorists suggest that, while there may be a singular reality, this reality has a fluid nature and its perception is dependent upon the cultural and gendered context of those interpreting their reality, while constructivists acknowledge the existence of multiple realities (S. Wilson, 2001). Ontologically, the critical theorist and constructivist view the nature of reality as being shaped by the values and experiences of those immersed in it (Killam, 2013).

Talking circles and Yarning fit within this constructivist ontological understanding of multiple realities. Epistemologically, however, Indigenous researchers would identify that, while Western research views the individual as the source of knowledge, that is, knowledge is an individual entity utilised by the researcher for personal gain of some description, an Indigenous epistemological perspective sits within a paradigm that sees as a fundamental belief that knowledge results from relationships with others (Romm, 2014; S. Wilson, 2001). Participants and facilitators are viewed as co-constructors of knowledge.

One of the consequences of colonialism has been the undervaluing of Indigenous knowledge under the dominant Western paradigm that emphasises knowledge as a commodity that is sought and owned by individuals (Steinhauer, 2002). The formulation of Indigenous knowledge is viewed as more intuitive and holistic rather than analytic and reductionist, catering for the inexplicable and spiritual dimensions that cannot be analysed through the application of scientific principles. This epistemological viewpoint is derived from the oral tradition of Indigenous histories developed over millennia and through which stories were shared by tribal Elders, discussed, and explored (Romm, 2014). An Indigenous paradigm, then, has at its core a fundamental principle that knowledge is relational, not owned by any individuals but shared amongst the totality of creation, without regarding reality itself but rather one's relationship with reality as the imperative (S. Wilson, 2001). Use of Yarning as a research methodology acknowledges the acceptance of traditional Aboriginal pedagogical practices. It embraces the reality of multiple constructs and a recognition of the subjective reality from the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (Leeson et al., 2016).

Utilising research methods and methodologies founded within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander epistemology, axiology and ontology arguably reduces the risk of further trauma and devises a space of Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander ownership and empowerment, whereby Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are positioned as the “knowers” of knowledge rather than the objects of knowledge. (Leeson et al., 2016, p. 9)

Although recognising that there is an imperative to consider Indigenous ontology and epistemology when designing research which includes Indigenous participants, Rigney (1999) concluded that there is no one single method or strategy that characterises Indigenist research. Of greatest significance is the context in which the researchers place themselves. Researchers honouring an Indigenist methodology need to contextualise themselves as “mere interpreters of knowledge that ultimately belongs to the cosmos” through a process that moves from a construct of cultural respect to one of cultural responsiveness, “committing to research with – not on – communities” (Knudson, 2015, p. 5).

3.7.3 *Methodological Considerations*

In common with focus group research, Yarning follows an interpretivist research paradigm that, through a systematic and interpretive gathering of data, can facilitate the development of empathy and understanding on the part of the researcher for the cultural reality of the participants. Within this paradigm, utilising a phenomenological methodology provides opportunity for the researcher to place themselves in the position of the participant (Coule, 2013). Such a methodological approach supports a subjectivist ontology and epistemology and provides access to culturally derived meanings by providing the foundation for exploration and interpretation of meaning on a substantive issue (Coule, 2013). Yarning fits well within this phenomenological methodology, as a method through which emphasis can be placed on understanding the subjective experience of the participants, developing perceptions regarding their motivations and highlighting the group interpretation of events

and actions that impact on their socially constructed reality (Babbie, 2016; Dean, 2010; Geia et al., 2013).

Hollander (2004) identified several possible pitfalls that may confound the researcher in the utilisation of methods such as Yarning. If levels of trust are low within the group, participants may be reluctant to contribute personal views. By including supportive and trusting participants and by sharing their own narrative and purpose of the research project, the researcher may mitigate against this problem. If an imbalance of power is perceived between the participant and the facilitator, the participant may respond in such a way as to fulfil the perceived expectations of the facilitator. On the other hand, should an imbalance of power exist between participants, individuals may feel influenced to conform to group expectations. Viewed through the social constructivist lens, the opinions of individuals, rather than being a stable entity, are constructed through interactions with others (Hollander, 2004). In this sense, rather than confounding the data, the resultant conformity and social pressure become the data, representing the regular effect of group conversations.

The various permutations of focus groups have reasonably specific methods that should be followed in their execution. The facilitator of a talking circle, for example, decides on the direction of the circle, ensures each person has an opportunity to contribute, and provides the talking circle symbol that is passed around the circle to be held by each participant as they speak (Mottola et al., 2011). The facilitator has a reasonably passive role to play once the process for the method has been explained and accepted, allowing the discussion to continuously move around the circle until consensus is reached in relation to the issue under discussion, choosing to speak or remain silent and simply pass on the symbol as it arrives (Running Wolf & Rickard, 2003). Picou (2000) describes the talking circle as a sociological practice of participatory research in which the participants are recognised as co-researchers who, through their involvement and contributions, add to the generation of

knowledge. Following the Exxon Valdez oil spill, for example, Picou utilised the talking circle as intervention, enabling Indigenous Canadian participants living in the region of the Prince William Sound to express and share their views and to find support for these from the other participants. Through this intervention, the participants were able to deepen their understanding of their own feelings towards the ecological disaster and to develop a consensus within the circle of how they could best move forward together and which processes they would need to put in place to resolve the deep impact the disaster has had on their communities (Picou, 2000).

Yarning provides a research medium through which the process of research can have a decolonising effect. Tuhiwai Smith (2012) noted, “Colonial processes such as religion and education actively set out to destroy the existence of Indigenous knowledge”. Hence, implementation of decolonising methodological research that privileges and values Indigenous ontology, epistemology, and axiology, such as Yarning, forms an appropriate basis for this research project. Four distinct categories of Yarning types can be identified (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Leeson et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2014):

1. **Social.** Through this type, comfortable conversations are held that lead to the development of rapport and strengthening of relationships. While the conversations may be unrelated to the research topic, time spent in social Yarning develops rapport and trust.
2. **Research Topic.** This involves purposeful conversations through which the researcher gathers information and guides the process of storytelling by the participants. The Yarn may be unstructured or semi-structured. While it may be quite relaxed in its execution, it is formal in as much as it targets the research question. It has a defined beginning and conclusion and “is a conversation with a purpose. The

purpose is to obtain information relating to the research question” (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010, p. 40).

3. **Therapeutic.** In a conversation that moves the researcher from facilitator to empathetic listener, the participants may relate intensely intimate stories.
4. **Collaborative.** Participants and researcher(s) share ideas directly involving the research topic in a trusting environment based in equality.

In the context of this research project, Social Yarning occurred over the first 2 days of the trek. These sessions occurred spontaneously and organically while walking, preparing and serving meals, washing the dishes, or setting up camp. Introductions were made with shared narratives during which I spoke about who I was and what brought me on this trip. I listened also to the participants’ stories as they shared banter with each other about their respective schools, the adventures of the day, their love of or distain for the chores that we were allocated, and any number of topics that gave insight and developed a sense of trust and understanding.

Research topic Yarning followed over the ongoing days as described elsewhere. While these were all purposeful conversations, the structure was very loose and individual contributions were made as participants felt they had something to share. As with all forms of group discussion, there were individuals who tended to be more vocal than others, with some more reticent participants requiring a subtle invitation by name to share their thoughts. There did eventuate a couple of yarning sessions that would be justifiably classified as Therapeutic. The one-on-one session with Participant 1, Olivia, would be an example of this. During this session, most of my time was spent listening without the need for questioning, particularly when the participant was relating her experiences moving from home to school and back and describing the impact of her boarding school experience on her relationships with family and kin. The periods that she found herself surviving (and thriving) in two different worlds and

her attempts to understand her own adaptations to these cultural challenges that she faced and managed invited empathetic listening with no necessity to intervene and direct the conversation.

Through these differing conversations, the sharing of information and the telling of stories establishes the trusting and equal relationships between participants and researcher, centred in Indigenous epistemology and contributing to the process of decolonisation (Walker et al., 2014). Yarning sessions should begin with a social yarn through which barriers between researcher and participant can be broken down, followed by a foray into the research topic, thereby facilitating in-depth discussions in an open and relaxed environment and providing deep discussion and thick descriptions (Berliner, 2002; Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010).

The 100-kilometre Cherbourg Commemorative Walk is held over a 6-day period with daily segments varying from around 10 to 30 kilometres. The group sleeps in swags at campsites along the way and shares responsibilities for daily routines such as cooking and cleaning (Yalari, 2017). Through these daily routines there existed an opportunity to develop rapport and a relationship with the participants prior to commencing the Yarning sessions. For the first 2 days of the Walk, no formal Yarning conversations were held with the participants. Rather, relationships were built through activities such as sharing in the mundane chores of cooking and serving meals, washing up and cleaning the camp kitchen each evening, and organizing games and activities including songs around the fire in the evening and games of touch football and frisbee in the afternoons once camp was set up.

Participation in these chores and activities on an equal footing with the participants provided opportunities to share our personal stories to begin the process of building trusted relationships. These occasions were opportunities to employ Social Yarning, engaging in

conversations that were not directly related to the research topic but rather provided opportunities for the participants to learn more about the researcher outside of the research parameters and for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the individuals' stories and background. With the older participants particularly, these interactions additionally presented opportunities to participate in collaborative Yarning, discussing the purpose of the research and listening to the participants' views on the research methodology. Importantly, through postponing the Yarning sessions focused on the research topic until such time as the researcher and participants knew each other by name and had some knowledge of each other's stories, the subsequent Yarning sessions were able to similarly see participants and researcher more as equals, sharing in the process, further ensuring a suitable environment for in-depth discussions.

3.7.4 Data Analysis

Analysis of data resulting from Yarning follows the same process as focus group data. The primary objective of the focus group is to generate, interpret, and report on individual opinions and group consensus around the topic under investigation. Data are delivered at three distinctive levels through focus group research (Cyr, 2016). These levels represent the unit of analysis and their significance to the research topic should be investigated prior to the undertaking of the research. The unit of analysis may be:

- i. **Individual.** The focus group can be interpreted as a number of simultaneous individual interviews enabling multiple conversations at one time and eliciting differing individual responses and reactions.
- ii. **Group.** If the group is envisaged as the unit of analysis, the researcher will look for the development of consensus around key questions. The researcher needs to report on divergent and minority views that appear (Kitzinger, 1994) and should

encourage conversation across the group such that co-participants become the co-researchers (Kitzinger, 1995).

- iii. **Interaction.** Group interaction may be viewed as a unit of analysis, with the facilitator reporting on the interactions back and forth between participants and the effect of these on forming and changing ideas and opinions. Through encouraging debate, trust, and openness in discussions, an environment may exist within the focus group within which individuals may challenge their own opinions and views around a topic, deepening the quality of data available for analysis.

For this research project, the group was utilised as the main unit of analysis. The Yarning methodology is such that the organic nature of the groups along with the unforced nature of the conversations allows for the formulation of consensus while accepting a range of views and opinions. At this point it should be noted that neither group size nor composition were consistent throughout this project. Group sizes varied from a single participant to groups with six participants. Some groups were homogenous for age and gender while others were mixed. The group has been identified in this project as the main unit of analysis precisely because of this natural and organic formation which was utilised in preference to implementing a formulaic division of participants into groups based on some arbitrary or artificial criteria.

While the significant stages in qualitative data analysis apply to the analysis of focus group data, there are aspects of this method that are quite distinct from, for example, interview data. Participants in focus groups may change their views and alter their opinions after involvement in discussion and debate (Krueger, 1997). The researcher may choose less structure and facilitator control of the conversation and encourage greater interaction and debate, allowing the facilitator as an outsider to develop greater empathy and understanding of the cultural reality of the participants (Coule, 2013).

While some researchers may choose to use abridged transcripts in analysis, greater rigour will result for the coding and generation of themes from full transcripts as in this project, as transcripts “do not simply provide a record of the discussion, they also allow for a more intimate understanding of the content of the talk, the flow of the discussion and the group dynamics as these emerge” (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 86). When interpreting the transcripts, conversation analysis and narrative analysis techniques should be employed rather than simply quoting comments of the individual participants (Wibeck et al., 2007). Simon and Mosavel (2007) described data analysis of focus group research as being complex and suggested the employment of a few strategies such as the inclusion of a member of the participant community to assist with analysis. They promoted as an analytical process the production of workshop-based summaries of each participant’s contribution to the discussion. Each summary should consist of three components:

- i. A quantitative list of participant responses which have an indication of the frequency of identified themes;
- ii. A “narrative synopsis” or qualitative summary of the emergent themes; and
- iii. Interpretations of the responses.

By generating these individual summaries and interpretations independently by two or more persons, they can be compared, and consensus reached (Simon & Mosavel, 2007). This process of analysis goes towards fulfilling the requirements of the analysis to be systematic, verifiable, and context driven.

3.7.5 Discussion

Despite the complexity of design and analysis and the ethical issues of confidentiality that arise with the employment of focus group/talking circle/Yarning, these methods have significant advantages over individual interviews. Participants who may have a reluctance to

be interviewed may feel more comfortable in a group situation with people with whom they are familiar (Kitzinger, 1994). Participants are able to explore and clarify their own views more easily as they interact in conversations and debates with others. Participants are able to formulate their own questions and initiate conversation around these, and the broaching of difficult topics by the more confident members of the focus group may encourage less vocal members to share their views and perceptions (Morgan, 1997a). Research structures such as focus groups, talking circles, and Yarning can provide cultural insights, highlighting shared knowledge that otherwise might remain inaccessible to the researcher.

3.8 Applying the Yarning Methodology to this Research Project

On the first evening of the walk, prior to the commencement of the journey, all walk participants attended a briefing at the Kilcoy Bowls Club, Kilcoy, Queensland, the venue for dinner that evening neighbouring the starting location for the walk. At this briefing the Student Development Officer from Yalari outlined the itinerary for the walk, explained the conditions we would encounter, and all the logistics of camping and walking along the route to Cherbourg for the next 6 days. At this meeting, all the volunteer assistants, including me, were introduced and our roles on the walk were explained. Along with four others, I had joined the walk as a volunteer with specific duties around the organisation of the camp kitchen and preparation of evening meals and the supply of food and water during each day's trek. While this was not an opportunity to introduce the research topic to the potential participants, as described in this chapter, that opportunity was provided after the first day of the walk.

Following the opportunity to explain the research topic to the students along with an opportunity for questions to clarify the purpose and methodology that was to be employed, 31 of the 32 current Yalari scholars participating in the walk, and two first-year-out Yalari

alumni, elected to participate in the research project. The students were invited by me to join in Yarning sessions in loosely organised groups that they themselves formed. The looseness of these group configurations follows the commitment to employ a decolonising research methodology with a clear separation from the dominant Western worldview that privileges Western cultural norms. Such norms would see me impose my own choice of group structures, formed in a fashion that would be convenient to the collection and analysis of data. As discussed by Geia et al, “a fundamental element in conducting research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples is the privileging of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island voices in the research process towards an emancipatory research outcome for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community” (2013, p. 16).

These groups were not defined at this time and would be formed organically as the walk progressed over the following days. In total, by the conclusion of the event, 12 yarning sessions were completed – nine group and three individual sessions. One of the Yalari scholars and both alumni chose to participate as individuals in one-on-one Yarning conversations with me while others chose to meet in groups ranging from two participants to six. These groups tended to be homogenous in relation to ages and school grades as well as gender, although there were some exceptions to this. Two of the older male participants, for example, who were at the time of a particular session enjoying lunch with a group of female participants, were invited by the girls to stay and contribute to the conversation. These two male students also participated in the fifth yarning session with the other older male students the following evening. It was following this lunch session that two of the female participants sought a second opportunity to share with me some of their experiences that they were not comfortable sharing in the larger group. The timing and locations of the sessions varied also, being quite organic in their occurrence.

As previously discussed, no sessions took place for the first two days, as this was a time for all the participants in the walk to become accustomed to the program and daily routines and an opportunity for me to become a familiar face around the camp and on the walks as I helped with meals, assisted with the setting up of food and drink stations along the track, and generally involved myself with the daily happenings along the journey. Once the Yarning sessions commenced on the third day of the walk, these manifested themselves as conversations while walking, at morning tea or lunch breaks, during or after dinner, around the campfire of an evening, or sitting around a table and talking while sharing a meal. Participants were not called to a meeting space, but rather I was careful to be as unobtrusive as possible, not interrupting games, activities, or conversations as they occurred nor setting a schedule of times for each group to gather, but rather waiting until the opportunity to have a conversation organically arose. These opportunities most naturally occurred before, after, or while sharing a meal or indeed while walking. These times did not take the participants away from any preferred activity and were times of least distraction.

Research examining conversations around the family dinner table indicate this as an opportunity to enable narratives describing both past and present events of significance in an environment that encourages sharing; "... when past events do emerge as topics of conversation, these narratives are extended and collaborative, with multiple family members contributing to the evolving story" (Bohanek et al., 2009, p. 507). While it is recognised that the Yarning sessions were not in family groups, the intent of conducting Yarning conversations at mealtimes either on the track or around the campfire was intended to provide a similar relaxed environment in which all participants would feel comfortable, valued, and heard.

Each of the Yarning Sessions commenced with a short, social introduction. We spoke of the day's walk, highlighting any unusual, interesting, or special happenings. For example,

on the fourth day of the walk, one of the groups I was yarning with, the mixed group of younger students, noticed two koalas in the trees along the track. These sightings became a highlight of the day, leading the young people to express their attachment to native Australian fauna along with their concerns for the continued health and preservation of the koala population. From here, the conversation led to their experiences in their home communities and stories of activities they participated in with their elders and parents such as hunting and fishing. From there, the Yarn moved from a social to a research phase as we contrasted these home experiences with boarding school life. At this point, it was put to the participants and agreed that this was a safe space where each person could speak their truth and that each person's privacy would be respected following the conclusion of the session. I then indicated that I would like to commence digitally recording the Yarn and confirmed that the participants were comfortable continuing. At the conclusion of each Yarning session, the participants were thanked and reminded of our agreement to respect the privacy of each individual.

The line of questioning followed through the Yarning Sessions, guiding the participants through their experiences of boarding school in relation to their developing sense of REC identity and academic self-efficacy is detailed in the Analysis chapter. as each of the themes and sub-themes emerged. Given the semi-structured nature of the Yarning Sessions, as a consequence of privileging the experiences and voices of the participants, each session followed a unique evolution reflecting the individuality of each participant group. Appendix E, Yarning Stimulus Questions, does expand on the theoretical basis of the line of questioning specifically in relation to the participants academic efficacy and REC Identity, exploring the four identity statuses expounded by Klimesra et al (2010) and Phinney (1989).

Chapter 4: Ethical Considerations

4.1 Introduction

Historically, non-Indigenous researchers have assumed the role of “expert”, relegating Indigenous people involved in the research process to the position of “subject”. Often, it has been the case that little benefit from this approach has been found by those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who participated in the research. In some situations, there is evidence that, far from being beneficial, research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has been damaging, exploitive, and intrusive. Concerns persist that much research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs continues to document significant disadvantage with no practical focus on the development and implementation of solutions (Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006).

4.2 Ethical Guidelines

This project has been granted ethical clearance by Griffith University (GU Ref. 2017/495). The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), in addition to the guidelines published in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (NHMRC, 2015), has produced a separate publication, *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders* (NHMRC, 2018). This guide emphasises the need in this research to recognise and value differences in culture of Indigenous peoples, understanding that it is from these traditional cultures, values, history, and wisdom that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples form their sense of identity. The guide recommends that, in addition to appropriate experience and education, researchers should “receive training or otherwise gain appropriate experience in developing cultural competence prior to undertaking their research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities” (NHMRC, 2018, p. 19).

The researcher was, for 10 years, the person responsible for implementing and managing the Indigenous Education Program at an independent boys' boarding school. This involved communicating and collaborating with and liaising between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their parents, community, teachers, and scholarship sponsors throughout these young people's boarding school experience. During this period, prior to undertaking this research project and again once the research had commenced, the researcher undertook cultural competence training as evidenced through Appendices I, J and K.

The NHMRC identifies six core values as crucial elements of research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants:

- Spirit and integrity;
- Cultural continuity;
- Equity;
- Reciprocity;
- Respect; and
- Responsibility.

Again, as a non-diasporic White researcher, it was incumbent upon me to ensure the research design and process were accountable to these core values. At each stage of the research project, from design through to conclusion, these core values were incorporated. Descriptors of each of the six core values along with the actions taken to ensure their incorporation in this research are illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1*Actions Taken to Support Indigenist Research Values*

	Core values:	Descriptor:	Action:
1.	Spirit and integrity	The behaviour of the researcher needs to support the five values described below in order for the researcher to exhibit integrity. The researcher needs to involve the community in the research design and decision-making processes. The researcher demonstrates respect and honour towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and cultures through commitment to the values of cultural continuity, equity, reciprocity, respect, and responsibility,	Prior to the commencement of the research project, the researcher met with Waverley Stanley, Founding Director, and Llew Mullins, Managing Director of Yalari, to discuss the project and the methodological approach that was proposed. This approach was communicated by Yalari and by the researcher to the parents of the participants as well as the participants themselves. Through equal immersion with the research participants in the Cherbourg Commemorative Walk that formed the context for the Yarning conversations, the researcher ensured the integration of these research values.
2.	Cultural continuity	The exploitive nature of colonising research has raised barriers between researchers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to value their cultures and protect their identities. Cultural	Application of a CGT framework supports a mutually respectful approach to the research that commences with no preconceptions nor a priori hypotheses to be proven. Within the CGT framework, utilisation of a qualitative decolonising methodological approach in the form of Yarning, through which each voice is equal and heard, ensures the Aboriginal and

		continuity empowers relationships amongst the People and between the People and their country.	Torres Strait Islander participants' cultures and identities are correspondingly shared, valued, and respected.
3.	Equity	Equitable research embraces difference, seeks to eliminate inequality, encourages participation and values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wisdom and knowledge. Fairness and justice lead to respect and appreciation of Indigenous cultural imperatives and values.	Yarning, as a decolonising methodology, respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies. As a decolonising methodology, the emphasis is placed on the equal value of each participant's voice within an environment of mutual trust and respect. The choice of research location, "on country" while commemorating the strengths, perseverance, and resilience of Indigenous peoples, was a deliberate strategy to promote equity between participants and researcher.
4.	Reciprocity	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are to be included equitably in the research process, with outcomes designed to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. All participants in the research should have equal voice and influence.	From the Information Sheet for the Project (Appendix A): "This research project has the support of Yalari and will be conducted in partnership with Yalari. Throughout the research process, researchers will work with Yalari to ensure that the wellbeing of students participating in the research is paramount at all times. All participants will be considered to be partners in the research and will be given full access to the final research report." As illustrated in the sample Yarning Transcript, Appendix F, the Yarning Conversations were structured in such a way as to ensure all participants' voices were heard and privileged. The conclusion to the research project

			includes a number of considerations for boarding schools to improve current pedagogy and practice that arose through analysis of the data.
5.	Respect	A recognition that people have the right to different norms and values and that open and trusting engagement in the research is equally important to the scientific rigour of the process.	Through the utilisation of the qualitative Indigenist research methodology, Yarning, within the CGT framework, the research project delves deeply into the meanings and shared experiences of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants' experiences of boarding. This methodological approach, while respecting the norms and values of the participants, leads to a largely inductive analytical process. Theory emerges through this rigorous analysis of the rich data arising from the Yarning sessions.
6.	Responsibility	There needs to be clear lines of communication ensuring accountability to Indigenous communities by the researcher.	From the Information Sheet for the Project (Appendix A): All participants are partners in the research and have full access to the final research report. In order to ensure accountability, a plain language summary of the research findings has been provided to Yalari for distribution to all participants. The methodological approach of Yarning within a CGT framework that purposely privileges the voices of the participants within a culturally safe environment ensures no harm. As the analysis of the data from the Yarning Sessions progressed, open lines of communication were maintained with Yalari. A plain language

			report on the findings of the project was forwarded to Yalari with a request that it be disseminated to the individual participants, providing all the key stakeholders with opportunities to feedback concerns or questions for clarification with the facilitator prior to the finalization of the results and findings.

4.3 Ethical Dimensions of Yarning as a Methodology

The very nature of Yarning as a research methodology introduces ethical dimensions that need consideration. The group basis of the method increases the problematic nature of ensuring confidentiality when compared with interviews or surveys. Within the informed consent documents agreed to by each of the participants prior to participation in the Yarning group, there needs to be a confidentiality statement. This statement should be referred to by the facilitator as a brief verbal reminder at both the opening and closing of the Yarning discussion (Simon & Mosavel, 2007).

Care needs to be taken with regards to other ethical issues such as balance of power and construction of trust, ensuring there is no perceived power differential between the facilitator and the participants, nor, as far as possible, between the participants themselves (Litosseliti, 2003). By privileging the voice of the participants, sharing his or her own narrative and purpose in facilitating and keeping a focus on listening, and guiding discussions (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan, 1997b; Simon & Mosavel, 2007), the facilitator can minimise issues around power and trust. As described in Section 4.8, the participants students were aware from the time the Walk commenced that I was an educator, previously holding the position of Deputy Headmaster at a Yalari partner school. Given this, along with my age and the cultural imperatives of these young people, there was a clear need to develop trust and minimise any perceived power differential. My strategy for this has been described in detail earlier, getting to know the students through play and social yarns based on my interactions with the students while performing the tasks allocated to me as an adult volunteer. The included transcript, Appendix F, is illustrative of the level of trust and perceived balance of power between me as the facilitator and the participants, in this case, the older girls. This transcript illustrates the comfortable flow of conversation following the establishment of the protocols for the session, all based upon the mutual respect for and equal value of each

participant's contribution. As the yarning Session proceeds, the facilitator's interjections decrease and the contribution of the less vocal, reticent, participants increase, indicating a level of trust and comfort in the process and purpose of the yarns.

Questions of purpose need to be addressed. "Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will the results be disseminated?" (L. Smith, 1999, p. 5). As First Nations people across the world have in common a primary conviction in the interrelatedness of all of creation, this needs to be mirrored in the research design. "A researcher must make sure the 3 Rs – Respect, Reciprocity and Relationality – are guiding the research" (Steinhauer, 2002, p. 73).

While the initial questions to be interrogated have been designed by the facilitator, a non-diasporic White male researcher, the intention is that the product of this research will be jointly owned by the participants. It is designed to benefit the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars who will follow in the footsteps of the participants as so eloquently described by Floyd in his artwork, explained in the Foreword to this thesis.

Chapter 5: Analysis

5.1 Introduction

As described in the Chapter 4, a total of 12 Yarning Sessions were held throughout the data-gathering phase of the research project. Given the semi-structured and dynamic nature of the sessions which followed a conversational rather than interrogational pattern, the conversations were guided through discussions around a number of themes with each Yarning session following a similar, but at times divergent path according to the participants' interests. In keeping with the CGT framework employed for the project, reflection on each Yarning session by the researcher provided informed direction for each subsequent session, leading to saturation. Each of the 12 groups met once during the week of the Cherbourg Walk although, of the 33 participants, four – Sophia, Ella, Jack, and Harry (pseudonyms) – participated in two sessions each.

Each of the 12 Yarning Sessions were voice recorded digitally and then transcribed verbatim as Microsoft Word documents. The timings for each session can be seen in Table 5.1. The variation in timings for the sessions is illustrated in Figure 5.1, indicating a median time of 30 minutes per session.

No attempt is made in this analysis to extrapolate quantitative conclusions from qualitative data. Being a qualitative study and having CGT as the theoretical framework does exclude any a priori hypothesis to be accepted or rejected. I recognise that, as discussed by Tsachor and Shatir (2019), this data gathered through a qualitative methodology and interpreted through CGT as the analytical theoretical framework, is not representative of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote and rural communities attending urban independent boarding schools on scholarships. However, it is intended that tabulated

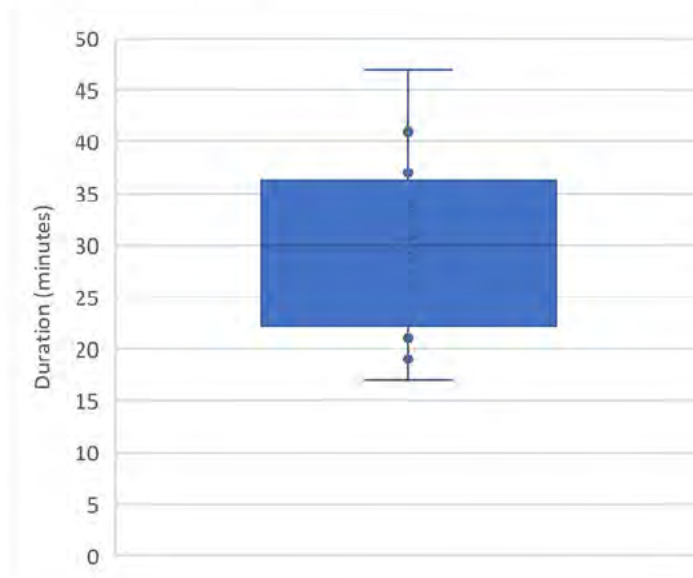
and graphical representation of the data allows the reader to visualize the relative emphasis of each of the Yarning sessions on the emergent themes and sub-themes identified in Figure 5.2.

This chapter considers in turn each of the four themes; Culture, Academic Self-Efficacy, Identity and Experiences of Racism. By quantifying not the content of the Yarning sessions which are explored in detail in Chapter 6: Findings, but rather the frequency of appearance of the themes and sub-themes within each of the Yarning sessions, the reader is presented with an opportunity to assess the authenticity and trustworthiness of the research.

Table 5.1

Overall Frequency of Nodes for Each Yarning Group

Yarning Session	Grade	Gender	Total Nodes	Timing of Yarning Session
Sabrina, Jessica, Sienna, Ivy, Ruby, Phoebe	Year 11/12	Female	529	47:42
Scarlett, Chloe	Year 10	Female	218	40:55
Emma, Hanna	Year 9/11	Female	198	41:12
Mia, Harry, Sophia, Isabella, Ella, Jack	Year 10/11	Mixed Gender	176	30:14
Matilda, Theo, Rosie, Erin, Bella	Year 8,9,10	Mixed Gender	161	26:16
Katie	Alumnus	Female	149	32:39
Millie	Year 11	Female	130	27:44
Olivia	Alumnus	Female	128	33:49
Sophia, Ella	Year 10	Female	93	19:57
Harry, Jack, Charlie, Noah, Jacob, Archie	Year 11/12	Male	65	29:17
Lily, Amelia	Year 9	Female	40	17:02
William, Ethan, Daniel	Year 7	Male	35	19:22

Figure 5.1*Yarning Session Times*

It is important to note that time was not needed at the commencement of the Yarning sessions to explain the nature or purpose of the research being undertaken, nor to introduce the researcher to the group. I had an opportunity on the first evening of the walk to introduce myself to the participants and to share with them my backstory and my reasons for participating in the walk. Following on from my initial opportunity to relate my story to the participants, as discussed in the Chapter 4, I had further opportunities to engage in informal conversations with the participants around the campfire while completing tasks in the kitchen with cooking, serving, and cleaning, while joining in with their games and, of course, while sharing the walking experience with them each day. These opportunities were most effective at breaking down barriers between the participants and me, enabling the Yarning sessions to be directed from the beginning towards the issues being investigated. There was, for example, an instance while playing football with a group of participants that I was hit in the head by the ball following a wayward kick. This was referred to during the Yarning session which included the boys who were part of the game, which helped the natural and informal process of the conversation:

Facilitator: ... what makes you proud?

William: I always keep up with the work, or sometimes. Then I've got a football trophy, me and him [referring to Ethan].

Ethan: Yeah, I got a Most Courageous and he got Most Improved

Facilitator: You've got good hands. Are you playing AFL?

William: Yeah.

Facilitator: Do you hit everybody on the head with the ball or ... ?

William: [laughing] Probably. Sometimes. Taking a mark is like ... [William gesticulates, replaying the incident]

Ethan: [laughing] I think maybe ... I like how you're just standing there and just like, Boom!

Facilitator: Yes, I took a mark with my head!

The remainder of this chapter will detail the analysis of the Yarning conversations transcripts, revealing the themes that emerged from the data and the coding that was applied to drill deeply into the implications of the conversations. Each theme will be explicated through Chapter 6, Findings.

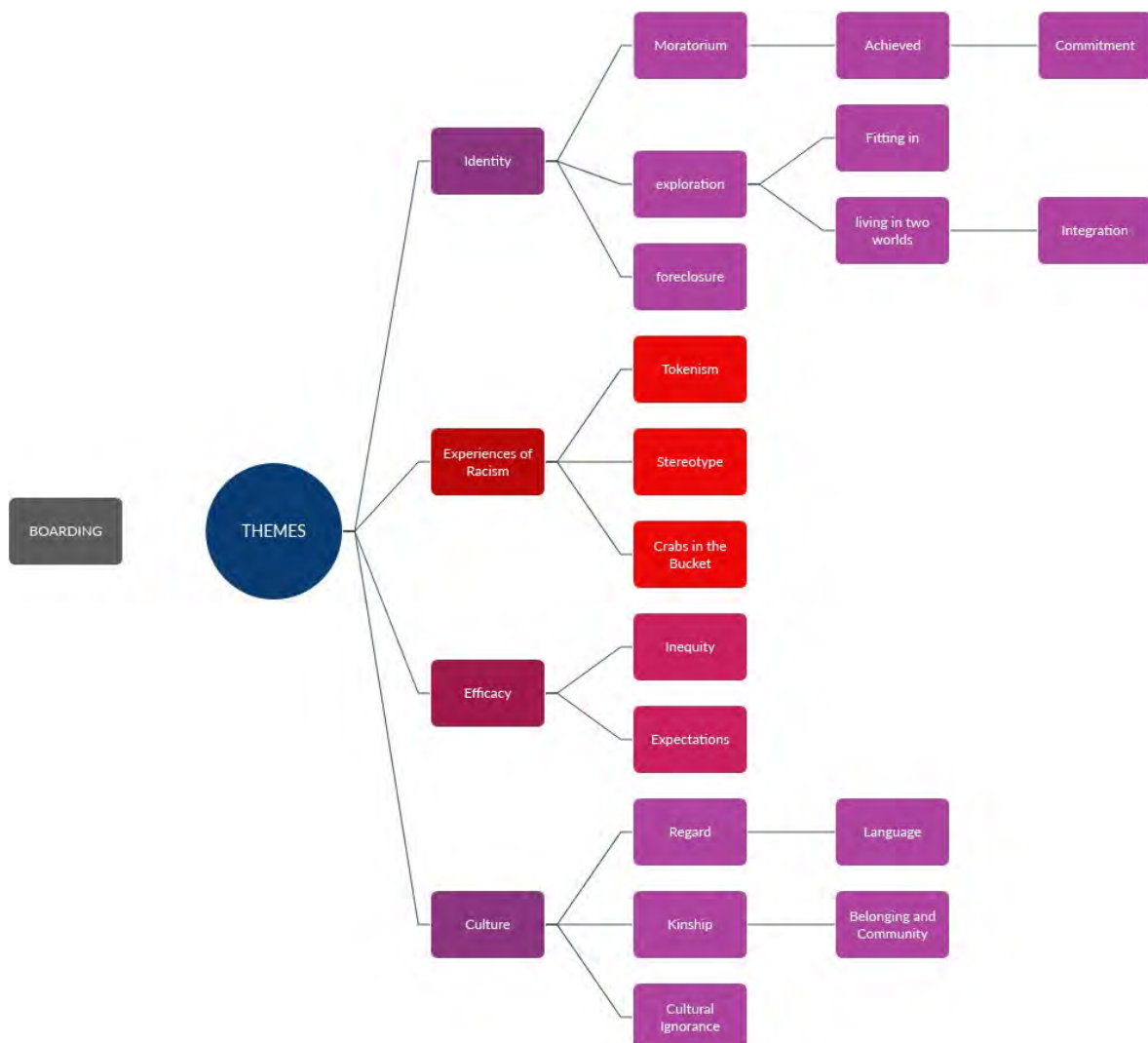
5.2 Overview of the Data Analysis

Following the verbatim transcribing of the sessions, the transcripts were then saved in the NVivo 12 Pro software program for detailed analysis. An initial examination of the transcripts in NVivo revealed four broad themes that were identified within the context of the boarding experience: Identity, Experiences of racism, Academic efficacy, and Culture, with each theme forming a discrete parent node in NVivo. Following the identification of these

four broad themes, the transcripts were re-read several times and studied in more detail, looking for the emergence of sub-themes. This process led to the identification of a number of child nodes within each parent node, forming a set of sibling nodes within each parent node. During the process of identifying and defining sibling nodes, some nodes were discarded while others were combined or modified to better reflect the interests of the participants. While it may be beneficial to reduce the number of initial codes in order to improve reliability, caution was taken to retain nuanced differences in the data (Campbell et al., 2013). The four parent nodes, including their sibling nodes, form the basis of the coding used in the analysis of each of the transcripts (see Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2

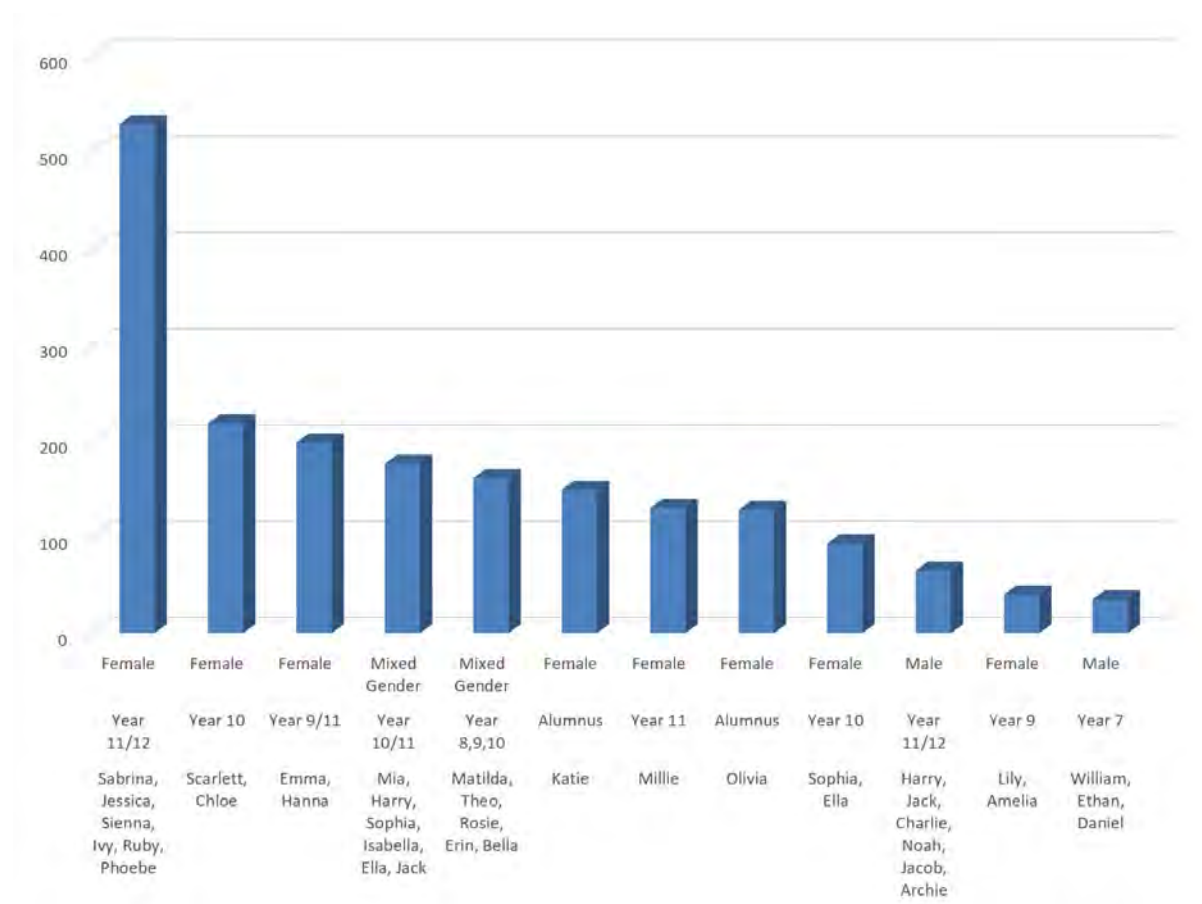
Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes



As is apparent from Table 5.1 and illustrated by Figure 5.3, not all of the Yarning Groups were equally forthcoming in terms of enthusiasm for participation in the conversations. As discussed in Chapter 3, a deliberate decision was made to allow the participants in the research to form their own Yarning Groups. A consequence of this was the resulting differences in the number of participants in each Yarning session, from three sessions with a single participant to three sessions with six participants. While the groups tended to be single gender, two were a mix of males and females. As it happened, the Yarning session involving the six older (Year 11 and 12) female participants was the most forthcoming and enthusiastic in their engagement and responses. Two of the girls in this group, Jessica and Phoebe, are Torres Strait Islanders and both presented as extroverted personalities. Phoebe, for example, strongly asserted from the commencement of the Yarning session that Torres Strait and Aboriginal cultures “are very different and unique and special in their own way”. This reinforces the position put forward strongly by Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson who stated, “... constructions of pan-Indigenous identity within research have been formulated largely from the foundations of biased Eurocentric epistemologies” (2014, pp. 2-3). With this group, once a question was posed, the participants often then held their own discussion with little need for me to do much more than keep the conversation reasonably on topic using prompts – in keeping with the Yarning methodology. By contrast, the group of older male participants was content to answer any questions posed without taking the lead in progressing the conversations. Overall, it can be seen from Table 5.1 that, while the Year 11 and 12 female group had an appreciably higher number of contributions to the themes being investigated, the remaining groups were, for the most part, engaged well in the Yarning sessions. The three Year 7 boys, William, Ethan, and Daniel, while being most willing to participate, indicated that their experiences of boarding were predominately positive.

However, as young adolescents relatively new to the boarding school environment, at this stage in their development, their responses indicate they had spent little time reflecting on their Indigenous heritage and culture and little exploration of their REC identities.

Figure 5.3
Total Nodes per Yarning Group



5.3 Perspectives on Boarding

The Yarning sessions all occurred during the week of the Cherbourg Memorial Walk at a time when all the participant students were on school holidays. Each of the Yarning groups was composed of students from different home communities and different schools. The structure of the Yalari program is such that students in the same year level at school would have previously met each other, at least from a common participation at the

Orientation Camp at the commencement of their secondary school journey and again during the Year 9 Central Australia camps and at the formal end of year dinners (Yalari, 2019).

In order to provide an opportunity for the students to reacquaint themselves and to organically develop their friendship groups prior to meeting with them, no Yarning conversations were held for the first two days of the Walk. The 12 Yarning sessions were then spread over the remaining 5 days of the Walk. Each of the 12 Yarning sessions commenced with a discussion about the students' boarding experiences, including invitations to discuss:

- What they had looked forward to most once they were awarded their scholarship; and
- What early memories they have of commencing boarding; the positive aspects and the greatest challenges they faced.

This deliberate introduction of boarding school to the Yarning Sessions at their commencement was made so as to set the participants' experiences of boarding school as the context for the conversations that followed. After explaining how the Yarning session would proceed, including the maintenance of anonymity, confidentiality, and mutual respect, the participants were invited to introduce themselves in order to assist later with transcription of the conversations. Following that, the scene was set with a discussion starter along the lines of, "When you found out that you were going to go to boarding school, what was most exciting about that for you?"

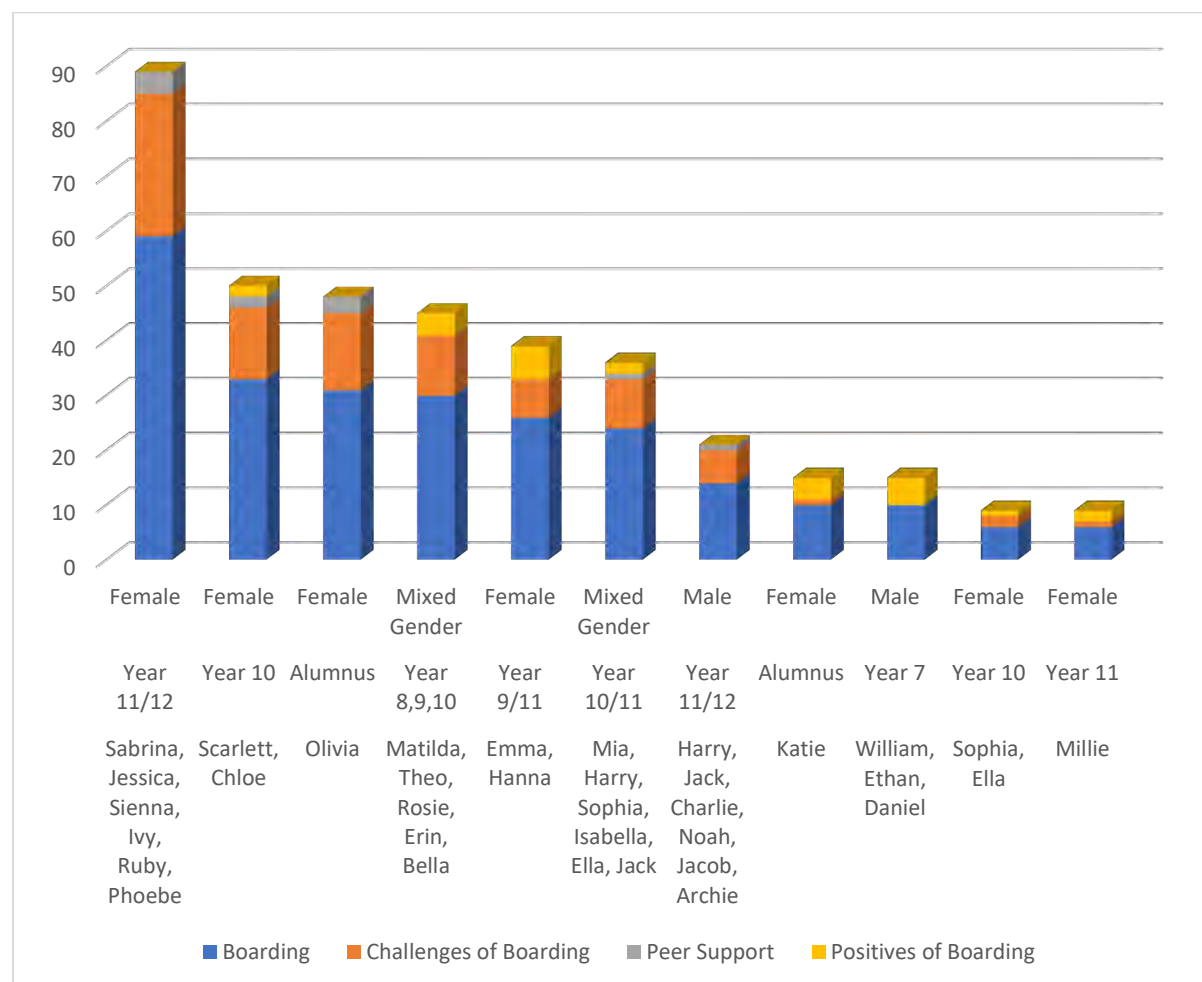
Within the context of the topic of Boarding, sub-contexts of Challenges of Boarding, Peers, and Positives of Boarding were identified. A description of each node related to boarding and the frequency of each node within the Yarning transcripts can be seen in Tables 5.2 and 5.3. The frequencies of each node are illustrated in Figure 5.4.

Table 5.2*Boarding Nodes and Descriptors*

Node	Descriptor
Boarding	Comments relating to the experience of boarding from the students' perspective.
Challenges of boarding	Structural, emotional, and psychological challenges identified by students such as schedules, forming friendships, homesickness.
Peer support	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students supporting each other at school, within friendship groups, boarding houses, year groups, or across years.
Positives of boarding	The experiences of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their early boarding days that they identified as being most positive.

Table 5.3*Frequency of Nodes Related to Boarding Throughout the Yarning Sessions*

Yarning Session	Grade	Gender	Boarding	Challenges of boarding	Peer support	Positives of boarding
Sabrina, Jessica, Sienna, Ivy, Ruby, Phoebe	Year 11/12	Female	59	26	4	0
Scarlett, Chloe	Year 10	Female	33	13	2	2
Olivia	Alumnus	Female	31	14	3	0
Matilda, Theo, Rosie, Erin, Bella	Year 8,9,10	Mixed	30	11	0	4
Emma, Hanna	Year 9/11	Female	26	7	0	6
Mia, Harry, Sophia, Isabella, Ella, Jack	Year 10/11	Mixed	24	9	1	2
Harry, Jack, Charlie, Noah, Jacob, Archie	Year 11/12	Male	14	6	1	0
Katie	Alumnus	Female	10	1	0	4
William, Ethan, Daniel	Year 7	Male	10	0	0	5
Sophia, Ella	Year 10	Female	6	2	0	1
Millie	Year 11	Female	6	1	0	2

Figure 5.4*Boarding Coding Frequencies***5.4 Theme 1 – Culture**

At its essence, culture can be defined through the connections that differentiate one group of people from another, forming a basis for the way in which people will identify with their group in ways that are unique to that group. Cultural members share similar beliefs and a value system that defines group membership. These beliefs, values, and rules of conduct that distinguish a cultural group are manifested through interactions, behaviours, protocols, and rituals that become a visible marker of the group (Dockery, 2010; Hofstede et al., 2002; Samovar & Porter, 2004).

The discussion analysed under the theme Culture was guided around questions such as: “Do you see a conflict between your cultural values and the values of the education system at your school?” “Can you describe any expectations or ways of doing things at your school that clash with the way you would do things at home or in your old school?” (Querengesser, 2014). Impressions of private and public regard were investigated through questions such as “How comfortable do you feel in a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people such as in the boarding house compared with being in a group of just Indigenous people?” (private regard) or “How do you think the rest of the boarding community feels about having Yalari students in the boarding house?” (public regard) (French et al., 2006).

In reading through the Yarning transcripts, segments of conversation that related to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ experiences of and attitudes towards their own culture were coded for using the child nodes shown in Table 5.4 under the parent node, Culture, while Table 5.5 illustrates the frequencies of each throughout the conversations. Figure 5.5 illustrates the frequencies of responses by participants in each of the Yarning sessions to these nodes.

Table 5.4

Culture Nodes and Descriptors

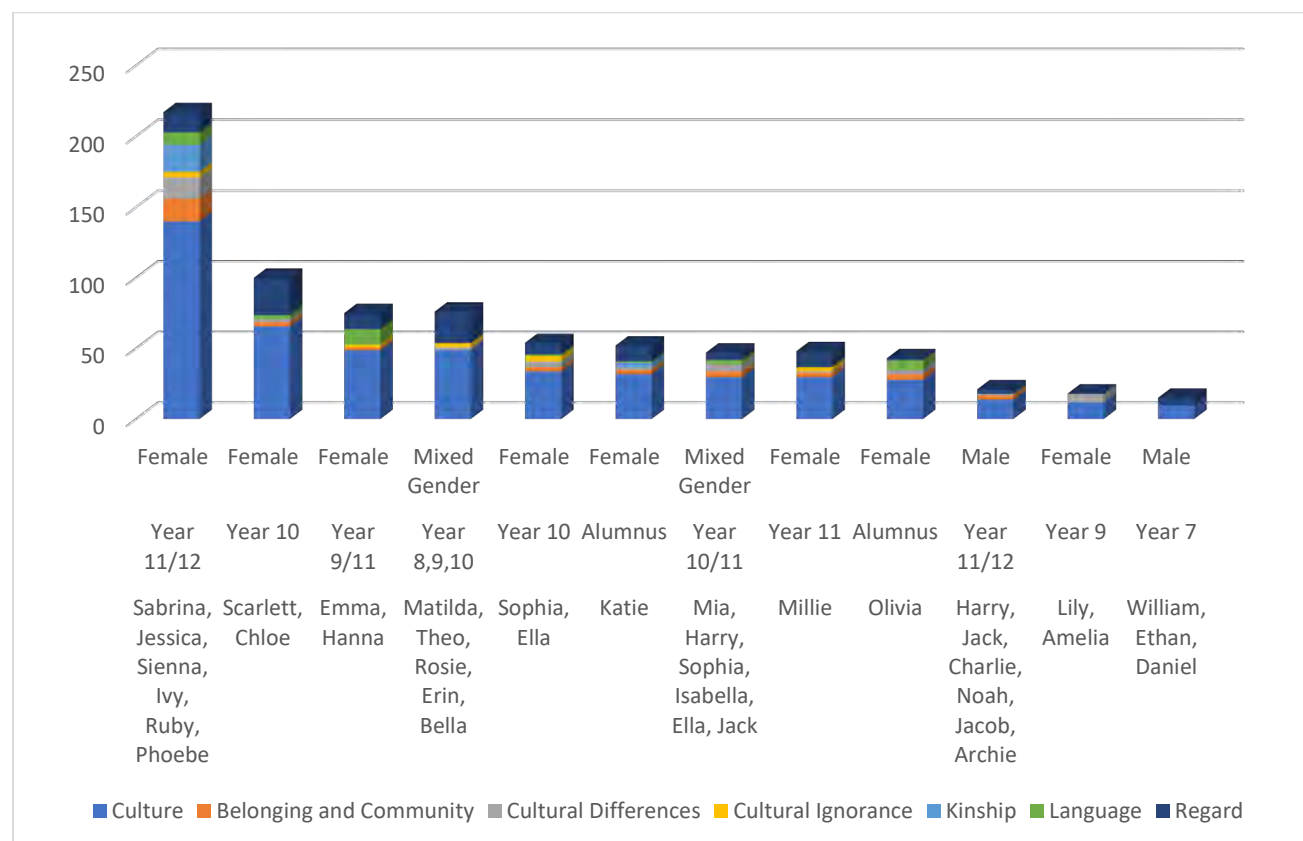
Node	Descriptor
Culture	References made to culture and cultural experiences during the Yarning conversations
Belonging and community	Students describe a sense of belonging to an Indigenous family or community; sometimes a sense of belonging because of like experiences, positive or negative
Cultural differences	Opportunities and challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students because of the cultural contradictions they face on becoming a boarding student
Cultural ignorance	Cultural stereotyping including not realising/understanding the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations and a general ignorance and at times disrespect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture

Node	Descriptor
Kinship	The importance of relating to family, friends, and relations in a culturally appropriate way
Language	Students feel the need to change their accent, words, tone to fit in at school or at home, “talking black”
Regard	A measure of positive or negative private or public regard for one's race; private regard reflects how the individual feels while public regard refers to the perception the individual has towards how society regards her/his race

Table 5.5

Frequency of Nodes Related to Culture Throughout the Yarning Sessions

Yarning Session	Grade	Gender	Culture	Belonging and community	Cultural differences	Cultural ignorance	Kinship	Language	Regard
Sabrina, Jessica, Sienna, Ivy, Ruby, Phoebe	Year 11/12	Female	140	16	15	4	19	9	14
Mia, Harry, Sophia, Isabella, Ella, Jack	Year 10/11	Mixed	30	4	5	0	0	3	5
Emma, Hanna	Year 9/11	Female	49	2	0	2	0	11	11
Scarlett, Chloe	Year 10	Female	66	3	2	0	0	3	26
Katie	Alumnus	Female	32	3	2	0	3	1	11
Sophia, Ella	Year 10	Female	34	3	4	4	0	1	8
Millie	Year 11	Female	30	3	1	3	0	0	11
Lily, Amelia	Year 9	Female	12	0	6	0	0	0	0
William, Ethan, Daniel	Year 7	Male	10	0	0	0	0	0	5
Olivia	Alumnus	Female	28	4	3	0	0	7	1
Matilda, Theo, Rosie, Erin, Bella	Year 8,9,10	Mixed	49	0	2	3	0	0	22
Harry, Jack, Charlie, Noah, Jacob, Archie	Year 11/12	Male	14	3	1	0	0	0	3

Figure 5.5*Culture Coding Frequencies***5.5 Theme 2 – Academic Self-Efficacy**

Research indicates that students with a high sense of academic efficacy approach their academic studies with higher levels of persistence and apply greater effort in an expectation that success is achievable when compared with students with a lower academic efficacy, for whom school failure and dropping out are more likely (Bandura, 2012; Carroll et al., 2009; Zimmerman et al., 1992; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1989). Dweck's research shows a tendency for individuals to hold an incremental (growth) mindset or an entity (fixed) mindset with regard to their intelligence, abilities, talents, and personality characteristics (Blackwell et al., 2007; Dweck et al., 1993). While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students generally hold themselves to higher academic expectations than do their teachers (Dandy et al., 2015), teachers with lower expectations and an accompanying fixed mindset in relation to

their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have a deleterious impact on educational outcomes for Indigenous students, leading to disengagement from learning (Moodie et al., 2019; Riley & Pidgeon, 2019).

In comparison with non-Indigenous students, Indigenous students tend to hold more of an entity theory of intelligence and ability, possibly as a consequence of the lower expectations of them by their teachers and parents (Riley & Ungerleider, 2012; Tarbetsky et al., 2016). Tarbetsky et al. (2016, p. 68) suggest that “one explanation for why Indigenous students reported entity beliefs may relate to the negative and nongrowth focused academic expectations, messages, and stereotypes to which they are systemically subjected”. How, then, do these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying at these prestigious independent Western boarding schools interpret the expectations of them by their teachers? Do these students perceive that their teachers’ expectations are affected by the students’ Indigeneity? Has this impacted on their academic self-efficacy?

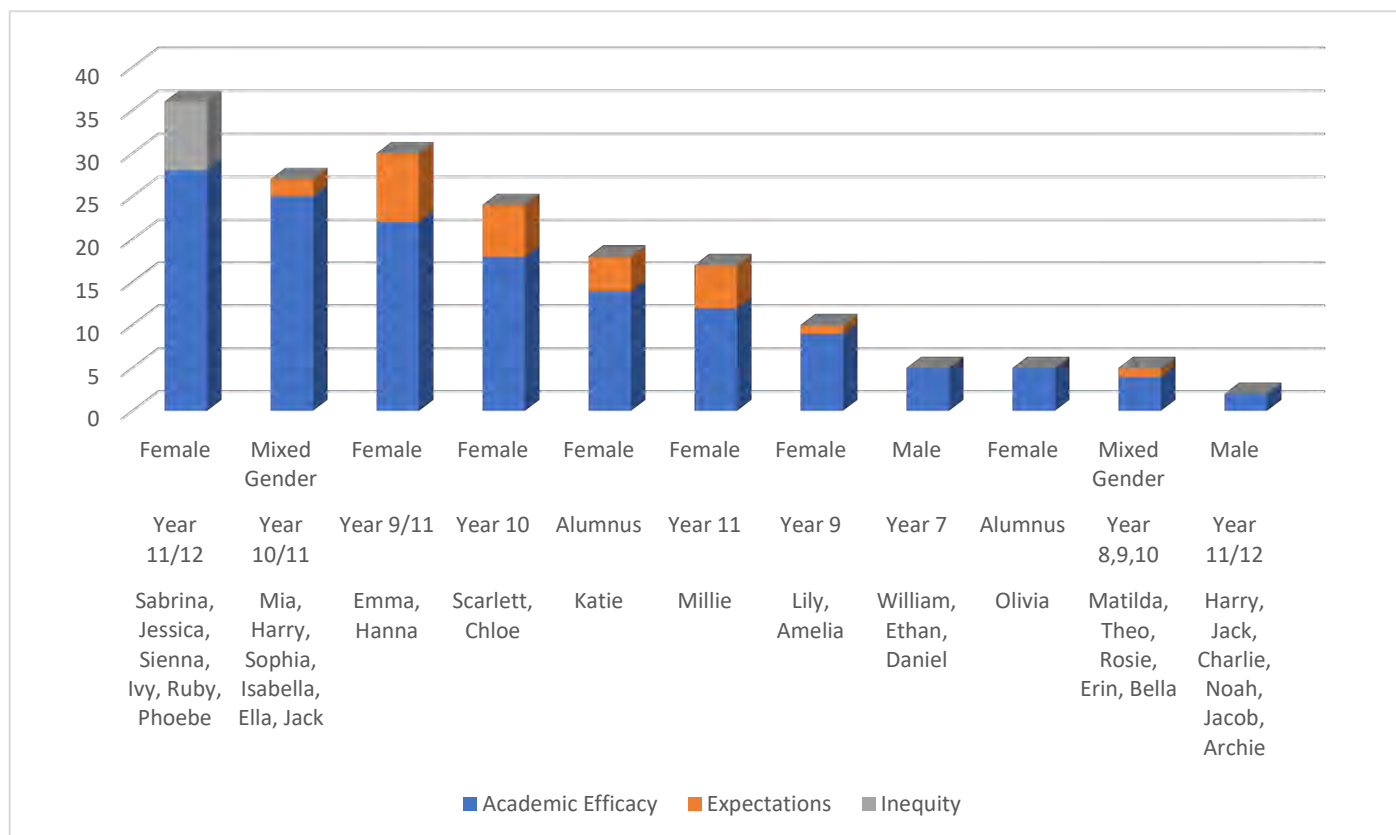
The theme of academic efficacy was explored through discussion questions such as, “Before you arrived at your new school, how did you feel about your academic confidence?” and “How academically challenging did you find the move to boarding school?”. Teacher attributions and expectations that impact on students’ efficacy beliefs (Riley, 2018; Riley & Ungerleider, 2012) were explored through questions such as: “How did the expectations of your teachers for Yalari students compare with their expectations for their other students?”, “How realistic are your teachers’ expectations?”, and “How do your teachers’ expectations compare with your own?” The nodes uncovered in the conversations that related to the academic efficacy of the participants along with descriptors of these nodes are shown in Table 5.6, while the frequencies of each are indicated in Table 5.7 and illustrated in Figure 5.6.

Table 5.6*Academic Efficacy Nodes and Descriptors*

Node	Descriptor
Efficacy	Comments relating to the perceived academic efficacy of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
Expectations	References made by the students regarding their teachers' expectations of them in the academic arena
Inequity	Examples of inequity in educational opportunities between home and boarding school identified by the students

Table 5.7*Frequency of Nodes Related to Academic Efficacy Throughout the Yarning Sessions*

Yarning Session	Grade	Gender	Academic efficacy	Expectations	Inequity
Sabrina, Jessica, Sienna, Ivy, Ruby, Phoebe	Year 11/12	Female	28	0	8
Mia, Harry, Sophia, Isabella, Ella, Jack	Year 10/11	Mixed Gender	25	2	0
Emma, Hanna	Year 9/11	Female	22	8	0
Scarlett, Chloe	Year 10	Female	18	6	0
Katie	Alumnus	Female	14	4	0
Millie	Year 11	Female	12	5	0
Lily, Amelia	Year 9	Female	9	1	0
William, Ethan, Daniel	Year 7	Male	5	0	0
Olivia	Alumnus	Female	5	0	0
Matilda, Theo, Rosie, Erin, Bella	Year 8,9,10	Mixed Gender	4	1	1
Harry, Jack, Charlie, Noah, Jacob, Archie	Year 11/12	Male	2	0	0

Figure 5.6*Academic Efficacy Coding Frequencies***5.5 Theme 3 – Identity**

From the work by Sarra (2011) in which he examined Aboriginal peoples' views of themselves as well as the views of "mainstream Australia" regarding Aboriginal people, comes the question: "Can you describe what being Aboriginal means?" Phinney (1989) investigated the developmental stages of ethnic identity in adolescent people belonging to minority groups. From that research that lead to the development of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992, 2010) come the questions: "Do you ever talk to parents or other adults about what it means to them to be Indigenous?" and "Have you thought about how being an Indigenous person will make a difference in your life as an adult?", both investigating the level of exploration of identity by the students, and "Are there things you

especially like or enjoy about your own cultural background?” and “Are there any specific ideas or things you consider to be strengths of your culture?”, exploring the concept of commitment to their identity. From several examinations of the Yarning transcripts, the sibling nodes under the parent node Identity were identified and described, as presented in Table 5.8, with the frequency of each node recorded in Table 5.9 and illustrated in Figure 5.7.

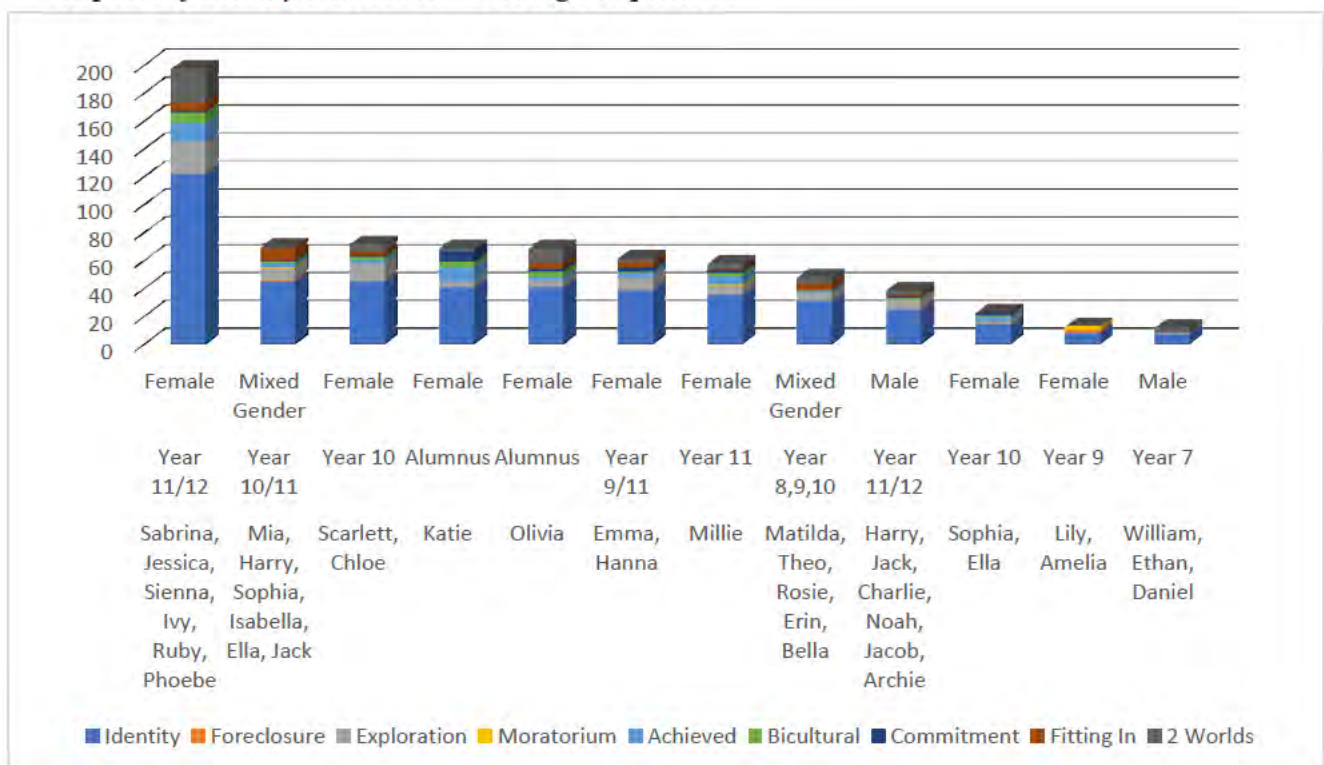
Table 5.8

Identity Nodes and Descriptors

Name	Descriptor
Identity	
Foreclosure	Committed to a sense of identity without exploration, usually based on parental and family values, and the starting point for children in families and communities
Exploration	Individuals explore sources of knowledge of identity as they seek to understand their identity, often with some level of anxiety
Moratorium	The individual has undergone high levels of identity exploration but achieved a low level of commitment - identity not yet achieved as the individual transitions from childhood to adulthood
Achievement	A firm commitment is made to one's identity following a significant period of exploration, internalising one's ethnicity
Bicultural - integration	The individual identifies with both the mainstream and traditional cultures and is able to move readily and comfortably between them
Commitment	Committed to one's choice of identity, shown by engagement in activities that are in keeping with identity characteristics
Fitting in	Strategies employed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students to develop friendships and belonging at school and home and the importance of this to the students
Living in two worlds	Perceptions of those at home and the need students feel to adjust to each transition from home to boarding school to home again along with the strategies they employ through these transitions

Table 5.9*Frequency of Nodes Related to Identity Throughout the Yarning Sessions*

Yarning Session	Grade	Gender	Identity	Foreclosure	Explore,	Moratorium	Achievement	Bicultural	Commit.	Fitting In	2 Worlds
Sabrina, Jessica, Sienna, Ivy, Ruby, Phoebe	11/12	Female	121	0	23	0	14	7	1	7	24
Mia, Harry, Sophia, Isabella, Ella, Jack	10/11	Mixed	44	1	8	1	3	1	1	9	1
Scarlett, Chloe	10	Female	44	0	13	0	3	2	1	3	5
Katie	Alum.	Female	40	0	4	0	10	4	8	0	2
Olivia	Alum.	Female	40	0	5	0	2	4	2	4	11
Emma, Hanna	9/11	Female	38	0	9	0	3	1	3	4	3
Millie	11	Female	34	0	7	1	6	2	2	1	4
Matilda, Theo, Rosie, Erin, Bella	8,9,10	Mixed	30	0	6	0	2	0	0	5	4
Harry, Jack, Charlie, Noah, Jacob, Archie	11/12	Male	24	0	7	0	0	1	1	1	4
Sophia, Ella	10	Female	13	0	3	0	3	1	2	0	0
Lily, Amelia	9	Female	7	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
William, Ethan, Daniel	7	Male	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4

Figure 5.7*Aspects of Identity Formation – Coding Frequencies*

5.7 Theme 4 – Experiences of Racism

Through their systematic study of the literature, Moodie et al. (2019) found a tendency by teachers to attribute the difficulties and problems faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in schools to their families, generated from deficit assumptions about the intelligence, talents, and abilities of Indigenous students. Wall and Baker described a new racism that is “far more subtle and, potentially, sinister” (2012, p. 55). This “new racism”, unlike the past overt racism, results in the negative stereotyping of minority group individuals with the potentially harmful consequence of these negative attributes being adopted by individuals as they continue to determine and develop their identities (Dandy et al., 2015; Moodie et al., 2019; Riley, 2018; Riley & Ungerleider, 2012; Wall & Baker, 2012). It is experiences of this new racism that the participants in this study were more likely to encounter, as shown through their conversations around experiences of stereotyping and tokenism combined with an ignorance of the multifaceted nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

In a conversation with Llew Mullins, current Managing Director of Yalari, in referring to the pressure students felt to “drop out” and return to their communities before completing school, she described the “crabs in the bucket” metaphor (L. Mullins, personal communication, September 9, 2017). This metaphor explains how a single crab in a bucket will attempt to crawl out, but once there are more than one, the crabs will remain in the bucket without the need for a lid. If a crab does attempt to crawl out, the other crabs will drag it back in. This metaphor is described elsewhere (Rangwala, 2017; Ronneberg, 2013) as a contentment with mediocrity and a resentment of those who would strive to improve upon their current circumstances, in this context through leaving their community to attend an independent boarding school. There is a contention that racism cannot be a manifestation of behaviour of a minority towards a majority, powerful racial group, nor can it be an intraracial

behaviour, as definitions of racism have differing emphases on colonialism, economic power, hostility, and social constructs (Weizmann, 2003). Clark (2004), however, recognised the power differential that can exist within a group leading to discriminatory behaviours towards members of that group and refers to this as intragroup racism. It is this power differential that some of the Yalari students identified in their Yarning conversations. Nodes related to the experiences of racism described by the participants and their descriptors are shown in Table 5.10 with the frequency of their occurrence shown in Table 5.11 and illustrated in Figure 5.8.

Table 5.10

Experiences of Racism Nodes and Descriptors

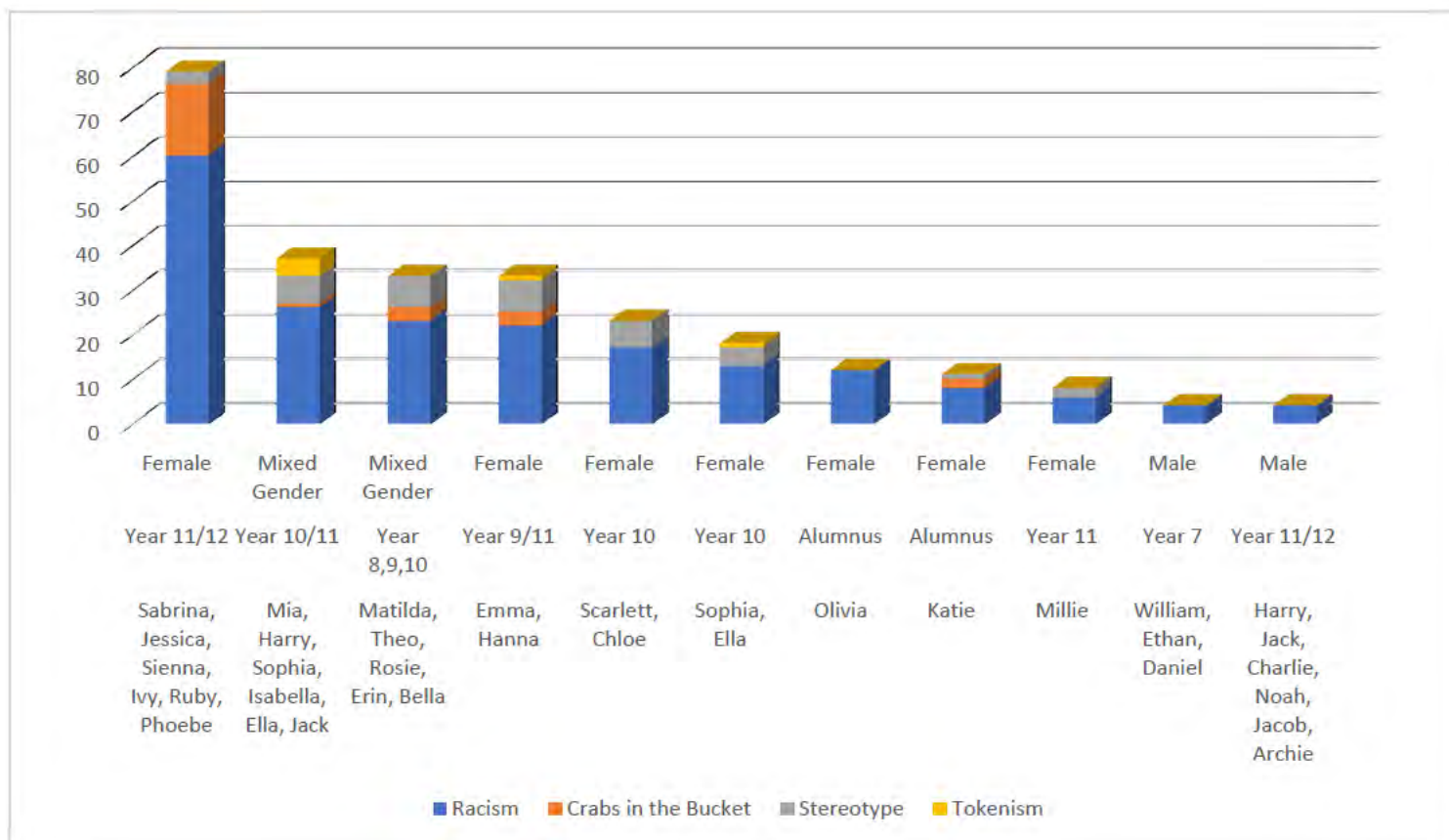
Name	Descriptor
Experiences of racism	Difficulties and prejudices faced by the students at school and at home because of their indigeneity, intentional or unintentional
“Crabs in the bucket”	Analogy used to describe the pressure for these students to not return to boarding school, but to remain in their community, most often from peers at home: as the crab tries to crawl out of the bucket, it is dragged back in again by those not wanting it to succeed
Stereotype	Individuals’ and schools’ unawareness that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are from different tribal and cultural backgrounds and nations, not simply “Indigenous”; also relates to experiences of behaviours directed towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students based on assumptions made about their Indigeneity
Tokenism	Occasional exploitation or purely symbolic recognition of Indigenous students, for example when celebrating NAIDOC as a one-off event with no follow through or lead in activity.

Table 5.11

Frequency of Nodes Related to Experiences of Racism Throughout the Yarning Sessions

Yarning Session	Grade	Gender	Racism	“Crabs in the Bucket”	Stereotype	Tokenism
Sabrina, Jessica, Sienna, Ivy, Ruby, Phoebe	Year 11/12	Female	60	16	3	0
Mia, Harry, Sophia, Isabella, Ella, Jack	Year 10/11	Mixed	26	1	6	4

Matilda, Theo, Rosie, Erin, Bella	Year 8,9,10	Mixed	23	3	7	0
Emma, Hanna	Year 9/11	Female	22	3	7	1
Scarlett, Chloe	Year 10	Female	17	0	6	0
Sophia, Ella	Year 10	Female	13	0	4	1
Olivia	Alumnus	Female	12	0	0	0
Katie	Alumnus	Female	8	2	1	0
Millie	Year 11	Female	6	0	2	0
William, Ethan, Daniel	Year 7	Male	4	0	0	0
Harry, Jack, Charlie, Noah, Jacob, Archie	Year 11/12	Male	4	0	0	0

Figure 5.8*Experiences of Racism – Coding Frequencies*

5.8: Conclusion:

Through this chapter, each of the themes and sub-themes that emerged during the Yarning sessions has been defined and identified, and their frequency quantified. As explained in section 5.1: Introduction, this quantification is not intended to be used in any generalisations nor emerging theories. However, it does illustrate the difference in experiences of the various Yarning groups. Figure 5.8, for example, illustrates the relatively frequent experience of the “Crabs in the Bucket” conflict encountered by the senior girls as compared with the senior boys, for whom this does not appear to be a concern.

In the following chapter, Chapter 6: Findings, I discuss in detail and interpret in relation to academic efficacy and cultural identity development the content of the Yarning conversations. The reader may choose to refer back to the analysis in the current chapter in order to assess the integrity, trustworthiness and authenticity of these findings.

Chapter 6: Findings

6.1 Introduction

Reading through the transcripts of each of the Yarning sessions brings to light a series of major themes and sub-themes in the context of boarding. These themes – Culture, Academic efficacy, Identity, and Experiences of racism – are described below. The process employed in identifying these themes and sub-themes and the utilisation of the NVivo software in this process is described at the start of Chapter 6 – Analysis. Evidence from the Yarning sessions is used to provide support for the identification of the themes arising from the research. Throughout, I seek to find a balance between my interpretation of and commentary on the conversations and the evidence emanating from the participants in the Yarning conversations relating to each of the themes and sub-themes.

In keeping with CGT, each of the themes is examined in turn, privileging the voices of the participants, comparing these with the literature, and examining the intersection of these within the context of immersion in a majority non-Indigenous urban boarding school experience. While the four themes and sub-themes are examined independently, as will be apparent through the reading of this chapter there is clear interrelatedness between the themes, as illustrated in Figure 2.1 in Section 2.2.

6.2 The Research Question Revisited

In order to keep the findings of the research in context, prior to the identification of themes and sub-themes it is useful to restate the central research question and the six sub-questions that help to refine and focus an understanding of the central question:

- *Is it possible for these young people, as they engage in the primary psycho-social purpose of adolescence, to explore and establish their sense of Racial- Ethnic-Cultural (REC) identity as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or must they*

forgo this in order to develop the academic self-efficacy needed to succeed as scholars in the boarding school communities in which they find themselves?

- o What coping mechanisms have these students developed to manage the cultural transitions to and from school and home?
- o How, if at all, does REC identity affect academic self-efficacy for these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship students?
- o In what ways do these students identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the environment of the boarding school?
- o To what extent have these students commenced an exploration of and a commitment to their Indigenous identity, using as a framework, the four-identity statuses paradigm?
- o How has the academic self-efficacy and REC identity of these students been impacted on by their membership of the independent boarding school community?
- o What support mechanisms are in place and how successful have these been in enabling the students' academic self-efficacy and REC identity?

6.3 Emergent Themes

As the Yarning sessions all took place during the school holidays and in the context of the Walk to Cherbourg – sitting around the campsite, at times while sharing a meal following a day's walking, talking and participating in different activities – there was a need to re-centre the groups within the context of the students' boarding school experiences. This context was set by me at the early stages of each of the sessions by asking the participants initially to reflect upon their original thoughts regarding what they recalled was most exciting about the prospect of starting boarding school. From there, the conversations developed to look more deeply at their subsequent experiences in boarding and at home and how boarding

has influenced their sense of who they are as young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

As described in the previous chapter, four broad themes emerged out of the Yarning group conversations with students. Within each of these broad themes (Culture, Identity, Experiences of racism, and Academic efficacy) a number of sub-themes were identified that will be explored in further detail within each sub-section of this chapter. As the Yalari students' experiences of these constructs occurred within the context of immersion in a boarding school, it is useful to understand their overarching impressions of boarding.

6.4 Experiences of Boarding

“And it was just exciting to know I was going to a boarding school, like a girl from Dubbo.

Yeah, it was pretty good.” Chloe

In 2004, Noel Pearson, Indigenous leader, a boarding student alumnus of St Peter's Lutheran College, Brisbane (Pearson, 2017), and Director of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, described in an article he authored for *The Australian* newspaper titled “No danger of another Stolen Generation” (Pearson, 2004), that:

Almost all of the Indigenous people from remote Australia who have succeeded in education and gone on to make leading contributions on behalf of their people were educated at boarding schools - often a long way from their homes, most often at church schools. In Cape York Peninsula, no Aboriginal tertiary graduates have come from local public secondary schools.

Pearson makes the point that attendance at boarding schools is not a new phenomenon for Indigenous Australians, although the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian students attending independent city boarding schools on scholarship has risen to around 2,350 since the formation of organisations such as the Australian Indigenous

Education Foundation (AIEF), founded in 2007 (AIEF, 2019) and Yalari, founded in 2005 (Yalari, 2016). Throughout the Yarning conversations, the negative and positive effects of boarding on the participants became apparent. These effects on the students' sense of belonging and community, sense of identity, experiences of racism, and their academic efficacy at times presented the students with challenges.

6.4.1 *Negative Attributions of Boarding*

The simple act of getting from community to boarding school, becoming familiar with differences in physical environment compared with home and, once at boarding school, communicating with home, presented challenges for Olivia, a Yalari alumnus participating in the walk, that in all probability would not have been experienced by the rest of the non-Indigenous girls in the boarding house. Olivia is the oldest child in a single-parent family from a community in regional Queensland. She recalls some of the challenges she faced as she commenced her journey into boarding school life after receiving her scholarship. Olivia's mother does not drive; the family does not have a car; their landline telephone had been cut off following failure to pay the bills. Her mother could not afford to use a mobile phone to call her while Olivia was at boarding school, and Olivia herself had very limited finances. While it is possible that there would have been non-Indigenous students in receipt of scholarships attending Olivia's boarding school, given the fees charged for boarding in the vicinity of \$20,000 per year in addition to tuition fees (The Good Schools Guide, 2019), it is unlikely that the fee-paying students in the boarding house would experience these same challenges and constraints. Olivia recalls these challenges:

I'm the only one in my family that has a license, so, it was, my mum had to ask another family to take us to boarding school. So, she asked her best mate, and then we went there, and it was like a maze... I got lost so many times, I

honestly did. Like, my family don't really have a house phone [landline], I don't know, because of bills or whatever, but like, we didn't have a house phone. Therefore, they never, my mum couldn't ring me. So, I had to ask for the [boarding] house phone all the time. And it got on the, the boarding houses didn't really like it much, but I haven't spoken to my mum in two weeks, I'm having a rough time. My mum can't ring me, and I don't have money to ring her. (Olivia)

While all students enrolled in boarding schools may endure homesickness, particularly during their early days of boarding, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students the effect can be more widespread and have a deeper impact. Risk factors that can accentuate experiences of homesickness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students include language and cultural differences, which can have the effect of causing students to feel isolated through immersion into a dominant cultural experience quite different from their home and community (Bobongie, 2017a; Macdonald et al., 2018; O'Bryan, 2016).

O'Bryan (2016) identified a number of influences that add to the experiences of homesickness. These include even the most basic organisational and structural differences such as routines, school uniforms, and size of the boarding schools which, in some instances, exceed the size of the population in students' home communities. Along with differences in the type of food served as meals and the affluence of their boarding peers are the separation from Country, loss of personal agency and hence feeling a lack of control, an inability to attend to family and cultural expectations and responsibilities, and a sense that no one at school or home truly understands their predicament. These factors have been identified in this current study as contributing to the experience of homesickness (Mander et al., 2015b; O'Bryan, 2016).

When asked what the greatest challenge was that they faced on starting boarding school, the participants in the third Yarning group, consisting of Year 10 and 11 girls and boys, answered almost in unison “Homesickness!” (Multiple participants). Some students, such as Mia, noted the difficulty of “just moving from one small place to another” whereas other students such as Harry noted how “not having your parents to help you out” could present a sense of isolation. Other students, like Jack, noted the difficulties of having to adhere to a new schedule. He notes, “Schedule. Living off, you know, set times for like, a whole day! It’s pretty hard to adjust to”.

The older Year 11 and 12 boys in the fifth Yarning group had similar observations around transition, particularly in relation to size, schedule, and community interactions, as the following quotes demonstrate:

Also, the big change from going, like, to a small-town school with no more than 200 people to a school with thousands of people. It was quite difficult to take on. (Jacob)

There’s a lot more routine at school, whereas home’s a bit more free. And our, like, relationships at both places are different. Completely different. (Charlie)

The older Year 11 and 12 girls articulated the challenges they faced also, with homesickness being the first to come to mind, as Jessica notes: “Yeah, definitely being away from home and your family. And the things that you are used to. The whole life change” (Jessica).

For some of the students this homesickness stemmed from the transition of coming from a community where they were members of the majority cultural group to now finding themselves in a position of a minority within an unfamiliar setting, as Ruby’s remarks demonstrate.

Like being Indigenous, like you come from like a more bigger [sic] group of like people. And like, I don't know but you just call everyone your family.

(Ruby)

In comparing the Indigenous experience with the experience of transition to boarding school for non-Indigenous children, Sienna observed:

I feel like the specifics is too, like the culture's different, so that things that we, like, our culture's different, so where we come from and where we go to school it would be different. Whereas for non-Indigenous Australians, it wouldn't be much of a difference from where they came from and where they're going to school. Whereas I don't know, like traditional foods, that would be different. And things that you do with your family, that's traditional, that would be different. (Sienna)

Her friend, Ivy, agrees and observes that:

There's nothing you can do about it. Like there's always going to be someone out there and like, the White kids back at our school are always going to think it's so weird, because they're nothing like us. They go home and it's just the same for them. They're the same all around, where we're like two different people in two different places. (Ivy)

Both students' comments reflect the fact that they do not see their values and culture reflected at them in the school, whereas there is a recognition that the school reflects similar norms and values to those of their non-Indigenous peers. They have articulated the challenges they face in finding themselves learning to live in two worlds. Scarlett, a girl in Year 10, shared a conversation she had with another Indigenous boarding student who struggled with the cultural dissonance she encountered as a boarding school student. She recalls:

Like, one of the girls, she got really upset because, like, she still speaks her language and stuff and she did all, like, things with her family, and that [boarding] pretty much took her away from it and stuff. So like she felt really upset about it. Like, it's a great opportunity, she said, but like, she can't do, like, the tribal things in the holidays and she misses out on a lot of things.

(Scarlett)

O'Bryan (2016), in a qualitative research project exploring the experience of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who had attended boarding school, found that, rather than the conventional wisdom in the literature suggesting keeping students busy and occupied being the best way to overcome homesickness, the alumni she interviewed identified relational factors as being the key. Moreton-Robinson, in her thesis examining Aboriginal women and feminism in Australia, discussed the centrality of relationships in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture: "Relationality means that one experiences the self as part of others and others as part of the self" (2000, p. 16). Keddie (2014) described an Indigenous epistemology of relationality with family connections, community, and kinship at the core. This epistemology recognises that everything has its place in a system in which relationships are both inclusive and tolerant of difference. She reports a conversation with an Aboriginal Elder who expressed the importance of relationality to Indigenous peoples in this way:

I think that's what a lot of people don't understand, a lot of teachers don't understand ... [is that] family and kinship are more important than school or whatever else is going on in their lives ... that's just the way we are. I'm not saying that it isn't important in other [cultures] but ... it's more, you know, of a priority. Our family comes first ... in Indigenous families, because it's so family oriented, if one person is upset or dysfunctional or whatever you like to

call it, that behaviour issue, you'll find that the whole family will try to get in there and support it and that means they'll miss school because the school at that time is not important. (Keddie, 2014, pp. 64-65)

While colonisation of Australia has resulted in damage and disturbance to traditional kinship relationality amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians through the impact of such policies as the forced removal of children, culturally destructive assimilation, and dispossession from their land and communities, Indigenous people continue to maintain their relational epistemological worldview, described by Dudgeon and Bray as “the continuation of strong and dynamic kinship relations between Indigenous women, their families, communities and their land [which] has also been the source of growing forms of resistance against cultural destruction” (2019, p. 2). The currency of relationality is reflected in the words of another student, Jessica, who discusses the protocols observed at gatherings in her home community:

It's respect. It's just a massive respect thing.... Or even if like a little kid or, like a, I don't know, like a 5-year-old, wants something from an older person but they're not related to them, you'll say oh, go and ask Nan Ruby [referring to another girl, Ruby, in the Yarning group] for that. It's just respect. Like, you would hate for a little kid, if you were at a family reunion and you're Aboriginal and the little kid comes up to you and calls you by your name and you're older than them. In a way that's disrespectful. So, you say oh, call them Aunty, Uncle, cousin. Like I have uncles, but I'm not related to them, if that makes sense. (Jessica)

The observations of researchers such as Keddie (2014) and Moreton-Robinson (2000) were further reinforced during the Yarning sessions. For example, Olivia discusses the

importance of how being near someone who can relate to your culture and experience makes a difference. She notes:

I had Nellie, which is my cousin, but she was 3 years above me. And that was very difficult, because we were barely in the same boarding house. We also had a girl above me, but we weren't really the same. We're from the same community but we just, I don't know, there was something, we weren't on the same level. And then until the year below me, a girl came, and it was exactly the same, and it made everything so good. Like, we were there for each other.
(Olivia)

Sophia's comments also reflect the importance of familiarity in an unfamiliar environment. She explains:

I struggled fitting in in general. Because there was only one other Indigenous girl at my school; She was a Yalari student in the year above me. So, it was a bit hard, because no-one actually understood anything, and was kind of ignorant towards like, the way we do things, and almost teased me for the way I used to talk and whatever. But yeah, yeah that was the hard part. (Sophia)

The value of peer support of the young Yalari scholars, particularly during the early stages of their boarding experience as they initially transitioned from their home community, is a recurring theme through the Yarning conversations.

Having friends who can help ease the transition and perhaps make it easier to build bridges between the two cultures was noted also by Ruby, who similarly depends upon her relationships with her Yalari friends to make the transition from home back into the boarding school environment. However, her statement also reveals that she still feels a need to adapt and adjust her accent and spoken language to the covert norms of the boarding school:

Well, I know that when I go back to school, I make sure that I spend like the first week with the Yalari kids.... Then I can have someone who won't judge me for like, you know, but we'll work together to get back into the habit, of like, talking in the other accent. Yeah. (Ruby)

Most school age students from Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal backgrounds speak a variety of Creole such as Yumplatok, the most common language of the Torres Strait, or Aboriginal English as their first language (Harrison & Sellwood, 2016). It is through this first language that these young people learn about their world, form relationships, and express themselves and their feelings.

There was no indication through any of the Yarning sessions that the boarding schools attended by the Yalari students considered the fact that, for many of them, Standard Australian English (SAE) is their second language, hence the need to transition from their home language to SAE each time they return to school following a holiday period. This transitional phase and its inherent difficulties are highlighted by the comments of Chloe and Ruby above. Reflecting on her time prior to boarding, while attending a local primary school, Katie related her difficulties at school based on her language. Loss of language is associated with detrimental consequences for mental health and well-being, impacting negatively on young Aboriginal people (Sivak et al., 2019). Through her research with Indigenous Inuit youth in Canada, Owen concluded that Indigenous languages provide “a vessel of cultural knowledge, traditions and beliefs; a source of pride when spoken and a source of shame when not” (2011, p. 159). Significantly, Katie did find that her confidence as a student grew through her boarding experience. She relays:

I'd say I was an average student; I definitely wasn't—I definitely didn't have the confidence at [primary] school, but I did ask questions. Yeah, I think that was one of the main things, I don't think I had the confidence to learn. My

family were really persistent on us learning, but just my background and, like, I couldn't speak as well as the other students because I spoke like, a mixture of Aboriginal and English. [...] We speak, like, Creole, so it's a mix between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and English as well, so it was really hard—well, just the way we—like, our pronunciations were different, our upbringing was so different that like, obviously some things like, I wouldn't look teachers in the eye or I wouldn't—I would fidget a lot when talking to people. I still fidget a lot but it was kind of, I don't know, I just didn't have the confidence in myself to really stick at something and I got that through boarding school. (Katie)

All students who leave home to attend boarding schools confront difficulties in adjusting to an environment different from that which they leave at home (Sheffield et al., 2013). However, in addition to the challenges faced by boarders from backgrounds with similar cultural norms and structures, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students on boarding scholarships face extra difficulties such as means of travel, adapting to a significantly different physical and cultural environment, exacerbated homesickness that accompanies the cultural and language differences encountered, and the transition from the majority ethnic group to a minority.

6.4.2 *Positive Attributions of Boarding*

Question 8 of the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census form asks, “Where does the person usually live?” The instructions for answering this question include “For boarders at boarding school, write the address of the boarding school or college” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). While this does not necessarily reflect the thoughts of the parents or students, the requirement for students to identify the boarding school, as opposed to their

actual home, as their nominal place of residence for the majority of the year represents the significance of the decision made by parents and children to leave their communities for extended periods of time and to travel, in some cases, great distances to attend a boarding school.

Given the possibility that many of the staff and students at their chosen school may have a limited awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, key stakeholders would need to have a strong conviction in the agency and benefits of the education on offer (Mander, 2015; Mander et al., 2015a). Through the Yarning conversations, students were able to identify their positive expectations and experiences of boarding. Many of the participants referred to their perceptions that the quality of education and resources available to them would be of a much higher standard than what was available to them in their home communities. They also referred to expanding their experiences through exposure to a greater diversity of people and culture than their home environments enabled. For example, Millie notes:

I think one of the most exciting things for me was that, you know, being in such a small town and getting this opportunity to go to a big city and get the education that not most Aboriginal kids are fortunate enough to get. I think that also going into the big world and experiencing different cultures, languages, and communities; I think that was one of the most exciting things.
(Millie)

Other students discussed the opportunities they felt the boarding school provided. During the conversation with Matilda (Year 10), Theo (Year 8), and Rosie, Erin, and Bella (Year 9), they noted that there were more opportunities for sporting and educational pursuits. Bella noted that it helped them “to get away from bad influences and stuff”, referring to the

behaviours of some of their peers at home who had become involved in substance abuse and truanting behaviours. Other students noted how simple acts from their peers helped them to adjust to feelings of homesickness. For example, Theo notes that “The boys, when I first got there, I was really nervous, but all the boys came out and asked if I wanted to kick the footy and made me feel welcome.” Support from peers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, played a large role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ feelings of acceptance and belonging, reducing the angst of missing home, which is exemplified in Sophia’s observation that the “best thing about being a Yalari student is I get extra sisters at my school.” Scarlett also discusses how her initial concerns about not fitting in were placated when she was introduced to another student, Emma, with whom she felt she could relate. She reflects:

Yeah, and I was worried. But like, when I had Emma [Yalari Year 11] with me, I was thinking like, you know, “There’s nothing to worry about.” Like it took a while to get used to because everyone was like, “Oh, what does that word mean, like, why are you saying that?” Like, you know, but after a while when I made my really good friends and stuff, like, they knew who I was as a person and they wouldn’t judge me by like, what I look like or what I sound like. (Scarlett)

Scarlett’s experience is indicative of the benefits of having a peer mentor in the boarding house being assigned to the Indigenous students as they commence their boarding experience, at least in the initial stages of settling in and finding their place. While students such as Scarlett were in a boarding school that has in place a formalised peer support program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students entering boarding, not all students indicated the existence of such programs in their schools. Jacob, a Year 11 student, when discussing the challenges he faced on entering boarding school in Year 7, referred to his

treatment by some of the older students that was a challenge throughout his transition to boarding; a challenge that may have been eased had his school had in place a peer support program:

I'd probably say dealing with a lot of the older guys. Because especially when we started there was, like, a lot of the hierarchy going on still. So yeah, they'd pick on the younger students. (Jacob)

Before commencing their boarding school journey, all Yalari scholars participate in an Orientation Camp held at one of the partner boarding schools, towards the conclusion of the Christmas vacation immediately prior to the commencement of the school year. The purpose of this camp is to prepare the students for boarding school life through sleeping in the boarding houses, eating their meals in the school's dining hall, and participating in activities and presentations that facilitate connections between the young students and older Yalari students who attend the camp in the role of student mentors.

In Year 9, the students attend two separate, gender-specific Year 9 Central Australia Camps. These camps immerse the students in an Indigenous Australian cultural experience while focussing on strengthening relationships and leadership skills. Once they reach Year 11, the students participate in an experience that is planned in a university setting, with exposure to cultural and creative activities and presentations and vocational workshops as they commence their senior schooling years (Yalari, 2019). These support programs are supplemented by the Student Support Officers (SSOs) allocated to each school. These Yalari personnel are responsible for acting as mentors for the students, regularly checking in with them and, as needed, liaising between the students, the school, the students' parents and the Yalari organisation (Yalari, 2016).

Despite the support programs in place, their effectiveness is mixed. Sophia, for example, when talking about the efficacy of these support services, reported that her school currently had no one designated as an Indigenous liaison officer or SSO and further observes:

I find that the only support I can really have is through the other Yalari students at my school. Like us mob, we all meet up in one of the senior students' rooms, and we all just kick back, and we talk about school and whatever. And just like, all the stuff that goes on. Like anything stupid [non-Indigenous] girls say and whatever. And we just tell each other how to handle it and whatever. Like that's the best support that we've got at my school.

(Sophia)

Despite not always having the formal support they felt they needed, many students expressed their satisfaction with the increase of educational opportunities and learning experiences the boarding schools brought into their lives. For some students, it was the opportunity to make new friends and meet new people, "Yeah, I was really happy to just like, have a fresh start and just make new friends", whereas for others it was about experiences and additional resources, as noted by both Hannah and Emma:

Well, just there was nothing to do at home, and like, the school there was, like, you just go to school, you go home, but in Sydney like, that was like, oh my God, you can go to Harbour Bridge now, they can do fun things. (Hannah)

Yeah. At my old school, it wasn't too flash, you know, it wasn't good. And there was just nothing to do in Tennant Creek, so you get bored really easy.

And it's just same thing, like, repetitive. (Emma)

Katie, one of the two alumni on the walk, made a clear distinction between what she saw as positive about her boarding experience and what she saw as most exciting. She states:

The most positive thing, I don't like – I think exciting and positive are different things, so the most positive thing was that I was getting out of my community. At that point I don't think there was anything left for me in Coen in Cape York where we were living. I think there wasn't anything – to be honest I don't think there was anything for Cairns or – like, a Cairns school could have given me. And the exciting thing was obviously like, that I got to try new things, like, try every sport under the sun and just make new friends and have new experiences, which I shared with my twin, yeah. (Katie)

The youngest of the students, the three Year 7 boys, William, Ethan, and Daniel, had similar responses and agreed that the boarding school provided them with more opportunities in relation to “meeting new people” and receiving a “better education” or even simply, “Just trying to get out of the house and just have fun”.

6.5 Culture

“I think being away from home and still staying connected with my culture, it's made me want, like, it's made me identify as more of an Indigenous person. Because I'm wanting to stay in contact with my culture.” Jessica

Six sub-themes were identified in the transcripts related to the overarching theme of Culture. These are Regard, Belonging and community, Language, Kinship, Cultural differences, and Cultural ignorance. In identity theory, the concept of “regard” is considered a measure of one's positive feelings towards one's race and culture. Private regard refers to the range of positive or negative feelings an individual holds regarding their ethnicity and culture, which is, in this case, about being an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian. Public regard refers to the perception the individual has towards how society regards themselves, which again, in this case, is as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Australians (Sellers et al., 1998). Exploration and development of identity is a key task during adolescence (Crocetti et al., 2008; Erikson, 1968; Kroger et al., 2010) and the personal regard one has towards their ethnicity, as well as to how one perceives that their ethnicity is regarded by others, plays a strong role in the development of one's ethnic identity (D. Hughes et al., 2011). As adolescents transition from membership of a majority racial ethnic group to a minority group, as is the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian students attending city boarding schools, their perceptions of their ethnicity are central to their identity formation (D. Hughes et al., 2011).

While the perceptions of how others may view an individual's ethnic group (public regard) do not necessarily impact the individual's private regard (Perkins et al., 2014), beliefs about both public and private regard may influence an individual's well-being, academic motivation, and school engagement (D. Hughes et al., 2011). In an investigation into private regard and public regard among ethnic minority adolescents entering middle schooling in the United States, the researchers observed that "school transitions may constitute an encounter experience that stimulates youth to feel more attached to their ethnic group and view group membership more favourably" (D. Hughes et al., 2011, p. 862); that is, the transition may impact positively on the individual's private regard. For example, in a longitudinal study, researchers explored the development of ethnic identity in adolescents transitioning from a relatively homogenous community to a more ethnically diverse heterogeneous environment (French et al., 2006), finding that this transition led to identity exploration amongst the minority youth, which in turn resulted in heightening their private regard and thus raising their self-esteem.

These findings were reflected and supported through the responses made by the students in this study when asked if they felt they were more or less proud to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander having had the boarding school experience. The conversation

began with the belief that it shouldn't matter whether one was living in the home community or elsewhere and evolved from there. The young women reflected on the fact that they were proud of their culture and understood identity as going beyond where one lives, what one looks like, and how one acts, as the following dialogue highlights:

Phoebe: It shouldn't matter how you act or where you live or whatever the situation is. At the end of the day you're still Indigenous, it doesn't matter if, I could be living in Canada or have a Chinese accent, but at the end of the day I'm still Indigenous.

Jessica: As long as you know where you're from, and identity isn't about where you live, it's about where you come from and what you think of yourself as a person.

Sabrina: And it should never be something you want to give up. Especially our culture, because it's so old and like ...

Ivy: ... Rich.

Sabrina: Yeah, it's like, you should never give it away. And even if I was still living up at home, I'd think of myself still the same as today, if I didn't go to boarding school.

Phoebe: And I've got a cousin who's like, pale white, grew up on the Sunshine Coast. But he like, still sees himself, like, he calls himself Torres Strait Islander and stuff like that. If you choose to identify and recognise it then you're Indigenous. Doesn't matter if you don't, like, act, in quotations [gesticulates quotation marks] yeah.

Jessica: If anything, I think being away from home and still staying connected with my culture, it's made me want, like, it's made me identify as more of an Indigenous person. Because I'm wanting to stay in contact with my culture.

Ivy: But then again at school, like, you're known as the black girl too ...

Jessica: Yeah, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. And it keeps you thinking, like, but even going home and seeing a lot of the kids up at home, they don't necessarily do a lot of things to stay in contact with their culture because they're always around it. Whereas us being away, I guess you put in effort, which makes you, like, want it more, just to stay in contact with it.

Throughout the Yarning sessions, students reflected a positive private regard in that their responses reflected several examples of pride in their Indigeneity. This was frequently accompanied by comments also indicating a strong positive public regard in that they perceived those around them were interested in their cultural identity. Nine of the participants across six of the Yarning groups related examples of sharing cultural aspects of their Indigeneity following the interest shown by their non-Indigenous school peers and teachers, as the following statements reveal:

I always tell my non-Indigenous friends about my culture. Like what we experience, what we go through and all this sort of stuff. I mean, on their behalf, they love hearing stuff like that. So, I think, again, it's like, it has to come from both sides where they want to connect. (Millie)

I was the only Indigenous girl in my year.... But the girls were like, interested in like, hearing about my stories and stuff, like, I'd tell them like, stuff I'd, yeah, like, culture stuff, and they were like, really interested and they didn't

really pick on me or anything; they were fine. Like, we'd sing songs and I'd, like, teach them really Aboriginal songs and stuff. (Ella)

The Year 11 and 12 boys also spoke about the interest shown in their culture and home life as well as their willingness to share their stories with their boarding school peers and teachers, again reflecting positive perceptions of both private and public regard. Jacob notes:

That's a big one for me. At my school, like, all Year 12s, some of them are pretty interested about Indigenous culture and I, like, tell them what I do back at home, you know? And they tell me, you know, what's it like? You know. It's simple. (Jacob)

Noah agrees and adds:

Yeah, like. Teachers are also. They always come up to me and ask me about my hometown, my people and I tell them truthfully. Basic things about Indigenous people.... Yeah, if anything it's good because a lot of them, like, are very uneducated about the culture and stuff. So, it's good for them to get a sense of what it's like, for us. (Noah)

Amongst minority group adolescents, high public regard as illustrated by these participants' experiences can enhance positive identity development throughout their adolescence (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2017). A research project that involved three groups of adolescents – White, African American, and Chinese American – concluded that their experiences of positive public regard from their peers resulted in a more positive private regard, demonstrating that the “beliefs that others view one's group more favourably predicted more favourable personal evaluations” (D. Hughes et al., 2017, p. 2148). The willingness and enthusiasm of the participants to share their cultural knowledge and

understanding in the Yarning sessions was indicative of a positive private regard. This positive private regard can provide positive outcomes for these adolescents including improved psychological well-being and self-esteem, lower levels of stress and anxiety, and enhanced academic outcomes (Ho & Sidanius, 2010; D. Hughes et al., 2011).

Students' perceptions of public regard, however, were varied, with some participants reporting examples of others devaluing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' academic abilities. Ella, a Year 10 female student attending an all-girls boarding school in Sydney, relayed the following:

Like a lot of people automatically, when they find out that I'm Aboriginal, or anybody's Aboriginal, they automatically think I'm really, like, dumb. Like I'll get, like, an eighty percent, and somebody else will get an eighty percent, and somebody else and I will have the same marks. But then they'll automatically think that I'm stupid. Like friends, people in your year group, that kind of thing. (Ella)

Experiences of this nature can often be the consequence of bias and deficit preconceptions of minority groups based on "bits of knowledge of social groups" (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016, p. xii) that stem from a history of colonisation based on concepts of genetic inferiority. Sarra (2011) discusses the "native mind" hypothesis in the first half of the 20th century when it was considered that Aboriginal people had a lower intellect than that of the European settler population. Blake (2001, p. 61), discussing earlier times at Cherbourg State School, is cited by Sarra (2011, p. 54) as reporting:

Within the classroom, the basic objectives were to give "very elementary knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic". The state school syllabus was used as a guide as to what subjects were taught and how the curriculum was

organised. To accommodate the native mind, the amount of time spent in each grade was considerably longer than the usual twelve months.

This lowered expectation of Aboriginal peoples led to the implementation of modified syllabi with very basic objectives for numeracy and literacy. Sarra (2011) discussed the persistence of this deficit belief towards the intellectual capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians still held by some White Australians, stating, “Sadly, many schools in Queensland continue to find the notion that Aboriginal children have the capacity to perform as well as white children in schools challenging” (p. 54).

Researchers have also observed that deficit thinking, when delivered by one’s peers, can be particularly detrimental to an individual’s public regard. In an investigation examining public regard and African-American and Latino high school students, it was found that discriminatory messages from adults – a less influential source of feedback during adolescence – did not have the same impact that discriminatory messages from peers, a highly credible source for adolescents, had towards potentially negatively influencing the individual’s public regard (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2017). While experiences of stereotyping and prejudice related to REC identity as described above by Ella appeared to have limited negative influence on her private regard, there is still a risk that the notion that one’s ethnic identity is devalued by society will have a negative impact on one’s self-regard (D. Hughes et al., 2011), as Millie’s statement reveals:

I think that, for me, the clashes is [sic] with the more western boarders.

Because a lot of them come from Dubbo area and stuff like that. As you know, that's very, that can be a very racist area. Only because they see the side of Aboriginal people, they see the bad side, so they, I feel like most of them suddenly think, you know, all Aboriginals are like that. And I think that when

the girl came from the remote, when they seen that side, they thought, oh, you know, she's just like, the same stereotype of what an Aboriginal person is from where I'm from. (Millie)

When reflecting on the students' private and public regard as students transition into new educational environments, such as from junior to middle to high school, circumstances arise that provide for an increase in private regard with respect to their REC identity (French et al., 2006). Exposure to different environments with a population comprising a novel REC composition in comparison to that from which they have come may lead to the exploration of their REC identity by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents entering boarding schools. Boarding schools provide an environment in which the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students transition from a community in which they are members of the majority ethnic group to experiencing membership of a minority ethnic group (D. Hughes et al., 2017).

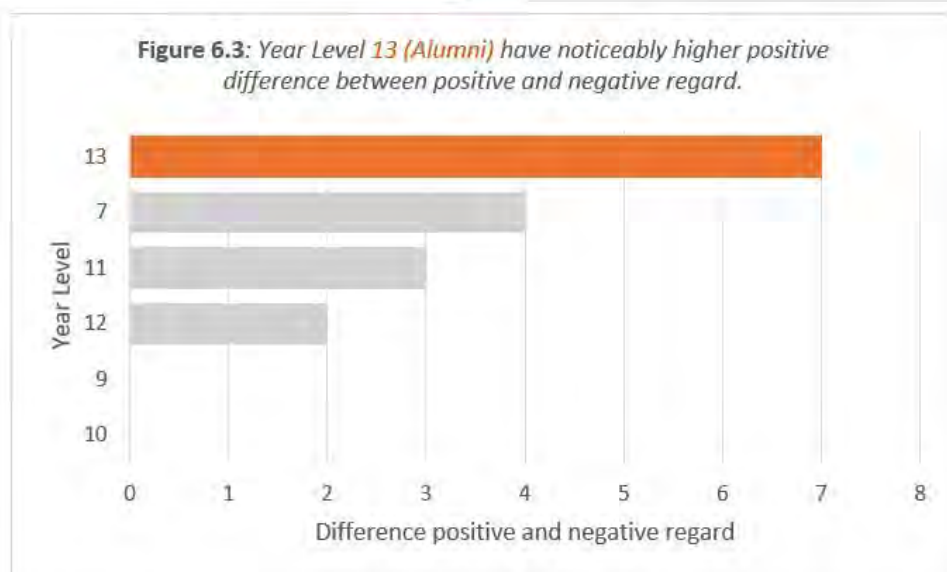
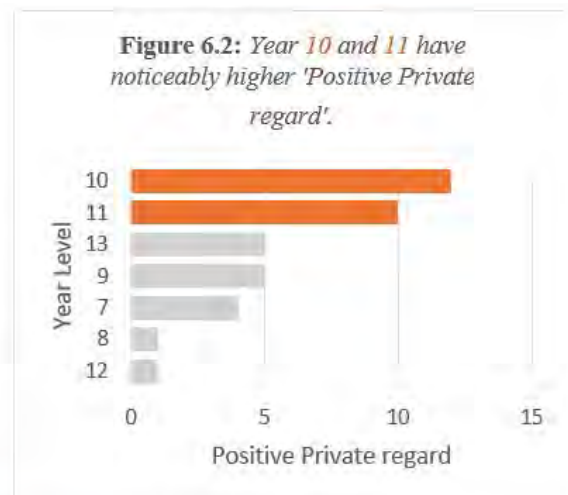
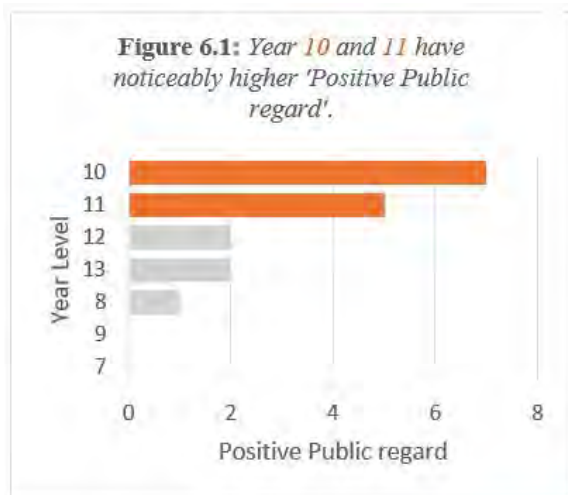
Table 6.1 enumerates the comments made during the Yarning conversations by each of the students, that were coded as either positive or negative comments in relation to private and public regard. The difference between the number of positive and negative codes was calculated, as was an indication from the coding that students were in an Exploration or Commitment status regarding their identities. The data show a tendency for students to be more aware of regard, both private and public, as they get older, correlating with levels of exploration and commitment.

As illustrated in Figures 6.1 and 6.2, the Year 10 and Year 11 students coded most frequently in this area. Figure 6.3 illustrates the difference between the number of positive and negative comments made with respect to regard, indicating the strongly assertive REC identity of Katie in particular. The data presented have been gathered through a qualitative methodology, hence are not intended to generate quantitative findings. Certainly, context and

Table 6.1:*Private and Public Regard and Commitment and Exploration of Identity*

Name	Group	Year Level	Positive Private regard	Negative Private Regard	Positive Public regard	Negative Public Regard	Difference positive and negative regard	Commitment	Exploration
William	10	7	1	0	0	0	1	N	N
Ethan	10	7	1	0	0	0	1	N	N
Daniel	10	7	2	0	0	0	2	N	Y
Theo	9	8	1	0	1	1	1	N	Y
Amelia	2	9	0	0	0	0	0	N	N
Lily	2	9	0	0	0	0	0	N	N
Rosie	9	9	1	0	0	2	-1	N	N
Erin	9	9	1	0	0	1	0	N	Y
Bella	9	9	1	0	0	1	0	N	Y
Hannah	11	9	2	0	0	3	-1	Y	Y
Mia	3	10	1	0	0	1	0	N	Y
Sophia	3	10	2	0	1	2	1	Y	Y
Isabella	3	10	0	0	0	0	0	N	Y
Ella	3	10	3	0	1	1	3	Y	Y
Scarlett	7	10	2	0	3	1	4	Y	Y
Chloe	7	10	2	0	1	2	1	Y	Y
Matilda	9	10	2	0	1	1	2	Y	Y
Harry	3	11	0	0	0	0	0	N	N
Jack	3	11	0	0	0	1	-1	Y	N
Charlie	5	11	0	0	1	0	1	Y	Y
Jacob	5	11	0	0	0	0	0	N	Y
Archie	5	11	0	0	0	0	0	N	N
Sabrina	6	11	1	1	0	1	-1	Y	N
Jessica	6	11	2	0	0	0	2	Y	Y
Phoebe	6	11	1	0	2	1	2	Y	Y
Millie	8	11	4	2	1	3	0	Y	Y
Emma	11	11	2	0	1	2	1	Y	Y
Noah	5	12	0	0	2	0	2	Y	Y
Sienna	6	12	0	0	0	2	-2	N	N
Ivy	6	12	1	0	0	2	-1	N	Y
Ruby	6	12	0	0	0	0	0	Y	Y
Olivia	1	13	1	0	0	0	1	Y	Y
Katie	12	13	4	0	2	0	6	Y	Y

purpose need to be considered when attempting to quantify the qualitative (Magnus et al., 2019). As a qualitative project, it is recognised that the data “may not be representative for all people” (Tsachor & Shafir, 2019, p. 10). Nevertheless, there is an indication from the data that older students in this study discuss and reflect on aspects of culture and identity exploration and commitment more than do the younger students.



Transitioning to boarding school was an experience found challenging by many of the students. It challenged their sense of belonging, and some felt torn between two worlds as they struggled to adjust to boarding school, as Olivia's statements revealed:

And it shocked me so hard to my core, because I was like, I don't want to change. I want to get an education, but I don't want to be the odd one out in my community. But I'm also sick of being the odd one out at school. (Olivia)

This participant describes the deep sense of belonging she has with her cultural community and family that has not diminished over her time as a boarding school student through to her current status as a Yalari alumnus. Yet the description also reveals how her new positioning within Yalari made her feel as the odd one out in both worlds. She notes the strong connection she feels for her community in the following statement:

I love our community. I love how we're so connected.... I love my grandmother. Because Elders are like, our chiefs and everything. And I just love how everyone respects my grandmother. I absolutely love it. Like every time people go out bush hunting, or fishing, they always bring my grandmother something. Even if we're not blood related, they always bring her something. (Olivia)

When asked what it was about being an Indigenous Australian that made them most proud, the participants in Yarning Group 3 agreed it was family and community:

Mia: It has to be family.

Sophia: Community and family.

Mia: Yep. Community and family.

Sophia: Yep, and the close bonds that you have with people that you're probably not even blood related to. Like, Harry and me, we're not blood related, but we still claim each other for cousin, because we've got mutual family like, if that makes sense?

Jack: Just knowing that by default, you've got a network with the other Aboriginal kids around you. Like, you know, you experience the same things, the same, you know, story, the same history, between each other? So, you can help each other, that sort of stuff.

Victoria Grieves, ARC Indigenous Research Fellow at the University of Sydney and a Warrimay woman from the mid North Coast of New South Wales, differentiates between race and culture as the core element of Aboriginality. She states, in an article written for the online newsletter, *The Conversation*, that “Family, kinship, relatedness and connectedness are the basis of Aboriginal world-views and the philosophy that underpins the development of Aboriginal social organisation” (Grieves, 2014). A number of participants in this research project, during the Yarning sessions, echoed this sentiment on the importance of community. Their sense of belonging to community and the mutual care the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students provided for each other within the boarding school context was critical to their sense of belonging in school.

At the same time, students were able to cite examples of misunderstanding by boarding staff and students of cultural obligations and expectations. At times, students may behave in a way that reflects their cultural values and traditions but that causes dissonance because it clashes with the Western norms of the boarding house. Each of them is on their own journey as they struggle with the challenges associated with finding themselves as a cultural minority immersed in a dominant Western culture in their schools and then developing strategies to adapt to this environment. This was exemplified in one particularly poignant incident which followed my third Yarning session when two of the participants, both Year 10 girls attending a school in Sydney, asked to speak with me again. They were keen that I understood some of the challenges they faced in boarding regarding culture. They described an example of a young Indigenous girl in their boarding house who had a relative

pass away back home and the difficulty that they faced in trying to support the girl during what is described in their Aboriginal culture as Sorry Business.

Bereavement practices and protocols are culturally important to Indigenous Australians. The obligations and specific expectations of individuals following the death of kin or community members constitute what is referred to by Aboriginal people as Sorry Business (Carlson & Frazer, 2015). While protocols with Sorry Business may involve a series of ceremonies over a number of days with restrictions and guidelines for individuals with regards to language, viewing of images of the deceased person, and using the deceased person's name, these protocols will vary and are specific for different communities (Carlson, 2014).

The Indigenous students in boarding schools are not exempt from their community's cultural protocols and expectations around Sorry Business, particularly if the deceased is a direct relative of the student. As Glaskin (2008) explains, in some circumstances, even separation by significant distance "does not constitute a sufficient impediment to attending a kinsperson's funeral" (p. 5). Given this, the two young women involved in the study wanted to relay to me what had happened when their friend went away for Sorry Business. The Yarning session appears to have provided these two girls with a sense of agency, security, and trust in that, while they felt unable to share their entire story with the original larger peer group of their first Yarning session, they wanted their story to be heard and felt sufficient trust in the process that they would seek out an opportunity to continue the conversation with me. In our conversation, Sophia revealed some of the tension that existed between staff and Indigenous students:

Because then we're battling with teachers about like, "oh we have a funeral", there's like, a cultural ceremony at home. When that kind of thing happens,

like, we had a little girl that left [boarding school] because the school wasn't supporting her very well. She left because of the girls bullying her, because the work was too hard for her, and the school wasn't supporting her when a family member passed away. When that happens, like, back in her culture, the Spirits kind of cling to the family members. And she like, she likes that, but when that happens, you're supposed to be close to your other family you know? And she can't do that. So, she'd want to like, come and stay with one of us in our room with us, and I had a spare bed next to me and said, she can just sleep here for one night. And they're like, "no, no, no, not allowed. Sorry, you don't get any special privileges". And I'm like, "I know I don't, but can you not see she's [upset]?" (Sophia)

The girl described in this conversation may well have been experiencing cultural anomie, a sense of isolation from her traditional cultural imperatives without having accepted or understood the cultural imperatives of the environment in which she now finds herself (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991). Likewise, according to the two young women, there seems to be some disconnect from boarding school staff who also appear to lack an understanding or appreciation of the protocols of the young girl's community. Mander et al. (2015b) explored the perceptions and understandings of staff at a number of private boys' boarding schools in Western Australia towards the experiences of Aboriginal boarding students from regional and remote communities. While there was some empathy towards the plight of such students, like the young girl Sophia mentioned in her story, there was also a conviction on the part of some staff that the Aboriginal students would benefit from learning to accommodate the challenges of their new cultural environment:

While many were concerned about the impact that culture shock had on Aboriginal students' sense of identity and wellbeing, others believed learning

how to feel comfortable and negotiate different environments, cultural contexts and social settings was an important life skill offered by boarding schools to Aboriginal students. (Mander et al., 2015b, p. 319)

A similar story received significant media coverage towards the end of 2018, in a case involving a young female Aboriginal student who had struggled with the transition to boarding school. Ultimately, this particular student was asked to leave the school and she returned home to regional Queensland following a series of behavioural issues. In an online article for *The Guardian*, Marnie O'Bryan, an honorary research fellow in Indigenous education at the University of Melbourne, describes the experiences of this student:

Feeling trapped and lonely, Elizabeth [pseudonym] became increasingly oppositional and self-destructive. Elizabeth was caught smoking in the toilet and had an alcoholic drink in a friend's room. "We probably only had a sip", she told me, "but that was enough". Rather than recognising her behaviour as a reaction to issues over which she felt she had no control, the school treated Elizabeth as a problem student. She was first suspended and then expelled. (O'Bryan, 2018)

The story was reported on the ABC News, Darwin (Hose et al., 2018) as part of a report investigating Indigenous boarding student retention, reporting methods employed by the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF). The report found that AIEF did not include first year Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who dropped out of boarding schools in their dropout rates, hence reducing the apparent dropout rate from around 20% down to less than 10%. AIEF explained that these students were not included in the statistics as they had not been eligible for AIEF funding, having dropped out in their first year.

Unlike those Australians belonging to the majority Western culture in which change is incremental and generations have ample time to transition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students moving from their home communities to urban environments can find themselves transitioning from their experience and understanding of cultural ways of being to immersion in the dominant Western culture, leading to conflict (Spencer, 2000). Nakata and his colleagues (Nakata et al., 2012) reject the notion that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as a colonised population, should submit to the expectations and assumptions of the Eurocentric Western culture in order to be accepted into a world determined by a Western epistemology and ontology. Further, it is an error to assume that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students come from a similar cultural experience, just as it would be an error to assume all non-Indigenous students belong to a homogenous cultural group. All cultures are evolving. Brayboy (2005) described the fluidity of Indigenous culture thus:

... culture is simultaneously fluid or dynamic, and fixed or stable. Like an anchor in the ocean, it is tied to a group of people and often a physical place. For many Indigenous people, culture is rooted to lands on which they live as well as to their ancestors who lived on those lands before them. However, just as the anchor shifts and sways with changing tides and the ebbs and flows of the ocean, culture shifts and flows with changes in contexts, situations, people, and purposes. Like all humans, Indigenous people are shaped by their cultural inheritance, and they engage in cultural production. (p. 434)

Cultural models are malleable, organic, and dynamic; susceptible to modification and revision by members of the cultural group as they navigate their context and interact with the groups and individuals both internally and externally (Gee & Green, 1998).

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are dynamic and evolving, affected by exposure to external cultural influences and internal creativity and innovation

(Nakata, 2002), those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who arrive from communities that more closely reflect the cultural values to which they are now exposed are less at risk of experiencing cultural dissonance and cultural anomie. This exposure to culture shock and the responses of boarding staff such as those mentioned earlier (Mander et al., 2015b) suggest the need for the students, rather than the boarding institution, to accommodate cultural differences. This supports Sarra's concerns referred to earlier in an interview with Brigid Glanville recorded for the ABC program, *PM*, "that the cultures of those elite schools are somewhat remote from those that children experience in communities. And there's a tendency not to stretch too much in those kinds of schools. It's either fit in or farewell" (Glanville, 2008a).

Students reported strategies they have employed that enable them to better manage cultural anomie through sharing and deepening their cultural connections. One group of students described a group they have formed at their school to explore and learn more about their Indigenous culture. While all the Yalari girls at the school are members of this group, membership is open to all students, with non-Indigenous girls welcome to join in. Ella, who started the program, relays the purpose behind the group:

So, we started up a group. Well, I kind of, it was, I started it up. It's called Mana Allawah, which roughly translates to a sit down gathering. And it's run by me and I have friends, mostly it's my friends that come, and some other girls from other year groups, and all the Yalari girls come. And we've, like, find a topic that we want to research, and it's really just time to research and like, learn about and talk about things. Like it's not me teaching anybody anything, like, it's all of us just learning together kind of thing. (Ella)

Ella and the girls who attended this group would research, for example, the current NAIDOC Week theme in preparation for their presentations at the school's assembly. In planning for one particular assembly, Ella described the girls searching for a poem that they liked which they used as the basis of a video presentation which they then created with a focus on reconciliation for their NAIDOC Week presentation.

NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) Week is the result of the evolution of the boycotting of Australia Day as early as the 1920s by Indigenous Australians in protest at the way in which Aboriginal people had been treated and their status since colonisation. Over time, the protest developed into the Day of Mourning in 1938 which continued through to 1955 as an annual event held on the Sunday before Australia Day. It evolved further in 1956 to become a day of cultural celebration for Aboriginal people, eventually in 1991 becoming a week-long celebration of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture ("NAIDOC week," 2019). A common theme across the Yarning groups was the practice of using NAIDOC Week by the school as an opportunity to promote aspects of Indigenous culture, mostly through school assembly presentations. Amelia notes how, around NAIDOC Week, boarding school staff might invite Indigenous students to talk at assembly, which she also notes she did not have a problem with. Sophia also discusses some of the activities held in NAIDOC Week. She recalls:

... just recently, we had a NAIDOC assembly where we got our, like, Indigenous Elder of the area from La Perouse, Uncle Vic Simms or something like, I forgot his name. But he comes over and he carved a tree for us, like, "the [School name] Dreaming". And he like, did a smoking ceremony for us, and we did it out on the oval because it was a nice day. (Sophia)

However, some of the students noted that these occasional assembly presentations could come across as somewhat tokenistic, as is apparent in the following discussion amongst some of the young women:

Chloe: Well, at school, like, we don't celebrate like, anything, like, we celebrate NAIDOC Day [sic].

Scarlett: But not really.

Chloe: It's just like, in assembly and all they do is like, put up a flag and we have the Acknowledgement of Country. But that's really it, type thing, like, we don't really celebrate like, cultural things at our school.

However, they are also able to describe efforts they have made to celebrate and promote their culture and indicate a sense of pride and accomplishment in doing so:

Scarlett: Yeah, but like, we've also like, done a lot of cultural things, like cultural dances and ...

Chloe: Yeah, we've done dancing, yeah.

Scarlett: And we're building a garden; we've already like, done our totem poles, like, we've painted them.

Chloe: Like with dot painting, yeah.

Scarlett: And they're like, doing that now and they're putting the poles in this garden and fill it with, like, native plants and stuff. I was pretty excited.

Chloe: Yeah, it's coming along really well, and just to know that we've contributed to this garden, like, we've helped painted the poles. And we're trying to get something like, Indigenous plants in there, and it's pretty cool, yeah.

Katie, one of two Yalari alumni participants on the Walk, described her experiences as a boarding student around the expression of her cultural heritage and the support she received from her school to do so. She explains:

... we were allowed to celebrate Mabo Day, Indigenous Reading Week, we were allowed to celebrate, whereas I don't know if every student has had that experience. So, it didn't take me away from culture; in a way ... it made me want to learn more, engage with it even more, kind of like a child when you say no and they keep wanting to do it, like, I'd say I was a little bit rebellious at times, so if someone said "no" it was something that I definitely wanted to do more of, and I did everything I could to engage with my culture when I was at school because I'm so proud, and I think it rubbed off on all the other girls, even the girls I still know at [school name]. (Katie)

Here, Katie expresses both gratitude and rebellion in relation to her public expression of her cultural heritage while at boarding school. While this permission to celebrate aspects of culture does indicate a level of support for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Katie's school, it may further indicate a lack of foresight by school staff working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by not ensuring their own awareness of significant dates such as Mabo Day and Indigenous Reading Week and then proactively encouraging and supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to celebrate these events. Katie's use of the word "allowed" when referring to gaining permission to celebrate culturally significant events and her assertion that this permission is not universal amongst boarding schools highlights the power differential experienced in the boarding schools between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.

Katie is clearly an assertive individual. Had she not been, she may not have chosen to alter the status quo of the boarding school by requesting opportunities to celebrate these events. There is no indication in her conversation that at any stage she was invited, rather than allowed, to celebrate culturally significant occasions. By proactively encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to share their cultural knowledges and experiences, indicating that these contributions are valued, schools may increase the students' perceptions of public regard with the flow-on effect of further enhancing positive private regard. By doing so, the likelihood of enhancing self-efficacy and positive social-emotional and academic well-being is increased (Ho & Sidanius, 2010; D. Hughes et al., 2011).

As recognised by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health plan 2013-2023, "There is a wealth of evidence that supports the positive associations of health, education and employment outcomes as well as general wellbeing with language and culture" (Australian Government, Department of Health, 2013). Further to this, as stated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, "Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs" (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2011, p. 11). Parents of these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who have transitioned to boarding schools, while valuing the educational opportunities this experience provides their children, remain concerned that, as the years pass and exposure to the academic and extracurricular life at school dominates their children's experiences, their children may disconnect from their cultural heritage (Mander, 2015). This concern emphasises the responsibility of the boarding school staff to ensure that connection with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is supported and encouraged while these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are in their care.

Research into subjective well-being has shown clear correlations between subjective well-being (happiness) and a variety of life outcomes valued by society, including successful

relationships, financial security, mental health, and longevity (Seligman, 2002). There is now strong evidence to support the hypothesis that happiness precedes success across a range of valued life outcomes. Lyubormirsky et al. (2005) noted that, “although our conclusions run counter to the belief that successful outcomes and desirable characteristics are primarily the causes, rather than the consequences, of happiness, a surprisingly large amount of evidence now appears to challenge this belief” (p. 846). This is a strong argument for boarding schools to ensure they have in place structures that enhance the well-being of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in their boarding communities, and this needs to begin with a valuing rather than simply a recognition of the cultural imperatives of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander charges.

By avoiding assimilationist-type practices and encouraging student leadership of cultural expression and engagement, boarding schools that are cognizant of the cultural diversity of their students and that provide the opportunities such as those described above by Katie are creating an environment that enhances the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Dockery, 2010). The enthusiasm with which these students describe their engagement with their culture and the relationship between cultural engagement, subjective well-being, and hence success counters the views of commentators who promote deficit views such as “Aboriginal culture is inconsistent with success in a modern economy” (Johns, 2008, p. 68).

Boarding schools hosting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote, regional, and rural communities on scholarship programs would benefit the academic, social, and psychological well-being of their students by not simply supporting the students’ cultural exploration and expression but by actively encouraging their initiatives in this area rather than adopting the deficit approach put forward by Johns (2008):

[Continuity of traditional Indigenous culture] is inconsistent with the views of those such as Johns ... that Indigenous culture acts as a barrier to improved socio-economic outcomes. Importantly, the positive associations with cultural attachment extend to employment outcomes and educational attainment. So even if one does believe that getting Indigenous people through school and into jobs is the ultimate solution, cultural maintenance should not be seen as a barrier but as a potential part of the strategy to enhance mainstream economic outcomes. (Dockery, 2010, p. 330)

What Johns (2008) fails to grasp in his deficit assumptions about the connections between traditional cultures and economic progress is that full and productive participation in a modern economy is most probable for participants who have a strong sense of identity and efficacy. Such efficacy, as exhibited by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who, rather than assimilating into the majority culture, have managed to live comfortably in both worlds, leads to the intrinsic motivation to succeed. This level of motivation is illustrated through Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008a, 2008b) that posits that the greatest level of creativity, performance, and persistence in individuals is promoted through the individual's experience of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. An assimilationist perspective, while effective for an economy and society of the Industrial Revolution, acts to remove all three of these criteria for high levels of intrinsic motivation and hence potential for significant contribution in the modern information era.

6.6 Academic Self-Efficacy

... all the way through primary school I wasn't, like, academically good, like with my learning. Like I didn't pick up things very well. So, when I came to [boarding school], like, I was excited, but I was also nervous because, like, I didn't want any of the kids to pick on me because I wasn't as smart as them. (Chloe)

Through his social cognitive theory, Bandura (1986) posited that individuals have a level of perceived self-efficacy across numerous dimensions that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their cognitive and affective life domains. He defines perceived self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act” (Bandura, 1995a). In a research study investigating the relationship between institutional inequality and self-efficacy in African Americans, the authors found that such inequality does impact negatively on self-efficacy (M. Hughes & Demo, 1989). Comments made during the Yarning conversations with several of the Yalari scholars, in which they described the inequities they faced in their primary education relative to the experiences of their non-Indigenous boarding school peers, would support this assertion.

6.6.1 *Inequity*

One of the challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as they transition from their regional primary school to the city boarding schools at which they have received scholarships is the consequence of the inequitable nature of the education many have received up to the end of primary schooling in comparison with their new classmates. Outcomes for the 2019 NAPLAN testing were unavailable at the time of preparing the 2020 Closing the Gap report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2020); however, the report did state that close to 25% of Indigenous Year 7 students remain below national minimum standards in reading, with close to 20% below the national minimum standards in numeracy. The 2018 Closing the Gap report, displaying data from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), shows that, at the end of Year 7, while 95% of non-Indigenous students have reached national minimum standards in reading, this falls to 74%

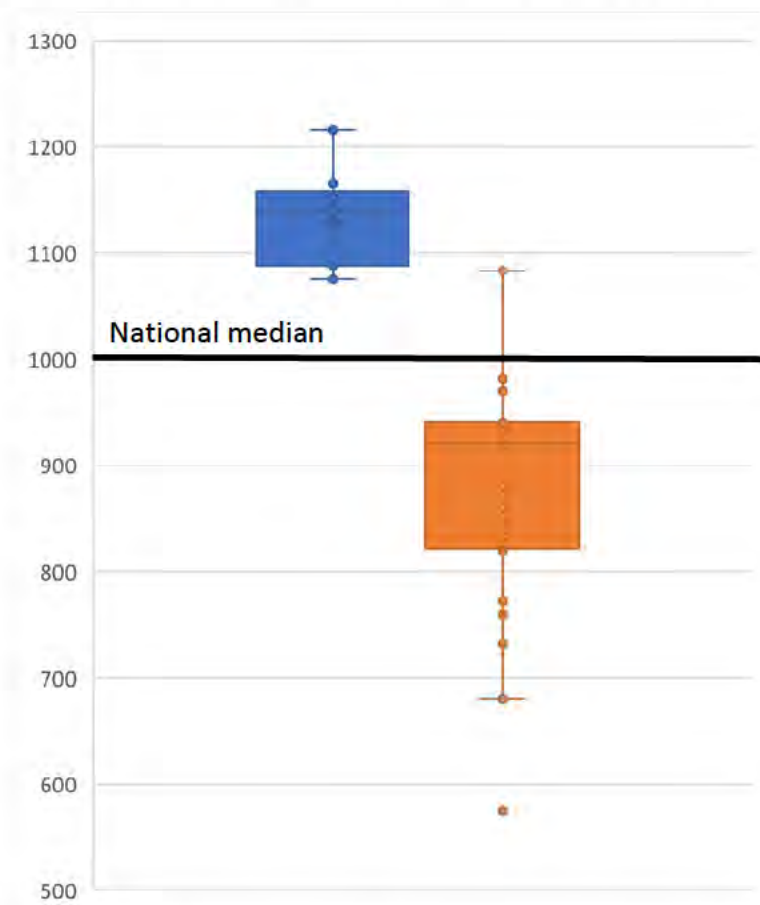
for Indigenous students, a gap of 21%. The same report indicates that while 96% of non-Indigenous students are attaining the national minimum standards in Year 7 for numeracy, Indigenous students are attaining minimum national standards at a rate of 80%, a gap of 16% (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018). When data for Indigenous students in regional and remote communities are examined, these attainment results indicate an even greater gap. In referring to the need for greater efforts to be made to lift the attainment levels of these students, the 2018 Closing the Gap report states: “Students in many remote and regional locations do not have the necessary foundation skills to satisfactorily progress through schooling” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018, p. 62).

Figure 7.4 illustrates the comparison between ICSEA values for the participants’ home community schools and their boarding schools. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage, or ICSEA, “corresponds to the average level of educational advantage of the school’s student population relative to those of other schools” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014b, p. 2). Nationally, the median ICSEA score is set at 1000 with a standard deviation of 100 and a range from around 500, indicating extreme disadvantage, to 1300, representing very high advantage.

As can be seen in Figure 6.4, all but one of the participants’ community schools have an ICSEA below the national median, with a minimum score of 575 and a maximum of 1080, a median score of 877, and an interquartile range of 115 from 940.25 to 825.25. The boarding schools by comparison have a median ICSEA score of 1140, ranging from 1075 to 1216, and an interquartile range of 52 from 1140 to 1088. This represents a median difference of 238 points, or 2.38 standard deviations increase in ICSEA score between the participants’ community school and their boarding school. These differences in ICSEA scores are

Figure 6.4

Boarding Schools (Blue) Vs Community Schools (Orange) ICSEA Values

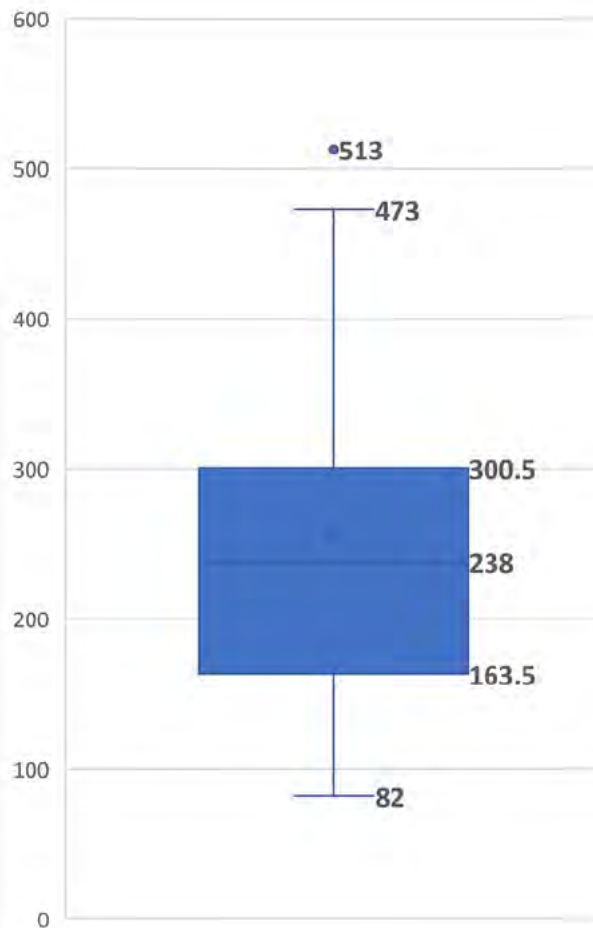


illustrated in Figure 6.5. The lowest difference of 82 points is just below 1 standard deviation difference, however at the extreme end this increases to a difference of 5.13 standard deviations in the case of Erin and Matilda between their home community school in Cherbourg and their boarding school in Toowoomba.

Given that ICSEA “provides ... a means of making a comparison of the levels of educational advantage or disadvantage that students bring to their academic studies” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2012, p. 4), the initial reactions to the newfound academic rigour and associated challenges experienced by the participants on commencing their boarding school education is not surprising.

Figure 6.5

Difference in ICSEA Scores Between Each Participant's Community School and Boarding School



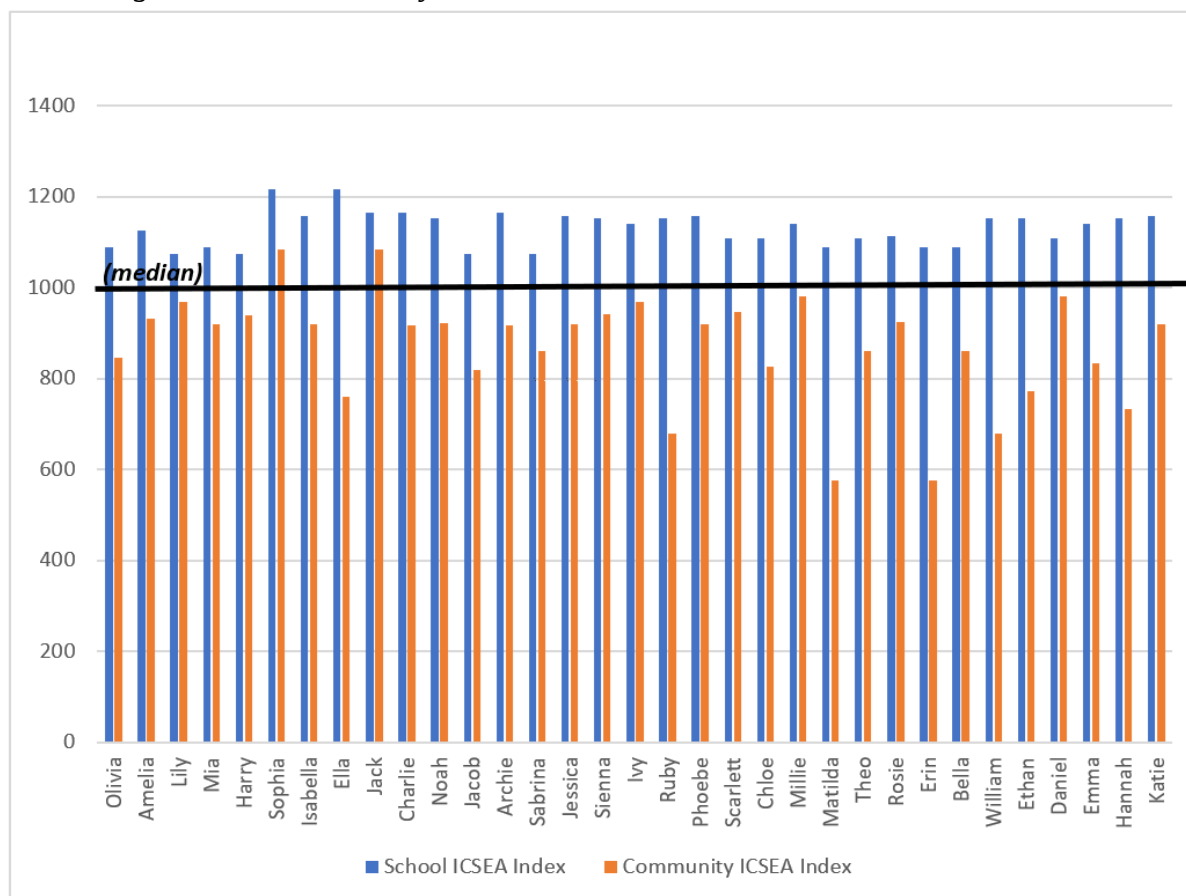
Understandably, as can be seen in the participants' comments that follow, many of the students received a negative jolt to their academic self-efficacy at the commencement of their boarding school experiences as they encountered the transition from their community schools to boarding schools with student cohorts from academically privileged circumstances. Figure 6.6 illustrates graphically the contrast between the ICSEA values for the participants' home community school and the boarding school at which they are enrolled. These values and participant demographics are provided in greater detail in tabulated form in Appendix H.

Jonathan Nicholls, Indigenous Policy and Advocacy Manager with Uniting Communities in South Australia, an agency of the Uniting Church in Australia, states:

Aboriginal kids, when they are taken out of their communities, from remote communities and brought to town are often a long way behind in terms of literacy and numeracy and while they may be in an elite school or a strong mainstream school, they struggle enormously because they're so far behind when they arrived. (Winter, 2014)

While boarding schools are perceived as being one strategy that can be employed to help “close the gap” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educational opportunity and attainment (Franck et al., 2020), it is necessary to be cognisant of the gap that already exists as students transition from their community primary schools to their boarding school experience. Noel Pearson, a strong advocate of the strategy of utilising boarding schools to build equity of opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, has also expressed concern at the inequity faced by students transitioning from their local communities to urban boarding schools in relation to their educational standard on entry to boarding:

The principal driver of the low retention rate in boarding schools (and secondary schools generally) is the fact that the students entering secondary school at Year 8 are not up to standard. While they have nominally completed Year 7, their literacy levels are around Year 3 or Year 5 at best. If you are in a Year 8 classroom and you are really at Year 5 level, then you are going to struggle to fit in and your chances of ultimate success are poor. (Pearson, 2004, p. 15)

Figure 6.6*Boarding School vs Community School ICSEA Values*

Although the educational attainment gap has lessened since Pearson made these comments (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018), it is still in existence. The Yalari students felt the impact of this inequity as they entered their new schools for the commencement of their secondary education. Phoebe recalled “And there were, like, gaps in some of my education that I think, from being in a remoter [sic] community”. Sabrina and Ivy related the lack of specialist subjects taught, particularly science: “No sciences. I didn’t have any science” (Sabrina); “I never knew anything about science when I went to [school name]” (Ivy). Sabrina went on to discuss the impact of her family’s movement when she was a young child on her schooling:

And I didn’t go to Year 1 and Year 2. Like, I was in and out of school a lot because we moved around Albany, Perth and Katanning when I was younger. So, I missed out

a lot on that. And it was just harder. Like as, I feel like they're [early years] really important, because that's where you kind of like, learn how to read and write and all that stuff. So, it was really hard. (Sabrina)

This lack of equity is called out by Ivy when she stated, "I shouldn't have had gaps in my education just because I live in a remote community". The ongoing effect of this perceived inequity in the standard of their education in remote community schools was described by Sophia who tells of her interaction with her boarding school mathematics teacher. "Maths teachers did that. They used to be like, 'This is stuff that you should have learned in Year 2.' 'Sorry, but I didn't go to school here in Year 2. In Year 2 I was learning two plus two, not whatever this Pythagoras stuff is'".

Professor Chris Sarra, reflecting on his initial days as Principal at Cherbourg State Primary School, lamented the exceedingly inferior academic standards of the students:

To me, classrooms looked like, and indeed functioned as, baby-sitting facilities that saw children coming and going as they pleased. Class attendance, out of an official enrolment of 20, usually dwindled down to about four children, on average, by the afternoon session. The Grade 7 students left for high school, as many did in previous years, like lambs to the slaughter, with no idea about how to conduct themselves in a regular classroom, and nowhere near the personal skills or the literacy and numeracy skills to survive. Sadly, as I had expected, and like many graduating from our school before them, most would drop out before the end of Grade 8 and disappear into the oblivion of society. Detailed analyses of 4,260 student record cards of Aboriginal students leaving Cherbourg State School to attend Murgon State High School reveal that these students stayed enrolled at high school for an

average of nine months, instead of the expected three to five years. (Sarraj, 2011, p. 104)

This experience of low expectations of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending some regional schools was lamented by a group of Yalari girls. Jessica, a Torres Strait Islander student, questioned the difference in standards of her local primary school and the schools on the mainland. “Why isn’t the curriculum the same from a school, say, in the Torres Strait to one that’s in [a city]?” Phoebe, also from the Torres Strait, reflects on the educational experience of her friends who were not exposed to the same opportunities she has had to attend a mainland boarding school. “I can get educated but then I feel bad for all the kids that had so much potential that are just, all they can do is work in retail now.”

Ivy highlighted her perceptions of the ongoing inequity that was being experienced by her friends back home while she was at boarding school. She discussed the expectation at boarding school that, following the school day, she was required to return to the boarding house and study, a concept that she feels was foreign to the experiences of her friends back in her local community high school. Ivy’s perception is that these students haven’t developed the skills required to study and hence to experience success and achievement at high school:

We go to school and then we go back and study. Like, you have to study. And it’s, I don’t know, it’s just different. It’s harder. Because the kids that go to the [Community] high school, and that are in the same year as us; like, it feels now that we would be more in front of them because we like ... when I first went [to boarding school] I didn’t know how to, like, study at all. But now I do, and I know kids [at home] that still don’t know [how to study].

Once again, Ivy is identifying the existence of a lower set of expectations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their local community schools in

comparison with her experience in boarding school. Lower expectations may be the cause for the discrepancies in academic skills and progress identified by Ivy and other participants and as lamented by Sara et al (2018). It should be noted, however, as illustrated by the discrepancies in ICSEA values discusses earlier, that in addition to differing cultural or community values and priorities, teachers and students in these community schools may be facing other contextual issues. These may include limited access to facilities outside of classrooms and schools such as well-resourced libraries, reliable internet services and personal computers, leading to a lower expectation to complete schoolwork outside of school hours. Sarra et al. (2018) discussed educators' assumptions of difference in educational aptitude of Indigenous students leading to deficit approaches in the classroom, with the effect of negatively impacting the academic efficacy of Indigenous children. From the Yarning conversations, a number of the students' experiences at their local community primary schools reflect the concern that "For Indigenous education, this is compounded by public and professional discourses around deficit positioning, and by historical conditioning, where many Indigenous students do not see achieving in school as part of their cultural identity" (Sarra et al., 2018, p. 1).

Experiences of inequity in educational opportunities and expectations as related by a number of the Yalari students during their primary schooling years may, therefore, have resulted in a negative impact on their academic self-efficacy on entering the academically challenging environment encountered as boarding school students. Olivia, on reflecting on her years at her primary school, recalled: "Primary school was like, I loved primary school. Primary school was, like, the best." She described her primary school achievements. "I was high. I was, like, the highest in my class". When asked then about her academic experiences in the early stages of her secondary schooling boarding experience, Olivia described the jolt

to her confidence and efficacy. “I was, like, the bottom. I was so dumb; I did not keep up until like, Year 10. Year 11, I finally knew what I was doing, how to study properly.”

Bandura (1986, 1997) posited that the academic self-efficacy beliefs of students are formed through the interaction of four sources which he describes thus:

- i. The *enactive mastery experiences* from previous performances is considered by Bandura to be the most significant of the identified sources of self-efficacy. When students are faced with challenges at the edge of their current ability levels and experience success in overcoming these challenges, described by Csikszentmihalyi (2013) as “optimal experiences” leading to the optimal state of “flow”, the result is an improvement in levels of confidence, resilience and self-efficacy.
- ii. The *vicarious experiences* obtained through the observations of others’ performance of specific tasks followed by the individual’s reflections and subsequent beliefs about their own likelihood of success.
- iii. *Social persuasion* in the form of both verbal and non-verbal feedback provided by others through which advocates have the opportunity to cultivate the students’ beliefs in their abilities and competence. These advocates, for example classroom teachers, need to employ appropriately high expectations of these students while ensuring the attainability of success.
- iv. *Physiological states and emotional arousal*, including levels of anxiety, mood, and arousal, inform a student’s academic self-efficacy. Positive emotions and arousal levels that accompany engagement in academic activities are more likely to promote academic self-efficacy. Conversely, experiences of negative emotions in an academic setting, such as stress and anxiety, increase the probability of lowering academic self-efficacy.

Looking at the remarks quoted above from Jessica, Phoebe, Ivy, and Olivia, their early mastery experiences and positive vicarious experiences led to positive emotional arousal as students in their primary schools. This may well have contributed to positive academic self-efficacy and, as a result, pleasing grades throughout their primary years. Several of the students, however, had similar experiences as Olivia who, as quoted above, after describing her efficacious engagement at primary school, then went on to describe herself as “I was like, the bottom. I was so dumb” once she commenced boarding and secondary school. Harry, one of the older boys, recalled, “I was so behind, like, my teacher would just expect me to know everything, and I didn’t know.” Sienna, in the senior girls’ group, described her recollections:

There was a bit of catch up when I first, because I was considered smart, like, back at home ... I was used to getting like, As and stuff in my subjects and I went to [school name] and I was getting like, Cs and B-minuses and I was like, “Whoa!!” (Sienna)

In the same conversation, Phoebe added “And there were like, gaps in some of my education that I think, [came] from being in a remote community.” For Millie, this lack of confidence in her academic abilities at the beginning of her boarding journey manifested itself in a reluctance to contribute to lessons:

Sometimes I would be a bit too shy to put my hand up to answer questions. Because I always felt that it wasn't the right answer, or I would get it wrong and stuff like that. So, I really felt like I lacked education, in a way, as I thought I wasn't as smart as the other girls.

Rosie and Bella, two of the Year 9 girls, spoke of their internal dissonance in relation to their academic confidence in their first year of boarding. “I thought I was smart, then when

I went to my boarding school, I thought I was so stupid” (Rosie); “Yeah, I thought I was pretty smart, but I stepped into boarding school. Smarter kids!” (Bella); “And there's way smarter kids” (Rosie). And in the same conversation:

I struggled with my education really. Because I, when they moved on too fast, it was kind of hard for me to catch up on my homework and assignments. So, I got a lot of work from it.... Which put me down really, thinking I was not as smart as, smart like the other girls in my class. (Erin)

In their Yarning conversation, when asked about their confidence in their academic standing in their new classes at boarding school, Amelia and Lily recalled, “I guess, Country [primary school] didn’t really offer that much academically. So, I kind of struggled at the start to catch up” (Lily). “Like, the start, Term 1, Year 7 was really difficult. Because I came from like, a small school that didn’t have much academic ... like, they weren’t as focused on academic stuff” (Amelia). For the less extroverted and less confident students, seeking help brought its own trials, as noted by Ella: “Some teachers are really helpful when you speak up and ask. But sometimes it’s a bit hard to kind of get the courage to ask.” Compounding the struggle inside the classroom was, for some of the students, the social struggle of making new friends. Ella continues, “I kind of struggled to make friends, because I never really had to make new friends before. Like, I kind of just kept the same friends from when I was younger.”

Teachers and boarding staff need to be aware of the cultural and social context of these young Indigenous students and the academic anxiety they face in this challenging new educational environment. If staff are able to engage these young people in a supportive and inclusive educational environment with high but realistic expectations, it is more likely that

productive learning and teaching will transpire (Bond et al., 2007; Guay et al., 2017; Sarra, 2011).

6.6.2 *Expectations*

For most of these students, their initial experiences of academic standards and expectations in their new boarding school environment were in stark contrast to their successes at primary school. They often reported not achieving the mastery experiences that promote academic self-efficacy in these initial days while their vicarious experiences of the successes of other students in their classes compared with their lack of success was clear. Constructs of themselves in these early experiences as “dumb”, “stupid”, and “not smart like the other girls in my class”, as quoted above, and the negative emotions, anxieties, and stress resulting from this, may also have contributed to a physiological state that impacted negatively on the students’ academic efficacy.

Loftus (1995, p. 1) quotes the character, Eliza Doolittle, from George Bernard Shaw’s play, *Pygmalion*, explaining to Professor Higgins that “the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves but how she is treated”. The Pygmalion effect asserts that one person’s expectations of an individual can influence that individual’s behavioural outcomes. In examining the potential Pygmalion effect in the classroom, Friedrich et al. (2015) found that “teachers’ expectations were positively associated with students’ math achievement at the end of the school year” (p. 9). Bodkin-Andrews, O’Rourke, and Craven (2010) discussed the need to embrace culturally inclusive practices in schools, including both equal and high expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students if we are to achieve equitable educational outcomes for our culturally diverse students. The positive correlation between teacher expectations and academic and well-being outcomes for students (Brault et al., 2014; Rubie-Davies et al., 2006) and specifically for

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian students (Bodkin-Andrews, Dillon, & Craven, 2010; Riley, 2018; Riley & Pidgeon, 2019; Riley & Ungerleider, 2012) has been referred to earlier. The consequence of these teacher expectations in the development of the students' academic self-efficacy is substantial as a primary source of social persuasion, described earlier as an important influencer of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986, 1997).

Although experiences of teacher expectation by the Yalari students varied, only one of the Yarning groups, made up of some of the younger students, described their perceptions of teachers as having lower initial regard for the educational levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students compared with their non-Indigenous peers. In discussing their early experiences at boarding school, these students felt that “the teachers would think we’re not really educated well” (Erin) “because we were Indigenous” (Bella). Over time, these students in this group reported an increasing sense of academic self-worth, with Matilda, the oldest of the students in this group, saying “now I’m fine with it. I can do this. I can do my assignments by myself and everything”.

Olivia described the high expectations that her teachers had for her and the other scholarship students, saying that:

teachers always have high expectation of Yalari students. Saying, oh, “you guys have the most incredible opportunities, therefore we are watching you like a hawk, like, don’t ever screw it up”. But it also, it’s also a positive thing because they want us to succeed. (Olivia)

She spoke about the “very high expectations” that she perceived her teachers to have, and how she felt that, for the most part, the teachers treated the Yalari students equally to the non-Indigenous girls in her classes.

Amelia and Lily, when asked about their teachers' expectation of themselves compared with their peers, replied, "probably the same" (Lily); "Yeah, I think they have, like, the same. So, it's like, you're like every other student in the class" (Amelia).

Millie also had constructive experiences with her teachers, describing a two-way flow in which the teachers were always willing to assist but that there was an expectation also that students would seek help as required:

... at my school, they're very supportive of all us Yalari girls. Even if we, it's got to come from us, wanting help. You can't be helped if you don't want help. So, I think that it has to come from both sides where, that if you want the help you want, you can get it. Then if you need it [help], they've got it.

The older boys also reported that the expectations of their teachers for them as Indigenous students were no different from what they were for the non-Indigenous students. Referring to the sudden increase they experienced with homework, for example, Jacob said, "Never got homework in my life until I started at [boarding school]." Noah recalled, "they expected us to do it" to which Jacob added, "it was good, but, because I don't want to feel like we were being singled out". Jack's experience was similar: "Well at [School] they were pretty understanding and there was a bit of leeway at the start, but then they expected us to [complete all the work]".

In Rahman's research (2010), she found that teachers who care, have high expectations, and believe in the students' ability to succeed impacted positively on student engagement and their levels of academic achievement. Through the Yarning conversations, it became clear that there was a level of care and expectation on the part of their teachers that has impacted positively on the students' academic self-efficacy and has, in turn, led to academic success and school competence.

The students described how, over time, they grew in confidence with their abilities to keep up with and succeed at the academic challenges that they encountered. As quoted earlier, for example, Ivy reflected that “when I first went [to boarding school] I didn’t know how to like, study at all. But now I do”. Similarly, Matilda stated, “now I’m fine with it [academic work]”, and Sophia said, “Yeah, because we got built up to it”. Chelsea, in Year 9 at the time of the research project, recalled that she was “getting better in Year 9, but Year 8, I really struggled”. Millie summed up the experiences of many of the Yalari students when she stated that the school she was attending was “such a high standard school. But they’re very supportive in the education area”.

Through these challenges that the students faced and overcame, they have developed resilience. They are achieving positive life outcomes through their overcoming the cultural and academic hardship to which they have been exposed, bouncing back after adversity and adapting to the substantial differences they have encountered as they traverse their journey through boarding school (Masten, 2001; Reivich et al., 2013; Southwick et al., 2014).

6.7 Identity

“If you don’t know [your identity], it’s like you’re not drinking water. You get thirsty for more.” Isabella

In his landmark book, *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, psychoanalyst Erik Erikson describes a series of eight psychosocial crises (Erikson, 1968). Each of these crises is explained as a period of potential and vulnerability, hence an opportunity for growth. The psychosocial crisis of adolescence is the resolution of identity versus identity confusion. Kroger and Marcia (2011) note that identity as a concept cannot be observed; hence, they derived an operationalisation of identity following the two behaviours identified by Erikson as indicative of identity development. These two criteria are exploration and commitment

(Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Exploration involves the investigation and trialing of different roles chosen from a set of meaningful alternatives, while commitment refers to the level of personal investment made towards a particular identity. Marcia has identified four identity statuses: Foreclosure, Diffusion, Moratorium, and Achievement. An individual's status is dependent upon their engagement in exploration of and level of commitment to aspects of their identity (Marcia, 1966, 2002, 2009).

Individuals with Achievement status can be considered as having constructed their identities, while those in Foreclosure are described as having conferred identities, adopted from family and kin rather than having evolved through a process of exploration. Those who do not yet show high levels of commitment are seen as belonging to either the Moratorium or Diffusion statuses. Those in Moratorium are in a stage of low commitment and high exploration as they actively seek to develop and refine their sense of identity. Finally, the diffusion status is descriptive of individuals who lack both a sense of commitment and an active process of identity exploration. This status is viewed as being the least adaptive (Klimstra et al., 2010; Kroger et al., 2010; Marcia, 2009; Phinney, 1989).

Klimstra and colleagues went on to assert that “movement from adolescence to adulthood involves changes in identity that can be characterised as progressive developmental shifts” (Klimstra et al., 2010, p. 151). From this is developed a modification of the four-status model that, in addition to exploration and commitment, includes a process of reconsideration leading to an additional status labelled as Searching Moratorium, through which an individual in the Achievement status, through reflection on their changing environments, compares their current commitments with the possibility of alternatives, cycling through Moratorium and back to Achievement. This process of reconsideration and in-depth exploration is an adaptive process positively associated with an openness to experience (Crocetti et al., 2007):

Positive self-identity for Indigenous students means they will have positive conceptions of the multiple dimensions of themselves, particularly as Indigenous Australians and as students. These positive conceptions will be valued and nurtured by significant others in each of the contexts in which they function, most importantly within the home and school environments. When young people have positive conceptions of themselves as both Indigenous people and as students, attachment and commitment to school, and successful school performance will be more likely outcomes than where there are excessive contradictions or tensions between the various aspects of self.

(Purdie et al., 2000, p. 4)

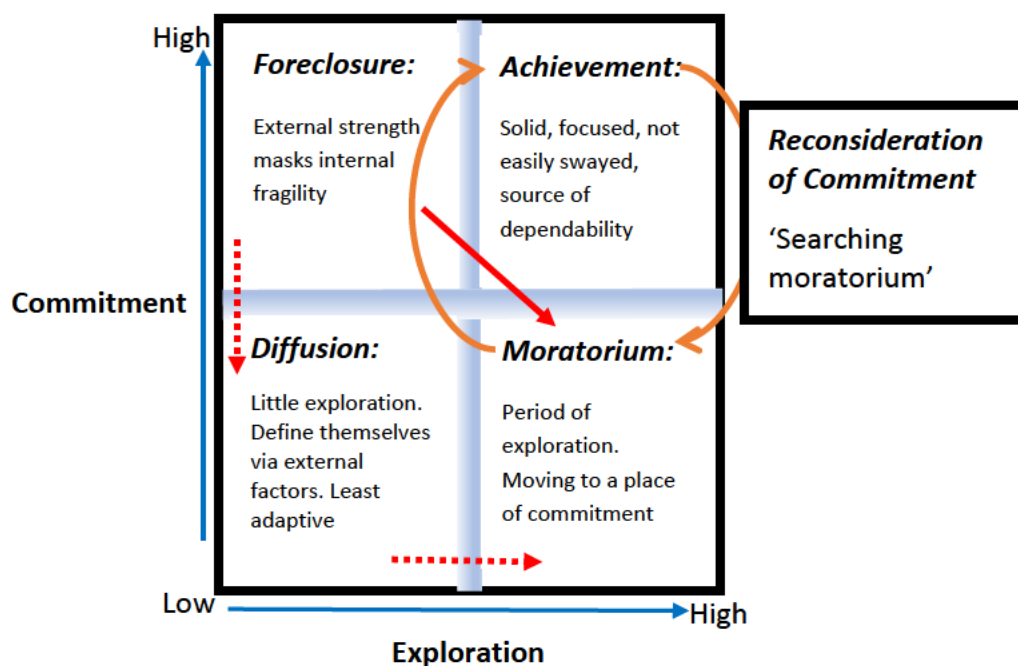
Identity is a dynamic rather than a fixed construct for Indigenous adolescent people as both their own physical characteristics and their experience of moving between school and home are in a state of flux (Purdie et al., 2000). This model of identity formation incorporating Marcia's (2009) four statuses and Crocetti et al.'s (2007) reconsideration can be illustrated through Figure 6.7.

The Yarning conversations indicate that students who have come out of communities with distinct and unique cultural values, beliefs, and practices were conflicted by the new environment in which they found themselves. Students boarding in independent, urban, Western boarding schools that are often located in large metropolitan or regional cities can find themselves caught between their new peers, teachers, and friends who reflect the majority culture in which they are now immersed, and the traditions, values, and expectations of their families and community members at home.

Olivia has experienced this personal conflict between cultures and described these during her Yarning conversation. As referred to earlier, Crocetti et al. (2007) discussed a

Figure 6.7

The 4-Status Model of Identity Development (Marcia, 2009) With the Searching Moratorium Status (Crocetti et al., 2007)



three-dimensional model of identity formation through which individuals reach commitment to an identity, then, through further exploration described as reconsideration of commitment, compare their current identity commitment with possible alternatives. Olivia discussed her commitment to who she felt she was prior to leaving home for boarding school. She talked about the impact boarding school had on her, with the conflict she experienced leading her to a need to reconsider her sense of who she was:

I looked at a whole new world. Like I was immersed in a whole different world. A whole new world compared to mine, therefore I had to think differently; I wanted to think differently. Because you're in a whole new world, you're not going to think the same, because it's not the same circumstances. It's so ... it's so different. (Olivia)

6.7.1 *Living in Two Worlds*

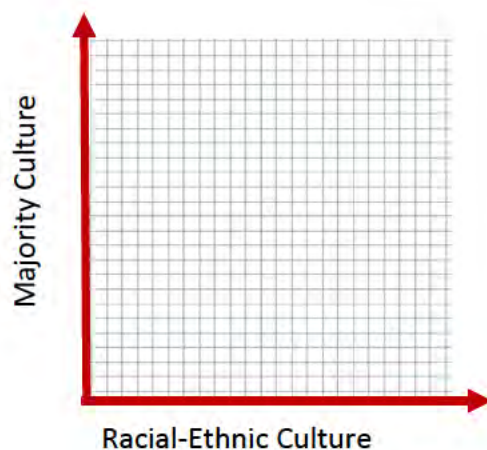
Oetting and Beauvais (1991) proposed a representation of cultural identification that they label an orthogonal model (see Figure 6.8). This model provides an alternative to the linear models of cultural identification that create a dichotomous choice for individuals who appear along a continuum. Oetting and Beauvais noted that:

the orthogonal identification model indicates that any pattern, any combination of cultural identification can exist and that any change is possible.... In general, high cultural identification is related to positive psychosocial characteristics.... Strongly bicultural youth have the highest self-esteem and the strongest socialization links. (pp. 662, 674)

This model builds from the bicultural model of cultural identification. The model posits that adaptation to the majority culture in which one finds oneself does not necessitate the surrender of one's original cultural values and identity. Extensive participation in both the majority culture and the individual's ethnic culture is possible. Rather than the linear model suggested by this bicultural paradigm, which places the individual somewhere on a

Figure 6.8

Orthogonal Identification Model



continuum between the two cultures at either end, the orthogonal model can be represented by a pair of perpendicular axes (see Figure 6.8), each representing identification with one or other culture, allowing multiple combinations of cultural identification with either culture independent of the other. Olivia illustrates this with her statement when asked about her survival in “both worlds”. “I love both worlds, I belong to both. Like if you try to put me in one, I will suffocate. I belong, my full potential is in both worlds. And even though sometimes it is lonely, it’s the price I’m willing to pay”.

In considering her future contribution to Australian society, Katie, during our conversation, muses:

I’d like to think that people looked beyond me just being Indigenous.

However, like, being Indigenous is – it’s a part of my identity. I think that there’s a need for Indigenous representation, therefore my Indigeneity in my profession will have weight behind it, as in for example like, if we’re talking about Indigenous issues, instead of it being from a non-Indigenous person who has no context around what Indigenous people are actually going through.

Obviously, I would have a bit of understanding, but I don’t want it to purely be on one side, I need it to be on an Indigenous level and a non-Indigenous level. (Katie)

Katie describes here the same dilemma that is expressed by Indigenous Australians such as professor, journalist, and author, Stan Grant. Grant identifies as a Wiradjuri, Dharrawal, Kamilaroi, and Irish man (S. Grant, 2020). In his book *On Identity*, Grant argues, as Katie indicates, that identity is far more complex than stating a dichotomous affiliation for either one or another ethnic grouping. He laments the bureaucratic necessity he encounters each time he completes a form:

To tell the world that I am black, that I am an Aboriginal person ... it is not my Blackness that I must cast aside, but my Whiteness. On every government form, every school enrolment, every sports team registration form, every medical appointment, there it is, that question that demands just one definitive answer.... Every time I have to answer that question, “Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?” – as I was asked to do in the census of 2016 – I am required to deny my grandmother. My son is required to tick a box that excludes his mother. (S. Grant, 2020, pp. 15, 20)

Both Stan Grant and Katie, rather than feeling restricted by their self-identification as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians, look beyond this false dichotomy, recognising their freedom to identify as Indigenous Australians while feeling comfortable to live across cultures.

The students across the Yarning groups spoke about the challenges they face living in two worlds and the impact that has on their sense of who they are. Ivy describes the perceptions of others that she faces as “two different, like, opposite, like polar opposites. At school you’re too Black, but at home you’re too White”. Sienna contrasts the tension she faces moving between home and school cultures and the ease with which the non-Indigenous girls at her school are able to transition:

I just feel like being away at school, surrounding yourself with non-Indigenous people and not always thinking about home, you tend to pull away from your culture. And not always having that constant reminder, like your family, and, you know, doing the little things that are traditional. Yeah, cooking traditional dishes or going out hunting or something ... I guess it’s

different to the non-Indigenous people that you're around. Because when they go home, they live pretty much the same life. (Sienna)

Sienna's experience is reflected by others. Millie reveals "... coming from Black ways to White ways, it's very challenging. Only because we have such different lifestyles". While Millie appears to identify strongly as an Indigenous person, she is not entirely comfortable with her immersion in a non-Indigenous culture.

The dynamic nature of cultural identification and placement along the orthogonal model described above is illustrated further by the internal conflict expressed by the older girls' Yarning group. The girls were responding to a question about whether their schools have support systems in place to assist them with the challenges to their identities they face each time they return from home to school and boarding:

It's more of a mental game in life, I think. (Ivy)

There's nothing the school can do. They all help, like, if you need them, they will help, but it's just something especially that you need to deal with yourself. (Sienna)

You need to deal with it on your own. (Sabrina)

You need to like, help the other young kids. (Sienna)

I guess having moral support is good, but there's not necessarily anything that anyone else could do. It's more of how you deal with yourself and whether like, you'd help another Yalari student out. (Jessica)

Jessica really helps me and stuff like that at boarding school. (Phoebe)

A recurring theme through the Yarning conversations is the importance of strong relationships with kin manifested through reliance on each other for support, particularly in the early days and after each transition from home. Earlier, Sophia was reported making the comment, “I find the only support I can really have is through the other Yalari students at my school”. Jack spoke about his support for the younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys arriving at his school:

Yeah, so we’ve got the two younger boys here, and just coming through I know that, I can like, help them with the things I’ve experienced at school and the problems I’ve had and all that. Just being there, and being able to, you know, have them communicate with me what they’re feeling and any troubles they are having. (Jack)

Students within the Yalari organisation have the added advantage of peer support from interactions with other Yalari students attending different schools as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students at their own school:

Like another support system. Like, yeah, Yalari’s helped us gain friendships where we can just like, we can have other people that can relate to us that aren’t in our school. We have Yalari students at our school and stuff like that, but like, if we don’t want them to talk to, we always have Yalari students from all over Australia. And I think that’s really good. And I like that Yalari gives us opportunities to do that. (Ivy)

Despite the peer supports available to the students, their place along the range of the orthogonal identification axes varies between students. While, as discussed earlier, students such as Olivia and Katie are strongly bicultural and very comfortable with their sense of identity in either their traditional community or in the Eurocentric community that is the

boarding house, others find living in two worlds to be a significant challenge. Although at the time of the Walk and our Yarning Session, Millie was in Year 11 and nearing the end of her fifth year at boarding, she still felt uncomfortable through the transition back to boarding:

... when I go home, I feel like I'm me. But then when I come back to school, I feel like I have to be the person that I'm not sometimes. I feel like sometimes we are restricted from being, well I'm restricted from being my own person, more like an Aboriginal person within the boarding community, only because I feel like they're such two different lifestyles. So, I feel like when I come home, I can be this free spirit, down to earth person who I truly am. But then when I go to school, sometimes I feel like I have to change my whole personality for that. (Millie)

There appears, for Millie, to be a stereotyped expectation of her persona in the boarding house as an Aboriginal person that prevents her from expressing her true self. For other students such as Katie who are particularly assertive and strong in their Indigenous identity, they felt very comfortable from the outset transitioning to boarding school. Katie reflects on her experiences along with her three fellow Indigenous boarding students as they first entered the boarding community at their school:

Oh, I think it was fine. I think that at first it was intimidating for students who had never met Indigenous people; there was [sic] four of us that went in very strong in cultural identity. We were very vocal, we didn't have a problem saying when we thought something was racist or out of line or – yeah, we were just very, very proud of our culture, and yeah, I think some people found it intimidating. Some people loved it, some people didn't like it, but for us we didn't care. (Katie)

Katie and her friends, in contrast to Millie, did not entertain any preconceived expectations that their boarding house peers may have of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, nor were they intimidated by their membership of a minority cultural group. These contrasting experiences of students such as Millie and Katie once again indicate the vacuum that may exist in at least some of the boarding schools in inculcating cultural awareness, understanding, and acceptance, again supporting Matias' (2013) call for non-Indigenous people to view themselves through the historical lens of Indigenous people: In other words, to approach relationships and interactions with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their boarding houses and classrooms from a place of empathy.

Similarly, experiences differed for the students on their return home at the end of each term. The younger boys, who were all in their first year of boarding, felt very comfortable returning home. William responded, "It's not difficult because we get to do, I get to spend time with my mum and my dad and all my cousins and go hunting with my dad. It's really fun". When asked about how the other kids in the community regarded them, Ethan said, "Yeah, they're all right. They're all running for me, hugging". The older boys reported different tensions. These boys describe retaining their former friendships at home and in their communities. Archie commented, "All my friends like, ask me about boarding and stuff, ask me about school and stuff, ask me what's going on and stuff. Like they're pretty accepting about it. And they're happy and proud in a way, as friends."

Noah's friends, on the other hand, were keen that, as the school holidays draw to a close, he remains home to attend school with them. "A lot of friends like, telling you to stay behind and stay at school with them for the last couple of years." While the older boys reported the tensions of leaving their family and friends to attend boarding schools, they didn't report treatment from members of their home communities as being ostracising or unfair. Similarly to the situation for the younger boys, old friendships and community

connections remained strong throughout the boarding experiences and transitions to and from school.

Conversely, many of the female participants across the various Yarning groups felt challenged and even ostracised by their friends and community on their return to their home communities from boarding for the school holidays. While the third Yarning group made up of older male and female students were talking about their experiences on returning home, Sophia commented, “Oh yeah, I cop that at home too. They’re like, oh, going down to school in Sydney. She’s a Sydneysider now, she’s rowing with the White girls.” Erin and Rosie had similar reports: “I’ve lost a few friends because they think I’m a rich little Black girl” (Erin); “Like when I’ve come home, all my friends told me ‘you’ve changed’” (Rosie). Emma and Hannah explained:

I can’t see my friends anymore but that’s because they’ve shut me out for going to school and, yeah, I don’t have any friends at home, so I like, never leave my house. Yeah, I have like, no friends at home. If it was like, my choice I’d still be friends, like, I don’t think I’ve changed one bit, but they just think that because I’ve gone to that school, like, I’m just completely like, like someone told me that I was completely whitewashed and that I was like, really posh and snobby now. (Hannah)

Yeah, they just assume that because you’ve gone away to school that you’re going to come back and you’re going to be all whitewashed and you’re going to act all different. But they don’t know because they don’t give you a chance. (Emma)

In the Yarning conversation with the older girls, it was clear that, at some stage when they have been at home during school holidays, they have struggled with their relationships with past friends:

Phoebe: And another challenge I'd say is even going home, because when you're down south you've changed so much, you've experienced a lot, and then you come up there [to the Torres Strait].

Sienna: You're growing up basically.

Phoebe: Yeah, you're growing up.

Sienna: And then you go home and sometimes people don't really understand the changes that you go through and just very quick to judge.

Phoebe: They think you're being snobby.

Ivy: Or being White or.

Phoebe: Yeah, I get, the term Oreo gets used, thrown around a lot.

Facilitator: Oreo?

Phoebe: Yeah. Black on the outside, White on the inside.

Facilitator: Okay. Does that happen at home now?

Phoebe: Yep.

Sienna: It gets worse when you're older.

Facilitator: Really?

Sienna: Yes.

Phoebe: It's like, oh what, you couldn't stay here?

Facilitator: So how do, Sabrina how do you deal with that?

Sabrina: I don't know, I just don't really think about it. I've been at [school name] for four years now, so it doesn't really like, bother me.

Sienna: It just seems to be the same people.

Sabrina: Yeah, like, all the Indigenous kids at my school had the chance to go for it. But the ones that thought they were too good for it, you know, didn't want to do it. So, whose fault is it? Not mine.

Facilitator: Ruby, is that your experience?

Ruby: Yeah. Like, I don't know. I just, like, I go back, and they'll be like, "oh, so you're going to a big White school" or something like that. I just ignore it. I just don't associate with people who talk to me like that.

Given their current adolescence and the imperative of identity investigation, exploration, and commitment during this life stage, the impact of these remarks made to them by former friends in their home communities, questioning their belonging to their group and their identities as young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, is a challenge to be faced. This behaviour has been referred to in Chapter 6 through the metaphor of "Crabs in the Bucket", through which the members of a minority group will actively resent the actions of individuals in the group who may appear to be seeking to improve their life circumstances through their moving away from Community, relationships, and friendships, in this context through leaving the local community to attend private city boarding schools. Described by Clark (2004) as intragroup racism, this form of alienation and discrimination has been shown to have negative effects in the case of African-American college students. During our Yarning conversation, Sabrina related her experiences of this intragroup alienation and how she has learned to deal with it over her years at boarding school:

Sabrina: And you don't want to act White at home because that's where you have your whole family and you don't want these little kids calling you a coconut [Black on the outside, White on the inside], specially [sic] when they're your family, you know? And then like, you've only got, like ...

Facilitator: So, have you overcome that? Are you able to survive happily in two worlds?

Sabrina: Yeah, now it's just a joke. Like, now it's not even funny. The people who say it, I'm just like, you know what? Who cares? The people that aren't really going anywhere. Like they're people that aren't going anywhere in their own life, so they just want to make everyone else miserable.

Given their statements, it is evident that there are challenges faced by these young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through their adolescent period of identity development as they struggle initially to find their place in the new boarding community in which they find themselves while maintaining a connection with their home community. Sienna and Phoebe reflected on these challenges during our conversations. They identified cultural differences including the way they interact with family, the food they prepare and share, as well as language, as the following conversation reflects:

Phoebe: Even, like, the language as well I'd say.

Sienna: Yep. Even the language ...

Phoebe: Yeah, *Passin* as well. *Passin* means, like, attitude. Like in the Torres Strait it's very centralised, like respect your Elders, everyone is Aunty and Uncle and stuff like that.

Sienna: And like, your *Ginnar*, the way you behave around other people. That was all different. Like seeing how other girls behave in different situations, like, very different to home and I think that was something that was a bit of a challenge, trying to adapt. Yep.

Faced with the challenge to adapt to the boarding environment characterised by a set of cultural norms wholly unlike those of their childhoods, Sienna and Phoebe will work their way through the stages of REC identity formation. Their journey will take them from foreclosure, acceptance of identity with minimal exploration, through moratorium, a period of active identity exploration, to commitment, following a period of reflection and exploration.

6.7.2 Identity Exploration and Moratorium

Identity formation requires exploration and commitment. The process of exploration “represents a quest for knowledge and understanding about one’s ethnic and racial heritage” (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014, p. 25). This exploration of identity tends to occur in mid to late adolescence, during which time the individual chooses between options which are meaningful to them. Commitment refers to the level of personal resources invested by the individual in the development of their identity (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Researchers (Kroger & Marcia, 2011; Marcia, 2002, 2009) describe the developmental process of identity formation as a journey through identity statuses, commencing with Foreclosure, the unquestioning acceptance of the identity values, traditions, and characteristics of family, through Moratorium, a period between childhood and adulthood leading to identity Achievement.

Phinney (1989) put forward a model of ethnic identity development through which individuals progress in a linear fashion from a state of unexamined ethnic identity through

ethnic identity exploration to achieved ethnic identity that speaks to the meaning in their life of their ethnicity (French et al., 2006; Phinney, 1989). In keeping with the assertion that the primary purpose of adolescence is the exploration and formation of identity, through the Yarning conversations students in the current study articulated their need to explore their sense of who they are, needing to reconcile their identities as young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians with their new experiences of immersion in a Western cultural boarding school environment.

Students discussed their exploration of their identities and the importance of this exploration. Sophia describes identity as the following, “Your identity is like, you as a person. You’ve got to, like, you know, even if you don’t practise it, you’ve just got to know who you are. And then you know what you’re doing later on”. In the same conversation, Isabella commented, “If you don’t know, it’s like you’re not drinking water. You get thirsty for more”. The older boys described how they would speak with the Elders in their communities to find out more about their story. Noah and Archie referred to their grandparents as a source of knowledge while Jacob spoke about conversations with “really older people. Because they know everything, really”. Charlie mentioned listening to his Uncle; “usually he tells stories by the fire”. When discussing the impact of distance from home for long periods of time on her search for identity, Katie declared:

Yeah, yeah, one hundred percent, being away from home makes you respect more where you’ve come from, your upbringing, even our old people. It makes us reconnect with the values that they had. My grandfather couldn’t graduate from school. He finished school at the age of 7 and went to work on pearling ships, and that was the norm. People didn’t graduate. My father didn’t finish Grade 12. He went back and did it at TAFE, but he didn’t complete it whilst he was like, 17. He still finished. But it’s a way of reclaiming our

identity, and yes, in a Western way, in a Western society we do that. We will graduate Year 12 because that's the "White" education system coming through, but then we're able to go back and go through [traditional] Law or go through custom and culture and still be able to "graduate" in inverted commas, in that way as well. Yeah, it's pretty cool. It just makes you want to know more. (Katie)

During the period of Moratorium, individuals actively seek out their identities, exploring their social environment and finding a place and group to which they belong, eventuating in identity Achievement (Kroger & Marcia, 2011; Marcia, 1966). Olivia's comments indicate her early stages of Moratorium as she struggled with her sense of who she has been and where she belonged (Foreclosure) conflicting with who she was becoming and the possibilities that her new life made available for her (Moratorium). Those in a Moratorium stage are engaged in a period of exploration, looking to form their identity, but struggling between alternatives. This is well illustrated by Millie, a Year 11 student at a boarding school in Sydney, who was quoted earlier on the need she feels at school to be someone other than her true self: "... when I go to school, sometimes I feel like I have to change my whole personality."

Lily, from the Grafton region of Northern New South Wales and Amelia, from the Cranbrook Shire in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia, appeared to be in a stage of Foreclosure (Kroger & Marcia, 2011) at the time of the Cherbourg Walk. At that time, they had not embarked on a deep exploration of their Indigeneity. Lily explains, "I know I'm from Bunjalung down near Coffs Harbour and Grafton. I like, I know who my family is around there, or, the Elders. But like, not much. Like, I don't think people speak Bunjalung anymore down there, it's kind of been lost."

When asked if she had conversations with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students about being Indigenous, Amelia's response was, "Not really, I just talk to Sienna". Sienna is a female senior student from the same area as Amelia. While Sienna and Amelia attend two different boarding schools, their shared experiences and common home community enable Sienna to assume a mentoring role for the younger Amelia. Similarly, Sophia, a senior student at school in Sydney, noted the following in conversations with others about what it means to be an Indigenous Australian:

We don't really question it, you know? Yeah, like no one really talks about it because, you know you're Aboriginal and you're proud of it. So, like, you never question it. You never even have to go anywhere near the topic of, I wish, like, I wish I knew more. That kind of thing. (Sophia)

It is probable from this conversation that Sophia is in the Foreclosure stage of identity formation, accepting her Indigeneity without experiencing a need for exploration.

Kroger and Marcia (2011) distinguished between what they describe as "constructed" identities, the notion of identity exploration over time, and "conferred" identities, accepted unquestioningly from family members and community. In this conversation, Sophia's comments seem to indicate that she is satisfied to maintain an identity that has been conferred upon her by her significant others. The outward appearance of this acceptance of an identity with little personal exploration is one of strength and fortitude; however, this may cover up a sense of fragility which has the potential to manifest itself as defensiveness (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Sophia illustrates this defensiveness in her description of interactions with some students at her school in the Eastern suburbs of Sydney whom she states have had no previous exposure to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians:

My school is ignorant as anything. Like, they're over in the Eastern suburbs, so they have no exposure to any Aboriginal people.... And they kind of have this stereotypical image of us in their head, so they kind of just expect us to follow it like, that. Like, I remember in Year 7, I used to get asked, Do you live in the bush? Do you live in a tin shed? Do you sleep in trees? Do you hunt for your food? I'm, like, no, I go down the road to Maccas, like, come on!

(Sophia)

Sophia's experience is also indicative of a lack of effort by her school to provide opportunities for the staff and students to gain some level of cultural awareness and understanding. It is a concern that Sophia, as a Year 10 student, observes her peers as having such a stereotypical, neocolonial perception of Aboriginal existence in remote communities. Such views are not limited to Sophia's classmates; similar views have been expressed as recently as 2003 in the New South Wales Parliament as referred to by Sarra, quoting the words of David Oldfield, co-founder of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party and, at the time, member of the New South Wales Legislative Council. During his period as an elected representative in parliament, Oldfield stated that "the Aboriginal civilization, if it could be referred to as that, is Stone Age.... The only thing unique about the Aboriginal people is that they never got out of the Stone Age, and without intervention never would have" (Sarra, 2011, p. 51). It is unfortunate that an elected representative would articulate such ignorance, given their privileged and influential position.

While Sophia's experience and tone in recollecting this conversation with her non-Indigenous peers is indicative of her frustration at the apparent lack of cultural awareness at her school, the Indigenous students also spoke of the opportunities they have experienced as a consequence of their participation in Yalari's Indigenous Scholarship Program to explore Indigenous identity. In addition to the biennial Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg, each

year the Year 9 Yalari students participate in a gender-based, year group Central Australia camp at Uluru. Reflecting on these two experiences, Chloe and Scarlett shared their thoughts:

I feel like we can connect a lot more, because we walk to Cherbourg ... we do these types of things to follow our ancestors and stuff, like through their footsteps ... and it makes you feel proud that, like, you're able to do this to follow in the footsteps and learn about culture a bit more. And that's what Yalari ... Yalari gives you the opportunity to connect with your culture ... we want it all to, like, pass on to our generations and keep it going. (Chloe)

The highlights were like learning about, like, when we went to the Rock, like, Uluru, it was really good to learn about like, what we did, like, what Aboriginal people did ... and, like, when we sat around the campfire, we had this lady, and she was Indigenous, and she was talking about our Indigenous culture and stuff. And I learned a lot, like, just about myself, like, I can, just as a proud Indigenous woman, I can be who I really want. (Scarlett)

During our Yarning conversation, Millie spoke about the benefits she found as a participant in the Cherbourg walk in exploring her identity and growing her confidence as a young Indigenous woman:

I've already been on this camp, but I think the thing that brought me back again was just being with the different years [students]. And getting to have a little bit, a taste, of Yalari, Waverley, is culture. Because history, for me, is such a massive thing. And because it can be lost within just years, or not even that, in the blink of an eye, I think that it's very important for us, after this camp, to go home, find out more about our culture and heritage and put the puzzles together ... I think being on this program has definitely helped me

regain who I am, I feel like. Because being, you know, like, back out in the bush and just campfires and all that stuff; I feel like it makes me want to know more about my culture. It's definitely empowered me, as an Indigenous woman, to just keep thriving, keep pushing. You know, just make it out there in the big world. (Millie)

Weaver (2001) asserted that ethnic identity exists through the differences with others. Reading through the statements made by Sophia, Chloe, Scarlett, and Millie confirms this insight. The students clearly recognise that differences do exist between them and the other students in their boarding environments. Their conversations also indicate the foundation of their ethnic identities as they continue through the period of exploration. While many non-Indigenous Australians would tend to identify themselves by their occupation or profession, Indigenous people may look more towards their mob, their community, or their Country when describing their identities (Weaver, 2001). Millie also describes the sense of agency she now feels because of exploration and now identifying as an Indigenous woman: "... once you know your heritage, you know your mob ... you start to find the power you have." When asked if knowing her mob and her heritage are important to her, Millie responded: "I think so. Because it's a part of who I am and it's created me, it's created the person I am today. Without my heritage and culture, I feel like I would be no-one".

For these young adolescent Indigenous people, their sense of their identities is a dynamic and fluid rather than fixed construct. From the conversations, it became clear that they continue to struggle with defining and expressing their Indigenous identities. They express their concerns that, as their desire to explore their Indigeneity increases, obstacles arise that need to be overcome. Phoebe explained the impediments that arose for her when exploring her heritage and culture:

I don't even, it's really hard because I don't really know too much about, like, my heritage in the sense that; so, both my grandads aren't from the Torres Strait. And then one of my grandmas, the only one that would, my only full like, Torres Strait grandma, she died when I was quite young. So, and then my mum and her siblings grew up, majority of their life like down south. So, then I only know bits. And then there's this thing called island adoption that they do in the Torres Straits, but a lot of people are given up and given to family members, but they don't document it. So, it's really hard to definitely know your, like, direct line. Jessica's Grandma was island adopted as well; both of our grandmas were.

Family displacement from Country and family members who were part of the Stolen Generation and dislocated from their culture and history are examples of the obstacles created for and confronted by these young people as they explore their backgrounds. When asked about their story, Emma and Hannah spoke about their family history, Country, and language:

I don't really know much of my own story. I learnt a bit from my Elders when I was like seven, but I can't remember much. But I just know that my tribe is originally from Walgett but moved to Lightning Ridge. But I'm pretty sure they came down from the NT [Northern Territory]. (Emma)

... my tribe is Jingili and that's where I'm from, like, Longreach and Elliot in the NT, but I've grown up in Tennant Creek, so that's like, the Warrumungu people. And I guess I learned a lot more Warrumungu [language] than I did Jingili because we had lessons dedicated to language and stuff at my old school. (Hannah)

Both girls value knowledge of their Aboriginal traditional language but express difficulties with learning it as languages are lost:

Yeah, 80 out of 600 languages [remain], like, they're dying out, and I feel really guilty for not learning my language. (Hannah)

Yeah, I'm the same. (Emma)

But it's hard because they're not written. And because, like, Jingili is a really small area, so it wasn't recorded or anything and it's just kind of like there's a few people that know how to speak it. (Hannah)

The girls went on to describe their experiences, challenges, and obstacles in exploring more about their history and identity:

I think I was 10 when I actually figured out that I wanted to find out more. I obviously do now but it's really hard to find Elders in my community that are willing to share that information, because they find it like, very sacred. But I used to have an Elder, Aunty June, who would teach me language and dances and like, smoking ceremonies. She passed away when I was like, 11, so I just stopped trying because like, there's no one else that we can find. Like I've travelled as far Moree to find an Elder. Because I'm Kamilaroi tribe, so like, it branches out. But yeah, I kind of gave up. But I'd love to do it again but it's just so hard to find an Elder who's willing to pass on that information. (Emma)

With my family, so my Pop, he's Scottish so he's not Aboriginal, but my Nanna, she's Aboriginal and she was part of the Stolen Generation, so she didn't get to learn her language really either; she got taken away from her place and got taken to Croker Island. So, they were like, not allowed to like,

practise any Aboriginal like, dances or rituals or speak their language without getting punished. So, she didn't learn her language and therefore she couldn't pass it to my mum or to me. And yeah, it's hard because it's like, a really small area group. And because I live so far away from it, like, they're right next to each other but still it's like, in the NT [Northern Territory] everything's really spread out. (Hannah)

Boarding schools may be well placed to assist students like Emma and Hannah in their continuing exploration of their Indigenous histories and identities. Again, this would require a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as having heritage that is complex. A beginning would be for boarding school staff to understand that historical occurrences such as forced relocations and Stolen Generations have impacted and continue to impact these young Indigenous people today. Many of the students, through the Yarning conversations, have described the importance of their family and community and their deep sense of belonging to their Mob. Understanding the sense of loss suffered by those young people who have not yet been able to trace their individual cultural and community heritage is a first step in recognising the significance of connections in Indigenous identity formation.

6.7.3 *Identity Commitment and Achievement*

Following on from a period of identity exploration, individuals reach a level of commitment and personal acceptance of their ethnicity that may lead to identity achievement. As described earlier, adolescents, in exploring their identities, may move between Moratorium and Achievement through what Crocetti et al. (2007) describe as Reconsideration of Commitment, or the searching moratorium phase. Individuals who have attained identity achievement tend to display personality characteristics such as self-

assurance, assertiveness, dependability, high self-esteem, and higher levels of moral reasoning than individuals who have not yet reached achievement identity status (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). For example, Phinney (1989) carried out a research project investigating the identity development of adolescents who were members of minority ethnic groups. Utilising a mixed methods methodology, in-depth interviews were conducted, with participants asked to describe those things about their culture that they particularly liked or enjoyed or considered to be strengths. Identifying these is indicative of commitment to Identity and the Achievement status.

This level of self-assurance and assertiveness indicative of identity achievement was also demonstrated by the older female students I interviewed who reflected upon the hardships faced by the original Aboriginal people displaced from their Country and forced to walk to Cherbourg Mission, as demonstrated in the following statements:

We just, we have something that no one else has. And will never have. Like I think that that's something that, like, the coolest thing when you think about it.
(Phoebe)

And they can't take it away from us. They tried and they couldn't. (Ruby)

And during the same conversation:

I'm proud of how like, connected we are to the land. (Sabrina)

Like you could go to Uluru and you could go with an Asian family, White family, a Malaysian family, but like, that is going to be, like, a totally different experience for an Aboriginal that goes there. (Phoebe)

Sophia and Ella spoke about their ongoing requests to hold a special NAIDOC assembly at their school. Like Katie's experience described earlier, their tenacity paid off and they were provided with an opportunity. The girls describe the enlisting of the school's

youngest students in the Early Learning Centre to participate by performing the Acknowledgement of Country and singing a couple of songs. Ella goes on to describe the assembly:

I did a speech on like, my identity and culture, and how like, I've been affected by that. And then Emma did a speech on her family and her history. And all the other younger Yalari girls did, like, they all were really keen to, they all did a speech on an Indigenous person they look up to. And then we did like, a dance at the end, and we showed the video that the group made. So, it's kind of like, we wanted our first one to be all of us together, to show that we don't need someone from outside, just to like, yeah. Like, we were like, probably want someone to come in and speak next time or something, but we wanted to like, we didn't want it to be that somebody came in, and the only reason that it was good is because somebody else came in and talked. You know what I mean? So, we kind of made sure it was all within the school, and within us, at the time. (Ella)

The strength of this event was the desire the girls had, firstly, to share their culture with the whole school and, secondly, to do so without inviting in a guest speaker. Their confidence in their commitment to identity was such that they felt strongly that no outside person was required in order to express to their peers what it means to them to be young adolescent Aboriginal people.

The older boys tended to be far more succinct in their responses. When asked what it is like to be a young Indigenous person in Australia today, Noah indicated his positive commitment to identity with a single word response:

Noah: Deadly!

Facilitator: Deadly?

Noah: Awesome!

Neville (2014) ascertained that REC belonging is a crucial quality leading to ethnic identity achievement. Belonging can be defined as possessing a sense of relatedness and connectedness to a social group. “As humans, we strive to become a valued member of a social group to which we identify as central to our identity” (Neville et al., 2014, p. 415). She goes on to define five dimensions of REC identity: history, place, and peoplehood; sense of community; shared language and culture; interconnections; and acceptance and pride.

6.7.4 *Dimensions of Indigenous Identity*

Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson referred to a report by Dobia et al. (2013) in which the authors “identified and measured nine dimensions of Indigenous identity” (2014, p. 792) present in a group of female Aboriginal high school students attending school in a rural town. These nine dimensions are Aboriginal pride, respect for Elders, Aboriginal history, cultural events, Aboriginal protocols, family connections, connection to Country, connection to mob, and community support. In their report examining processes and interventions to enhance the resilience and connectedness of Aboriginal girls, Dobia et al. concluded that standard measures of identity are “based on individualistic notions of selfhood that fail to capture processes of collective social identity” (2013, pp. 20-21). These measures are not suited to portray the sense of cultural belonging at the core of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander REC identity. The nine dimensions discussed make visible the “sensitive links” (p. 20) between culture and self.

Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2014) argued that, rather than defining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity through a Eurocentric lens, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity is a multifaceted construct. Regardless of the continuing presence of

considerable numbers of “self-identifying and named autonomous groups across the continent, the original inhabitants of Australia have always been understood and named by Europeans as a singular group – ‘the Aborigines’” (2014, p. 789). These diverse and distinct tribal and language groups are illustrated in Figure 3.2 in Chapter 3. Affinity with these dimensions of identity was further associated positively with desirable outcomes such as increased resilience and engagement and connectedness with school (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2014). The two sets of dimensions have clear overlaps, apart from the dimension of interconnections referred to by Neville et al. (2014).

While there is no clear discussion through the transcripts of empathy for and connection with minority ethnic groups from other countries, that is, the interconnections described by Neville et al. (2014), each of the other dimensions of REC identity were referred to through the various Yarning sessions. A selection of comments illustrating the students’ identification with these dimensions described by Dobia et al. (2013) and discussed by Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2014), incorporating the dimensions identified by Neville et al., are summarised in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2

Dimensions of Racial-Ethnic-Cultural Identity

Dimension of REC identity	Student	Evidence from the Yarning sessions
Aboriginal pride	Millie	... being an Indigenous student, an Indigenous woman is very empowering for me now. Over the years, I've started to know I've got the power to do little changes or even big changes within my school, being an Indigenous woman. I think that's something that sometimes is going to be taken for granted, but it's something that we should be proud of.
	Kayla	I just wanted to see, like, Waverley [Stanley], like, connect with his land, because like, obviously I'm really proud of Waverley

		and what he's done [founder of Yalari]. It sounds a bit weird because I'm the student,
	Erin	... when people ask you about it, you can tell it proudly, really. And with the Dreamtime and everything; you can tell the stories that you've heard from your Elders and everything.
	Noah	[Facilitator - what it is like to be a young Indigenous person?] Deadly! Awesome!
	Phoebe/Ruby	We just, we have something that no one else has. And will never have. Like I think that that's something that, like, the coolest thing when you think about it. (Phoebe) And they can't take it away from us. They tried and they couldn't. (Ruby)
Respect for Elders	Olivia	My grandmother is one of the Elders in our community. She turned 90 this year. She has a lot of knowledge. I love my grandmother, because Elders are like, our chiefs and everything, and I just love how everyone respects my grandmother.
	Jacob	Yeah, really older people. Because they know everything, really.
	Ruby/Jessica/Ruby	It's just because we were, like, we were all raised to be respectful towards other people / Elders, especially Elders / Yeah, people that are older than you, you must respect them.
	Sophia	... we had a NAIDOC assembly where we got our, like, Indigenous Elder of the area from La Perouse, Uncle Vic Simms. But he comes over and he carved a tree for us, like, the Kambala dreaming. And he like, did a smoking ceremony for us.
Aboriginal history	Ella	I started [a group] up. It's called Mana Allawah, which roughly translates to a sit down gathering. And it's run by me, and I have friends, mostly it's my friends that come, and some other girls from other year groups, and all the Yalari girls come. And we've, like, find a topic that we want to research, and it's really just time to research and like, learn about and talk about things.
	Katie	History is a part of our culture, and instead of always focusing on dispossession, looking at the really beautiful parts of our culture, particularly dance, storytelling, song ...
	Emma	 when we went to the Rock, like, Uluru, it was like, really good to learn about like, what we did, like, what Aboriginal

		people did and stuff. And like, when we sat around the campfire, we talked about like, we had this like, lady and she was Indigenous, and she was talking about like, our Indigenous culture and stuff. And I learned a lot, like just about myself, like, that I can, just as a proud Indigenous woman,
	Millie	Because history, for me, is such a massive thing. And because it can be lost within just years, or not even that, in the blink of an eye, I think that it's very important for us, after this camp, taking, go home, find out more about our culture and heritage and put the puzzles together.
Cultural events	Olivia	Yeah, we always did Reconciliation Week, we had dinners, we had like, so many activities.
	Katie	I think cultural heritage is like, one of the foundations of my own being. When I have children, they'll grow up not having the disadvantage that I had but having the opportunities that I had to engage with culture, so practise my culture in the best way that I have or maybe more.
	Jessica	...a lot of the kids up at home, they don't necessarily do a lot of things to stay in contact with their culture because they're always around it. Whereas us being away, I guess you put in effort, which makes you, like, want it more, just to stay in contact with it.
	Ella	See at school, with me, I like to take a lot of initiative and like, use a lot of like, NAIDOC assemblies and dances and stuff. And I like to take a lot of things like that. That's how they know at school, but other than that, nobody really knows.
	Millie	Without my heritage and culture, I feel like I would be no-one sometimes.
Aboriginal protocols	Sophia	... when a family member passed away. When that happens, like, back in her culture, the spirits kind of cling to the family members. And ... she likes that, but when that happens, you're supposed to be close to your other family, you know?
	Jade	It's really hard to find Elders in my community that are willing to share that information, because they find it like very sacred. But I used to have an Elder, Aunty June, who would teach me

		language and dances and like, smoking ceremonies. She passed away when I was like, 11.
	Phoebe	Respect your Elders, everyone's Auntie and Uncle and stuff like that.
Family connections	Mia	... like, everyone's your cousin even if you're not related to them.
	Noah/Charlie	[Facilitator – what does it mean to you to be a successful person?] Noah: Supporting your family. Charlie: Yeah. Supporting your family.
	Sophia	Community and family... and the close bonds that you have with people that you're probably not even blood related to. Like, Harry and me, we're not blood related, but we still claim each other for cousin, because we've got mutual family like, if that makes sense?
Connection to Country	Jessica	As long as you know where you're from. And identity isn't about where you live, it's about where you come from and what you think of yourself as a person.
	Phoebe	You could go to Uluru and you could go with an Asian family, White family, a Malaysian family, but like, that is going to be, like, a totally different experience for an Aboriginal that goes there.
	Kayla	... when we did the walk around Uluru, I felt so at peace with the land, like, even though it wasn't mine. But yeah, I really liked it there, like, I actually felt like, not spiritual, but I felt like, a really deep connection with the land and, like, who I was.
	Sabrina	I'm proud of how, like, connected we are to the land. I just love seeing different parts of the land and this [Cherbourg Commemorative Walk] is so good.
Connection to mob	Jack	Just knowing that by default, you've got a network with the other Aboriginal kids around you. Like, you know, you experience the same things, the same, you know, story, the same history, between each other.
	Katie	You can follow your mother's moiety or your father's moiety. I follow—traditionally Kanntju people follow their father's moiety so I actually—I have a say on Taipan Country but I

		follow my dad's bloodline, and when I have children, it depends who their father is, but just say he was a Kanntju man, they would follow his moiety not mine, so they wouldn't be—they would have a say on Natukumapinta Country but they wouldn't—they would follow their father's Country.
	Sophia	Like us mob, we all meet up in like, one of the senior students' rooms, and we all just kick back, and we talk about school and whatever.
	Millie	I feel like sometimes we underestimate ourselves. But I but I feel like once you start to know, like for me personally, once you know your heritage, you know your mob and all that stuff, you start to find out the power you have.
	Ruby	Being Indigenous, like, you come from like, a more bigger group of like, people. And like, I don't know, but you just call everyone your family.
Community support	Olivia	I love our community. I love how we are so connected.
	Millie	I know, personally, that with the strong Aboriginal women in my life, they've impacted, like, a good impact on my life. Without them, I feel like they've just created and helped me shape the Aboriginal woman I am today.

Although the students were not directly asked to comment on these dimensions, the comments they made during the course of their conversations are indicative of the value they place on these dimensions of REC identity. These associations with the dimensions identified by Neville et al. (2014), Dobia et al. (2013), and Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2014) are further indications that these students are well into the process of identity exploration and commitment.

6.8 Experiences of Racism

I always get pulled up, all the time, for always talking “Black”, and I’m like, well it’s me, that’s who I am ... two different, like opposite, polar opposites. At school you’re too Black, but at home you’re too White. (Ivy)

6.8.1 *Stereotyping*

Structural, “traditional” racism includes aspects of prejudice, stereotyping that involves flawed generalisations about the minority ethnic group, discrimination resulting in unequal treatment, and bigotry demonstrated by displays of intolerance (Salter et al., 2018). The students reported few instances of these racist behaviours. However, Jessica and Sienna did relate incidents that they were confronted with concerning their relationships:

My best friend just dated a guy whose parents are racist, and they don’t like her because of her ... (Sienna)

I just remember when I dated, like, a White guy and everyone was like “Oh, you like dark chocolate?” or yeah, “You getting the Black?” Like they were making jokes. Not like the, it’s just that, I think, it’s not really more racist, it’s more ignorance, if that makes sense. (Jessica)

Examples of stereotyping did occur and were reported by the participants. This was illustrated by the frustration that students like Harry, who attends school in Albany, Western Australia, reported that he felt when “everyone just thinks like, because you’re an Aboriginal from here, like, if you go to school here, you’re Noongar”. This is a classic neocolonial assumption that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are members of the one Nation, that devalues Aboriginal people like Harry, who lives in Yawuru Country and identifies as a Yawuru man. As “an Aboriginal from Broome, like, I don’t need to be like, [classified as] Noongar”. Jessica, from the Torres Strait, was similarly annoyed that “at school we always get Aboriginal. And we always have to explain that Indigenous is both Torres Strait and Aboriginal people.” As Phoebe explained, “Both are Indigenous, but both are so different, like so unique and special in their own ways.”

Similar examples of stereotyping and the potential impact on the students' perceptions of public regard have been described earlier, with Ella describing how, once it was known that she was Aboriginal, she felt she was perceived to be "stupid", while Millie also relayed that some of the girls from regional country areas considered all Aboriginal people as lazy and unmotivated. As previously noted, Ella and Millie both identify confidently and positively as young Aboriginal women; however, the effects of racist encounters such as these that label all individuals of similar ethnic origin with derogatory characteristics based upon personal prejudice can have severe debilitating outcomes. Impacts of these racial stereotypes include "internalisation of negative beliefs about Indigenous intelligence and academic performance" (Moodie et al., 2019, p. 2) as well as potentially detrimental impacts on the young people's exploration and formation of their ethnic identity. These young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who commence their boarding school experience with high expectations of themselves will be challenged to maintain these expectations and personally satisfying academic outcomes through their boarding school education and engagement in the face of these responses and behaviours from their peers (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2014; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2013; Moodie et al., 2019).

Dweck and her colleagues have explored the influence of beliefs in relation to the malleability of intelligence on academic and social outcomes for students. They have classified those students who have an incremental understanding of intelligence, that is, that intelligence is not fixed but can increase with efficacious application and effort, as possessing a "growth mindset", while those with an entity understanding that intelligence and abilities have a predetermined, fixed quantum, as possessing a "fixed mindset" (Blackwell et al., 2007; Dweck, 2009, 2012; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). In a research study examining the implicit beliefs of Indigenous Australian students regarding intelligence and abilities, Tarbetsky et al. (2016) found that Indigenous students who held incremental beliefs about

their abilities and intelligence achieved substantially better academic grades than those students holding entity beliefs. Further to this, she found that “stereotype threat is the additional cognitive and emotional burden held by [Indigenous] students who face stereotypes that they are inferior to others because of their ethnicity” (Tarbetsky et al., 2016, p. 63). Stereotype threat has the potential to lead students like Millie and Ella towards adopting entity beliefs about their intelligence and abilities (Aronson et al., 2002) and decreasing their self-expectations, given that “stereotype targets tend to choose easier, success-assuring tasks when their abilities are subject to scrutiny or if their ethnicity or gender is made salient” (Aronson et al., 2002, p. 115).

The use of the term “Aborigine” is a derogatory term that has been used to describe Aboriginal people. It is seen as a relic, a leftover piece of language from colonial times, as “being referred to as an ‘Aborigine’ reminds many of a time when Aboriginal people were classified as non-human and were counted under the Flora and Fauna Act” (Carlson et al., 2014, p. 68); a time when all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians were considered as a homogenous race rather than a collection of nations, no different from Europe or Africa (Carlson et al., 2014). Media commentator Andrew Bolt who, as a White Australian, refers to “the myth of the Stolen Generations” (Bolt, 2008, p. 1), chooses to focus on race rather than ethnicity, and uses “Aborigine” as his term of choice in describing Aboriginal Australians in one of four columns he authored, questioning the Aboriginality of several fair-skinned Aboriginal people (Bolt, 2009). He describes Aboriginal author Tara Winch;

... despite her auburn hair and charmingly freckled face, she, too, is an Aborigine, who claims her “Country is Wiradjuri” ... Larissa Behrendt has also worked as a professional Aborigine ever since leaving Harvard Law

School, despite looking almost as German as her ~~father~~-[sic] name and having been raised by her white mother. (Bolt, 2009)

In referring to Associate Professor Anita Heiss, who identifies as a Wiradjuri woman, Bolt states, “What's more, she was raised in Sydney and educated at Saint Claire's Catholic College” (Bolt, 2009). The clear implication from Bolt’s commentary is that Aboriginal people, “Aborigines”, are dark-skinned, disadvantaged, undereducated, and live in remote communities (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2013). Emma, a Year 11 female attending boarding school in Sydney, recollected a similar experience early on in her time at boarding school:

I mean, it wasn’t bad, because like, I obviously don’t look Aboriginal, like, they didn’t think that I was at first. They also didn’t think that Ella was, because we’re both quite light compared to the other girl who was on our scholarship at the time. But yeah, they just didn’t really understand that we basically grew up the same way that they did. They just thought that like, we [Aboriginal people] were completely different people, which was a bit confronting.... But yeah, that was a bit confronting. (Emma)

In the same conversation, Emma’s friend, Hannah, spoke about the lack of comprehension of her new boarding school peers about Aboriginal Australians:

I’m from the Simpson Desert, so they all assumed that it was like, cactuses and sand and those little tumbleweeds like, yeah. They were really, yeah, it was weird to see like, how unaware they were of what it’s actually like, and how uneducated they are about how it is. (Hannah)

Several of the students described similar prejudicial experiences, as delivered by Bolt to the successful Aboriginal women mentioned earlier, in their boarding schools. These

support the findings of Pechenkina that “Indigenous [Australian] students, especially those who are fair-skinned, are scrutinised and pressured to justify one’s claim to Aboriginality” (2019, p. 509). The students in the third Yarning group, consisting of males and females in Years 10 and 11, discussed their experiences of this ignorance of Indigeneity by their non-Indigenous peers, who have a stereotyped image of Aboriginal people. Considering the generations of extermination followed by dispossession and assimilation of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, it is clear that “physical characteristics should never be included in a definition of ethnic identity. It is inaccurate to associate physical features with any specific cultural identity” (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 18):

Mia: It’s the fact that, because we’ve got ... light-skinned [Aboriginal] people who go to the same school, they say “Oh, you’re not Black, not Black enough”.

Isabella: They say, “You see my tan?” [comparing their skin colour with Isabella] and I say, yeah, I’m Black, Black blood, and they’re, like, not.

Mia: ... the light-skinned [Aboriginal] girls [say] “I’m Aboriginal” and they’re, like, “What?” “Yes, I am.” And then they’re like, “Well, no. You’re too light.”

Harry: Yeah, like, “Oh, why do you say you’re Black when your skin colour is tan?” Like, “Oh, no, I’m Aboriginal. That’s Black, not tan.”

Ella: People tell me that I do, like, better in school because I’m lighter. And people like me, like, the teachers like me better because I’m not as dark.... It’s like they don’t realise what they are saying. And sometimes they try and make it a compliment [having fair skin], but it’s actually not.

Sophia: Well, I don't know about Ella, it might be different. But, when people see me, straight away they know I'm Aboriginal because I've got the dark skin, you know? And when they talk to me, they can hear, I've got that little kind of twangy kind of voice. Not voice, but like, accent, that kind of thing.

That Ella's contemporaries in the boarding house would consider it a compliment to describe her as fair-skinned is evidence of unintentional, casual, covert racism, referred to by Augoustinos et al. (2005) and Kessar (2006). Whether intentional or otherwise, such behaviours are characteristic examples of racial microaggressions; the common if brief verbal or behavioural incidents that promote negative racial connotations towards racial-ethnic minorities (Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017). This perpetuates an attitude of superiority that can have inadvertent consequences on young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people struggling with identity formation when belonging to a minority group.

Chloe, a Year 10 student, recalled her early days in boarding and her apprehensions as she started her boarding experience:

I was obviously worried that people were going to pick on me because I was Aboriginal and like, I had a couple of people say to me like, "Oh, you don't look Aboriginal, but we know that you're Aboriginal because of your voice."
(Chloe)

These behaviours described by Mia, Isabella, Harry, Ella, Sophia, and Chloe are examples of racial microaggressions; behaviours that are manifested as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of colour because they belong to a racial minority group" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Perceived discrimination as reported by these students is a risk factor for psychological, physical, and academic health and well-being (Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015). In a study that included 409 ethnically diverse undergraduate college students,

the researchers found that “racial microaggression was inversely related to academic self-efficacy while ethnic identity was positively related to self-efficacy” (Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015, p. 71).

As Foley states, “Skin colour or percentages of Aboriginal 'blood' cannot, and does not, define Aboriginality” (2000, p. 45). Foley went on to assert that stereotypes of Aboriginality and Indigeneity are reinforced when the fairness or otherwise of an individual’s skin colour is the criterion by which non-Indigenous people choose to classify others as Aboriginal or not. He declares that, despite the desire by non-Indigenous people to define who is and who is not Indigenous, “Indigenous identity is ultimately the responsibility of the Indigenous community” (Foley, 2000, p. 49). Questioning Indigeneity based on the fairness of an individual’s skin colour, as experienced by several of the scholarship students, reinforces stereotypes and supports an assimilationist viewpoint (de Plevitz, 2016; Foley, 2000; Pechenkina, 2019).

6.8.2 *Covert and Casual Racism*

Traditional forms of racism as described at the beginning of this section are based on a belief that different racial groups can be ranked in a hierarchy of value from superior to inferior. There is clearly no scientific evidence in support of this colonial construct of superior versus inferior that has been used to justify the dominance of colonial powers over Indigenous Peoples (Keita et al., 2004; Moreton-Robinson, 2006, 2009; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Plainly, the “concept of ‘race’ is an outmoded, inaccurate, meaningless way of describing or understanding human biological variation” (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2014, p.84). In contrast to these traditional racist viewpoints, contemporary forms of racism, described as covert or casual, are more commonly experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians today (Augoustinos et al., 2005; Kessar, 2006). Kessar (2006) asserted that

casual racist behaviour becomes normalised such that perpetrators are themselves unaware of it, and hence “the majority of nice, decent Mununga [White] people can and do participate in everyday kinds of casual racism” (p. 349). One such form of racist behaviour is opposition to affirmative action initiatives, through which people occupying a place of disadvantage in society are provided with an opportunity to assist in overcoming that disadvantage (Augoustinos et al., 2005; Salter et al., 2018). In the case of the student participants in this research project, two students, Emma and Hannah, related experiences of resentment by others, in their case, a member of the boarding house staff, that they had been given (earned) the opportunity to attend boarding school on a scholarship. This adult member of the boarding community invoked the values of egalitarianism and meritocracy to imply unfairness in the granting of scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to attend these schools – a subtle form of racism that gives the impression of maintaining neutrality while perpetuating a justification for the inequalities that exist between the majority White and minority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ethnic groups in Australia (Salter et al., 2018):

Hannah: I had heaps of troubles in Year 7, like, with my boarding mum. So that’s the boarding mum that liked to pick on the Koori kids a bit more and, like, she made me not want to come to school.

Facilitator: What was her motivation, do you think?

Emma: She thinks that we shouldn’t have an opportunity. Like she thinks that we should pay like to go to a school because like ...

Hannah: Because she had to work two jobs for her girl to go to school. And, you know, like I think, like, lots of people think that she thinks that we

shouldn't have a scholarship to go to a good school because she had to like, work her butt off for her girl to go to school.

Rather than referring to the structural inequalities in contemporary Australia that negatively impact opportunities for successful educational outcomes for young Indigenous people, this form of covert racism attributes disadvantage to the transgression of majority group values such as self-reliance, hard work, and compliance with the status quo. Hence this opposition can be defended as being based in majority-group meritocratic values rather than racism (Augoustinos et al., 2005).

Students also related experiences of support following encounters with racist behaviours at school. Olivia describes her reaction to the support she and her Indigenous friends received from the school and her Principal following an incident that occurred during a modern history lesson:

I love my Principal; she had no tolerance for racism. I love my school. It was like, we had, like, one racist incident, and it was a modern history class, and I was in Year 10. And coincidental, there was the rest, there was only three Indigenous girls in my year, out of 83 [students], and coincidental we were all in the same classroom when this incident occurred. It was more like, they [the other students in the class] were uneducated, they were just saying what they see on the news ... actually, they had no idea. But I love the school, how they dealt with it. (Olivia)

Olivia went on to describe how, rather than hide the issues, the Principal used the incident to address the issue of racism at school assemblies and, as this was an Anglican school, the Chaplain addressed racism during Chapel services also. Olivia described how the girls involved in the behaviour apologised. "We told them ... who we are, like, it's just

unacceptable. It's all about miscommunication and under-education, and the way the school dealt with it was amazing. And like, whole entire five years, only the one incident.” (Olivia)

The flow-on effect of this empathetic response by the school leadership is to lead to a sense of heightened positive public and private regard by Olivia and her fellow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In turn, this potentially positively impacts upon their social-emotional well-being and academic efficacy (Ho & Sidanius, 2010; D. Hughes et al., 2011). Conversely, inaction by leadership following incidents of racist behaviours, whether covert or overt, can result in a negative impact on a person's public regard, leading to diminished academic self-efficacy and increased academic stress for students belonging to a minority ethnic group (Chee et al., 2019).

It is important that staff at boarding schools with student populations that do include young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are aware of the implications of racism on the well-being and hence educational outcomes of these students. These students commence their boarding experiences with some level of apprehension but also with high expectations of themselves. In the face of prejudicial behaviours based on racial and cultural differences, they may find these expectations difficult to maintain. In the extreme, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who perceive threats of racism and resultant marginalisation may inadvertently choose to exchange their cultural identification for educational success as measured by the schools in which they are enrolled, the very definition of assimilation (Moodie et al., 2019). The high level of senior staff support described by Olivia, along with a willingness to bring the issue into the open and to address it in the most public settings existing at schools, assemblies and chapel services, has clearly resulted in Olivia feeling that young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and their REC values and heritage are valued by the leadership at her school.

6.9: Conclusion

The participants in this project have encountered a series of challenges and struggles following their enrolment into boarding schools as diasporic members of a cultural minority. These challenges include adjustments to higher academic standards and expectations, homesickness, language variations, and cultural differences and adaptations. In general, however, they have been able to identify benefits such as the broadening of their friendship groups, exposure to diverse groups of people, a greater range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities than available to them in their home communities, and acceptance into the boarding communities by their fellow boarders.

The Yarning conversations indicate a positive relationship between perceptions of public private regard and levels of identity exploration and commitment. Quite clearly, the older students appeared more committed to exploring their cultural heritage and sense of REC identity than did the younger participants. From the Yarning conversations, a correlation has emerged indicating an affinity of the students with the dimensions of REC identity discussed by Dobia (2013), Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2014) and Neville et al (2014). This strong connection to culture and identity that these young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have maintained and developed is illustrated in Table 6.1.

The following chapter acts to bring together the analysis and findings described in earlier chapters in order to inform the conclusions and identify the limitations of this project. Recommendations for boarding schools can then be discussed along with considerations for future research.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Through Chapter 6, the four broad themes that had emerged from the Yarning conversations were explored. These themes – Identity, Experiences of racism, Academic efficacy, and Culture – identified within the context of boarding were further divided into 15 sub-themes. These themes and sub-themes were defined, analysed, and described with their frequency of occurrence in each of the Yarning sessions reported.

In Chapter 6, each of these emergent themes were explored in detail. The voices of the participants were heard and reported. Within the framework provided through CGT, the students' experiences were examined, reflected upon, and analysed, compared with and informed by the current body of literature.

The current chapter, Chapter 8, will synthesise, integrate, and consolidate the findings and analysis detailed in the previous two chapters. In this way, the current chapter will inform the conclusions, limitations, and considerations for future research as expounded in Chapter 9.

7.2 Boarding

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending independent, urban boarding schools face challenges; some similar to those faced by non-Indigenous students, but others that are quite different. Olivia's challenges, for example, started with the basic need to find transportation from her home community to her boarding school in a regional Queensland city. Following her arrival at boarding school, Olivia experienced a sense of isolation that would not have been the experience of her fellow boarders, given her immersion in an environment of a conservative, Western, Eurocentric boarding community without even the option to call home due to her mother's telephone having been cut off. These students may be

confronted by socioeconomic difference and disadvantage in addition to the cultural challenges they face.

The homesickness that may be experienced by many students as they join a boarding community is exacerbated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through transitioning into a cultural minority group and experiencing differences in relational cultural expectations, norms, and nuances of language. This would be especially salient for students whose first language is not Standard Australian English. Additionally, the students are confronted with organisational and structural contrasts such as the size of the boarding community being larger than their home community for some students, the wearing of conservative school uniforms, the type of Western food served in the boarding houses, and the new constraints imposed by a prescriptive, repetitive, and rigid daily routine.

Several students referred to the challenges they faced in their transition to boarding regarding their language and home relationships. Olivia, Chloe, Ruby, and Katie, for example, all referred to their need to alter their accents and language when transitioning into boarding. While most school-age Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from regional and remote home communities speak a dialect of Aboriginal English or Creole, and many have Standard Australian English as a second language, none of the students gave any indication that this language barrier was recognised and mitigated against at their boarding school by their teachers, boarding staff, or their peers. The students in the various Yarning groups also identified a number of positive experiences and attributes of boarding. Many of these related directly to enhanced opportunities, both educational and extracurricular, particularly including opportunities to participate in a range of sports and other activities.

While the students have identified issues such as cultural adjustments, homesickness, and language as challenges they face in boarding, they also identified their exposure to a

greater diversity of people and cultural encounters as enhancing their broader education and experiences. Although students such as Sophia talked about the struggles they initially faced in fitting in and adjusting to a whole new set of relationships, in general the students reflected that they were well accepted in their boarding communities, that there were new friendships to be developed, new activities to join and to develop mastery in, and a busy regime that prevented boredom. As Katie expressed, in addition to the perception of enhanced educational opportunities, the move to boarding school enabled her to build new friendships and participate in experiences that would not be options had she remained in her Cape York community for her secondary schooling.

7.3 Culture

For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying on scholarship at urban boarding schools, such as the Yalari scholars in the study who transition from a community in which they belong to the majority cultural grouping to a boarding community in which they form a minority, their perceptions of public and private regard are central to their healthy identity formation (D. Hughes et al., 2011). The overall perception gleaned from the Yarning conversations was that, for the most part, these students perceived a high public regard and held high levels of private regard.

The conversation with the older girls demonstrated that their distance and dislocation from their home communities resulted in a desire to stay in contact with and to understand more deeply their Indigenous culture and evidenced their positive public and private regard. Across six of the Yarning groups, this was further reinforced as participants related examples of their sharing of their cultural heritage with their non-Indigenous peers and teachers. Such positive levels of public and private regard can enhance positive identity development and lead to such positive outcomes as improved psychological well-being and self-esteem,

lowered levels of stress and anxiety, and enhanced academic outcomes (Ho & Sidanius, 2010; D. Hughes et al., 2011).

Not all participants enjoyed experiences that positively reinforced their perceptions of public regard. Ella, for example, reported that negative assumptions were made by others about her intellect based, not on her academic results, but rather as a consequence of her Aboriginality. Her experiences are supported by Sarra's research (2011). This research is also consistent with Millie's experiences: she reported that, at her school, non-Indigenous boarders from some rural communities held negative, preconceived views regarding Aboriginal people in general. While such experiences may well have led to a diminished sense of public regard, for these participants, that does not necessarily lead to a lesser private regard (D. Hughes et al., 2011), as evidenced by other comments made by Millie during the Yarning conversation.

Despite Ella's negative experience, described above, her resilience became clear as she went on to describe her leadership of a cultural initiative that she implemented at her school, the Mana Allawah group. This student group provides a forum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to come together and to explore, research, and learn more of their cultural heritage from each other. Scarlett and Chloe described their accomplishments in producing cultural dances and artistic installations at school, while Katie discussed her initiated recognition of Mabo Day and implementation of Indigenous Reading week at her school.

While some boarding staff have indicated the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders learning to cope with the cultural challenges faced in the transition to boarding as important life skills (Mander et al., 2015b), insensitivity towards the cultural beliefs and obligations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can lead to

unfortunate outcomes. Once such example was the departure from boarding by the young Aboriginal girl, spoken about by Sophia, who was prevented from practising her cultural norms by boarding school staff. Elizabeth's story, reported by Dr. Marnie O'Bryan from the University of Melbourne (Hose et al., 2018), describes a similar outcome for a young Indigenous girl unable to successfully make the cultural transition to boarding. These experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in boarding schools indicate an ongoing need for teachers and staff in these schools to become more aware of the impacts of racial and cultural hierarchies present in these institutions. As Matias, a proponent of critical race pedagogy proposes, there is a need for non-Indigenous boarding school staff to "colour their racial identity" (2013, p. 296).

Community, kinship, and relatedness are at the core of Aboriginal cultural understandings. Olivia, Maria, Sophia, Mia, and Jack all referred to the centrality of kinship and community as an aspect of culture that they likened to a default network of mutual obligation and support. Enabling students to use their initiative in incorporating their cultural norms in boarding with some degree of autonomy, supporting their cultural competence and their relatedness and collaboration with others, will in turn support their intrinsic motivation, psychological well-being, and prosocial skills (Deci & Ryan, 2008b; Ryan et al., 2008). The evidence from the Yarning conversations indicates that, in the experience of the research participants, schools and boarding staff tend to be reactive rather than proactive in promoting cultural expression by these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students.

7.4 Academic Self-Efficacy

Our self-efficacy is our belief we have in our ability to successfully engage with challenges that we encounter over the various domains of our lives, as discussed by Bandura in his social cognitive theory (1977). Bandura (1986, 1997) discussed four sources of

academic self-efficacy in students: previous mastery experiences, vicarious experiences of the success of relatable others, social persuasion through feedback from significant others, and the emotional arousal experienced by the individual through engagement in academic undertakings.

There are clear criteria set by organisations such as Yalari and the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) through the application process for students seeking boarding school scholarships (Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, 2021; Yalari, 2021). Not all independent boarding schools have an affiliation with organisations such as Yalari and the AIEF. The Scots College in Sydney, for example, manages its own Indigenous Boarding Program. Their communication to potential applicants includes the paragraph:

We do not look for either outstanding academics or sportsmen, rather we seek two things: boys with a positive attitude who will make best use of every opportunity available to them at Scots and the backup of a family member who has a very strong commitment to the power of education (The Scots College, 2021, p. 1) .

The AIEF criteria include being enthusiastic about attending school, likely to complete Year 12, in financial need and having parents and family that have demonstrated support and encouragement for the enrolment and the scholarship. Yalari criteria include academic effort, school references, primary school attendance rates, participation in sport and extra-curricular activities at school and in community, family support to attend boarding school and performance interviews. While none of these organisations stipulate previous academic achievement as a criterion for application or selection, the criteria illustrated above do indicate that the students would be drawn from a pool of hitherto academically successful

individuals with a healthy academic self-efficacy, as indicated by the comments of many of the students through the Yarning conversations.

Consequently, in general, the Yalari students commenced their secondary schooling at boarding school with a strong sense of academic self-efficacy following on from successful years in primary school. However, they found their initial experiences at boarding school to be challenging. Many of them lamented that they experienced the gaps in their knowledge and understanding identified by Sarra (2011).

Sienna and Phoebe recalled a change from achieving high grades to declining, more average results. Olivia felt “dumb” in Year 8 while Harry reflected that he lagged behind the expectations of his teachers. Rosie, Bella, and Erin all described how they had moved from a strong sense of their academic ability to struggling academically, particularly in comparison to the other students in their classes.

No longer experiencing mastery in their academic classes commensurate with their previous experiences during their primary school years, along with the heightened levels of anxiety and negative emotional arousal, may have had a negative impact on the Yalari students’ academic self-efficacy. Amelia and Lily reflected on their primary school experiences as not having the level of academic focus and rigour they now encountered at their boarding school.

Teacher expectations fit with Bandura’s (1977) identification of social persuasion as an influence on academic self-efficacy and academic achievement. Of the 12 Yarning conversations, only participants in the younger, mostly female group (Group 9) described their teachers as considering them to have a poor level of education on commencing secondary boarding school as a consequence of their Indigeneity. However, many of the students in their conversations spoke to the high expectations of their teachers and their

subsequent academic confidence, improvement, and success over time. These students' academic self-efficacy, according to Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977), would have been promoted through the combined effects of social persuasion resulting from their teachers' expectations as well as the mastery experiences of these students as they progressed through secondary schooling.

7.5 Identity

Identity formation, the primary task of adolescence (Erikson, 1968; Kroger & Marcia, 2011; Marcia, 1966), is a dynamic rather than a fixed construct. The formation of an REC identity is one aspect of their personal identity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that is impacted by the students' regular transitions to and from their private city boarding schools to their home communities in rural, regional, and remote Australia (Purdie et al., 2000). The students who participated in the Yarning groups by and large were experiencing what Crocetti et al. (2008) labelled as "searching moratorium", a stage of reconsideration of commitment through renewed identity exploration.

The students reflected on this reconsideration when they discussed their adaptations to "living in two worlds". The conflict this causes them is well summarised by Sienna, who describes how, at school, her perception is that she is seen by her peers as being "too Black", but at home she is "too White". Other students have very similar experiences, with Millie describing the challenges of moving from "Black ways to White ways". Olivia talked about her loneliness at times as she moves across the two worlds, but at the same time she is clear that she loves both worlds and living in both enables her to reach for her potential. Oetting and Beauvais (1991) described their orthogonal identification model that is a good fit with this tension and fluidity in levels of identification by the students with both the majority culture in which they find themselves at boarding schools and their REC identification.

Even though the boarding school attended by these young adolescent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have in place a Student Support Officer employed through Yalari, whose job is to provide counsel and support to the students, the students described the importance of their own peer support amongst themselves. Sienna, Sophia, Jessica, and Phoebe all spoke about their reliance on the other Yalari scholars at their schools for personal support, while Jack, as one of the older boys, confirmed his sense of responsibility to look out for and support the younger Indigenous boys commencing boarding at his school.

The difficulties experienced during these transitions are further exemplified by Millie, who, while identifying strongly as a young Indigenous woman, felt her character and personality were constrained at school. At school she felt that she was not able to express her true self but needed to conform to the expectations placed on her by her boarding community. De Plevitz (2016) asserted her concerns that this expectation that students will develop the skill of being comfortable living in two worlds successfully actually lends towards assimilation. As discussed in Section 3.8 of the review of the literature, movement to an assimilation orientation through the surrendering of one's culture of origin in favour of acceptance of the dominant culture has potential negative outcomes. These include higher rates of bullying and victimisation (R.M. Roberts & Ali, 2013). Katie, on the other hand, recalled her strength and determination in asserting her Indigeneity within the boarding community, describing how her arrival in boarding "was intimidating for students who had never met Indigenous people; there was [sic] four of us that went in very strong in culture identity".

The students have also reported tensions on their transitions home. For the younger boys, there appeared to be no difficulties returning home for school holidays in so far as their relationships with family and friends were concerned. The older boys, while describing how their friends at home would ask why they chose not to stay in community to complete their

schooling, were able to maintain their friendships, and reported that they felt supported by their friends at home. Several of the girls, on the other hand, described the breakdown in relationships they experienced on returning home on holidays. Phoebe related incidents in which she was described as an Oreo – “Black” on the outside but “White” on the inside – an experience shared by other girls in the group. Hannah and Emma spoke about their past friends describing them as “posh and snobby” and being “whitewashed”, while Erin’s friends described her as a “rich little Black girl”. Over time, several of the girls evolved strategies to manage these perceptions and comments. Sabrina, after 4 years as a boarding school student, reported no longer feeling bothered by the comments, while Ruby made the decision to simply not associate herself with the people in her community who expressed negativity towards her for her decision to accept a scholarship to attend a private boarding school.

Given the nature of the methodology employed in this project, it is not possible to conclude that girls in general are at greater risk than boys of experiencing rejection by their peers and friends on return to community, but this is an area that may invite further research and may warrant the development of strategies by organisations involved in boarding scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to minimise such rejection. While Clark (2004) recorded negative impacts of this form of discrimination on the well-being of African-American college students, behaviour he describes as intragroup racism, these Yalari students do not appear to have a lasting negative consequence on their sense of identity as a result of these actions. The impact of intraracial discrimination against these students may present another opportunity for further study.

These young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have actively explored their REC identities and discussed opportunities they have had through their association with Yalari to do so. They refer to the Cherbourg Memorial Walk as an opportunity to reflect on the strengths of their forebears and the sense of strong connection they feel with Country and

mob, both while on the walk and during their Uluru camping experience in Year 9. While they recognise that Uluru and Cherbourg may not be their mob's Country, through these experiences and by listening to the stories of their Elders and the Elders of other communities, they have developed a stronger sense of who they are as young Indigenous Australians.

These experiences occur outside of the boarding school setting. While some students recall activities and initiatives at their schools that have provided them with opportunities to explore their Indigeneity, there does not appear, from their conversations, to be deliberate, planned cultural explorations and expositions uniformly across the boarding schools which they attend. From their conversations, it appears that much of what happens in their schools in relation to the exploration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture is a result of the students' willingness and desire to share their stories, which several of the students expressed as something they enjoyed doing. Hence, these opportunities that promote exploration of and commitment to their REC identity may not be the experience of all non-Yalari Indigenous students.

Dobia et al. (2013), Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2014), and Neville et al. (2014) described nine dimensions of REC belonging. These dimensions are: Aboriginal pride, Respect for Elders, Aboriginal history, cultural events, Aboriginal protocols, family connections, connection to Country, connection to mob, and community support. While these nine dimensions did not form the basis of questions raised through the Yarning conversations, a scan of the transcripts reveals an affinity with all these dimensions by the Yalari students, indicating the strength of their connectedness to their Indigenous culture, identity, and heritage. The indications from the Yarning conversations are that this group of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are, for the most part, in a process of

identity exploration. They express positivity in relation to their Indigeneity and, while at times they find it to be a struggle, they are successfully navigating “living in two worlds”.

7.6 Experiences of Racism

The students reported the experience of casual and covert racist incidents more so than overt incidences of racism, which were not widely reported. Some of this casual racism can be attributed to ignorance on the part of some of the non-Indigenous members of the boarding community. Several of the student participants referred to the tendency of their non-Indigenous peers to stereotype, not understanding that, at the time of invasion and colonisation, there were over 500 different clan groups with distinct languages and cultural practices making up Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

Participants used adjectives such as “stupid”, “lazy”, and “unmotivated” in describing the stereotypes with which they were confronted. Maintaining their own high expectations is challenged by the application of these stereotypical, derogatory slurs and labels to these Indigenous students. Having commenced their boarding experience with a growth mindset, believing they will grow, develop, and succeed academically and socially, they are at risk of developing a fixed mindset as a consequence of this stereotype threat.

The neocolonial entitlement that leads influential media commentators such as Andrew Bolt to believe that they, rather than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are best placed to define a person’s ethnicity, was encountered by several of the research participants. Mia, Isabelle, Harry, Ella, Sophia, and Chloe all referred to instances of being judged by the colour of their skin. Two of the female students, Hannah and Emma, spoke of the resentment held towards them by their boarding house “mum”, the very person whose responsibility was to support their social-emotional well-being. This staff member employed a form of covert racism, hidden behind an overt assertion that the students had been given an

unfair and unearned advantage, invoking values of meritocracy and egalitarianism that ignore the deeply entrenched inequities that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

Such racist encounters, often described by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as coming from a place of ignorance on the part of their non-Indigenous peers, were not reported as common or widespread occurrences. Many of the students during the Yarning sessions described opportunities to celebrate their Indigeneity and cultural heritage, from NAIDOC commemorations to recognition of Sorry Day, performances at school assemblies, introduction of respectful practices such as Acknowledgement of Country at assemblies and meetings, and the formation of student groups to engage with their cultural heritage.

In keeping with Clark's (2004) assertion of intergroup racism existing when a power differential exists, such as when these students return home to be confronted by former friends, and in contradiction of Weizmann's (2003) refutation of intraracial discrimination labelled as racist, Sabrina and Ruby both felt that some of the discriminatory behaviour with which they were confronted on return to their communities was, indeed, racist:

Ruby: I hate that Oreo and stuff. Like, what's that even supposed to mean? Like you act White? Like just because you speak, like, proper English does not mean ...

Sabrina: I'm educated

Ruby: Yeah, exactly. That's racist within itself.

Sabrina: That's racist saying that Indigenous people are not educated, and calling us, like, Oreos, being educated.

From their conversations around their pride in their Indigenous identities and cultural heritage, this group of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people displayed a resilience that counters the potentially detrimental impact of the covert and casual racist

behaviour they have encountered. However, there is clearly an opportunity within these boarding schools to proactively address issues of prejudice as educational opportunities for the entire school community. This is the stance that was taken by the Principal and the Chaplain at Olivia's school, following the incident she referred to during our Yarning conversation.

7.7 Conclusion

This study specifically investigates the development of REC identity and academic self-efficacy within a context of boarding school. Joining a boarding community has brought with it challenges including homesickness, adjustments to language, changing relatedness and relationships and cultural dissonance. Advantages have also been enunciated by the participants including enhanced curricular and extra-curricular opportunities, and exposure to a diverse student population.

The final chapter will reiterate the 'What, Why and How' of this study. The outcomes for these participants' REC identity development and the relationship with academic self-efficacy is discussed. This is considered within this context of membership of a boarding community as a diasporic cultural minority group.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1: Introduction

This qualitative study set out to investigate the efficacy of the independent boarding schools' scholarship programs in which around 2,350 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living in remote, rural communities are enrolled. Specifically, the study examined the racial-ethnic-cultural (REC) identity development of these young Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander students and their academic self-efficacy.

Following invasion and colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have faced eradication, dispossession, relocation, segregation, assimilation, integration and, lately, reconciliation. Are these scholarship programs simply assimilation by stealth? Is it possible for these young people to engage in the primary purpose of adolescence, to explore their identity including ethnic-racial-cultural (REC) identity as First Nations people, or must they forgo this in order to develop the academic self-efficacy needed to succeed in the boarding school communities in which they find themselves?

These questions were interrogated through an Indigenist qualitative methodology, Yarning, within a constructivist grounded theory framework, privileging the voices of the young Indigenous Australian students, viewing their boarding journey through their lens.

8.2: Outcomes

The young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who participated in this project were confident, intelligent, and eloquent young people. They displayed pride in their cultural heritage and were all on a trajectory towards identity achievement. They displayed initiative in promoting and exploring their heritage and identity. Students like Katie illustrated the link between a strong sense of who she is as an Indigenous young person, and how she has applied her confidence in her identity to strengthen her sense of self-efficacy:

I had to grow into myself and understand that, like the circumstances where I've come from, like, my disadvantage I had because I was Indigenous. Because, like, I was from a remote area. But I used those in a way to empower myself, used my culture to empower me and others around me. (Katie)

Ella spoke about the group she formed with her friends at school, with the specific purpose of exploring Indigenous history and culture. The students described experiences approaching epiphany when immersed in adventures such as the Central Australia pilgrimage to Uluru or participating in the Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg. Their reactions to these experiences illustrated their thirst to understand more deeply their place in the World as Indigenous Australians.

These young people described the challenges they face as they move from the familiarity of their home communities to join boarding school communities where they are very much members of an ethnic-cultural minority. They spoke candidly of their experiences of homesickness as they learn to safely navigate and live in two worlds. Unlike their non-Indigenous boarding school peers who also undoubtedly experience some level of homesickness on leaving the familiarity of their families for immersion in the boarding school community, the Indigenous students must develop a higher level of resilience that enables them to navigate and cope with significant cultural changes also. These cultural challenges are well illustrated in the Yarning conversation with the older girls who described their language, family connections, relationships, kinship, and responsibilities. In addition to these relational differences, adaptations to everyday occurrences such as differences in the boarding house menu and experiences of cooking and diet at home need to be successfully navigated.

The young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants also several times each year managed the transition home. They spoke about being torn between attending boarding

school with its educational and experiential life advantages and the breakdown in their friendships with young people in their home communities who, at times, felt betrayed by their friends' choices to go to the city for their schooling.

Several participants discussed the academic challenges they faced. Having experienced confidence in their abilities and success in their achievements through their primary school years, many reported significant challenges at their new schools, with initial academic results reflecting the difficulty they faced in transitioning. Nevertheless, these students reported their confidence in their academic self-efficacy which grew and strengthened over time.

For this group of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians there is every indication that they have been able to face the challenges of homesickness, minority group membership, cultural anomie, heightened academic expectations, covert and casual racism, and racial microaggressions, all during a time of adolescent identity development. As illustrated by the strong correlation between the comments made by these participants and the REC identity discussed by Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2014), Dobia et al. (2013), and Neville et al. (2014) shown in Table 6.1, these young people are very capable of exploring, maintaining, and developing their identities as proud, young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians while benefiting from the opportunities available to them through their educational experiences as boarding students at independent urban boarding schools. Schools that partner with organisations such as Yalari to provide scholarship places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have reason to be motivated to provide an environment that supports the academic self-efficacy and REC development of these young people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are made invisible in the absence of curricular and extracurricular content that recognises and promotes their cultural heritage. This form of

racial microaggression labels our Indigenous students as “inconsequential” (Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017, p. 39).

Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2014) report a negative correlation between perceived racism and levels of achievement in standardised tests, academic grades and school engagement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Strong cultural identity, however, is a protective factor for young Indigenous people when they are confronted with instances of racial or cultural discrimination. Forrest-Bank and Jenson (2015) in a study involving undergraduate students in the United States similarly found that, for ethnic and racial minority groups, while a negative correlation exists between the experience of racial microaggressions and academic self-efficacy, as a protective factor, strong ethnic identity is positively correlated with academic self-efficacy.

8.3 Revisiting the Research Question

Although these boarding programs are supported by Aboriginal leaders such as Noel Pearson and Waverley Stanley, both alumni of similar traditional, independent, urban boarding schools, concerns have been raised by highly qualified and respected Aboriginal educators such as Professor Chris Sarra who has expressed concerns that there exists a significant cultural gap between boarding schools and home communities. Further, he suggests that there is little flexibility on the part of the schools to accommodate the cultural needs of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, placing the burden on them to adjust or drop out (Glanville, 2008). Nicole Major, the Program Manager for the University of Melbourne’s Institute for Indigenous Development, Murrep Barak, has stated that, “there’s a Stolen Generation again in terms of private schools and those scholarships” (K. Carr, 2015, p. 15). The concerns expressed by Sarra and Major are legitimate. A review of the literature

did expose a gap in our knowledge of the impact of these boarding scholarships on the REC identity development and academic efficacy of the student recipients of these scholarships.

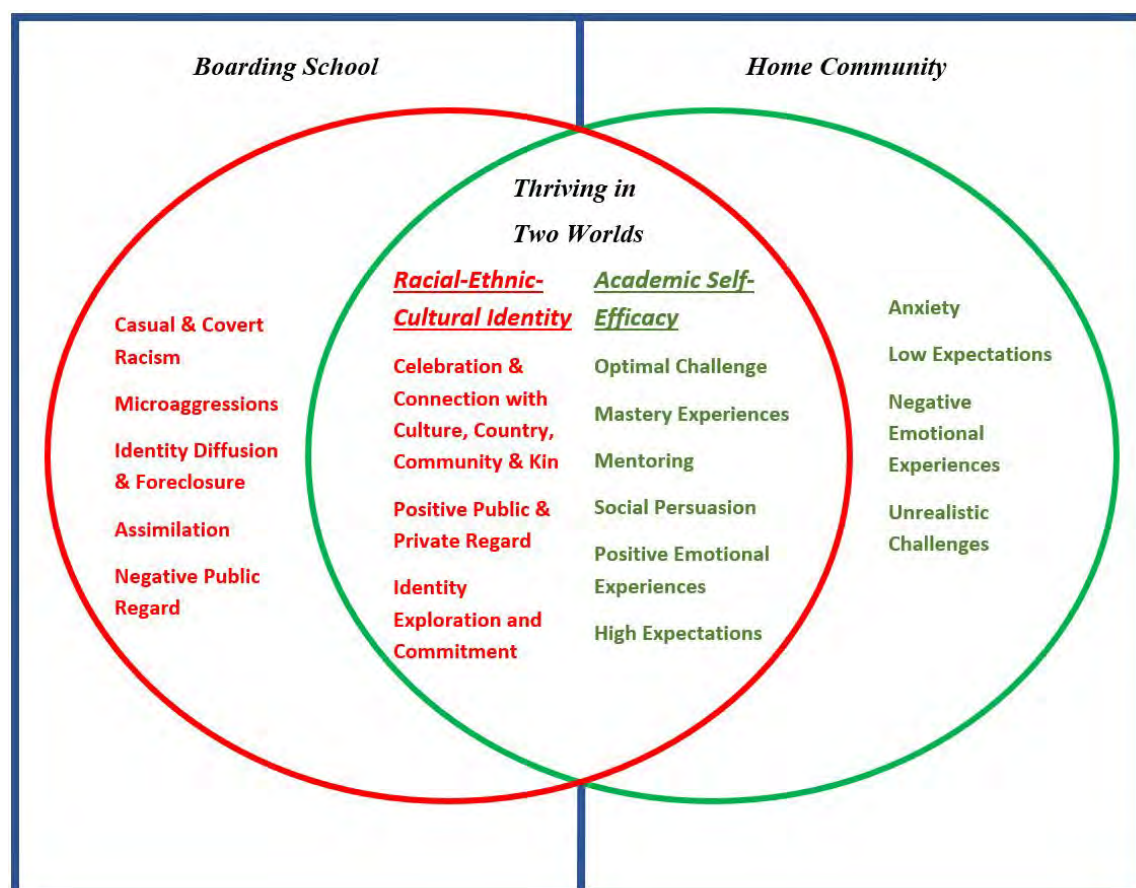
However, for this group of 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled on scholarships at 12 different independent urban boarding schools spread across all mainland Australian states, the concerns expressed, while legitimate, are not entirely reflected in the students' lived experience as articulated through the Yarning conversations that took place during the current study. As summarised in Table 7.1 in Chapter 7, their experiences have not hampered, and have arguably enhanced, these students' exploration of and commitment to their identity as proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Similarly, the Yarning conversations indicated that the growth in the participants' academic self-efficacy over the period of their boarding school experience was not at the expense of their identity as young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but possibly occurred because of their self-knowledge. As referred to earlier, the research of Forrest-Bank and Jenson (2015) with 409 ethnically diverse undergraduate college students in the United States found that "ethnic identity was positively related to [academic] self-efficacy" (p. 71). Within the current research project, for this cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students both their academic self-efficacy and their REC identities appear to have developed positively over their time as scholarship students. Further research is needed to confirm whether this relationship is causal or purely correlational.

After yarning with this group of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, it is evident that as their sense of REC identity strengthened, so too did their academic self-efficacy, as is illustrated in Figure 8.1. These students have not exchanged their desire to identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in order to gain the benefits of an education in an environment where they are the cultural minority, nor have they surrendered

their academic self-efficacy. Rather than assimilating into the majority non-Indigenous culture in which they have been immersed for close to 40 weeks each year, they have developed strategies that have enabled them to navigate two worlds, both of which, their statements indicate, they value. However, their comments also indicate some important areas for educators and policymakers in this boarding school space to consider the social-emotional and academic well-being of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth they serve. This will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

Figure 8.1

Bringing it Together – Attributes Leading to Thriving in Two Worlds



8.4 Limitations and Considerations for Future Research

Although the benefits of this study are clear in terms of the depth of information provided directly by the participating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

themselves, no study is without its limitations. This section provides some insight into areas where further research may be considered.

Qualitative research techniques such as the Yarning methodology employed in this research project allow for a deep dive into the reality and lived experience of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Carr has noted that “the rich data produced [by qualitative research techniques] provide an illuminating picture of the subject, with great attention often given to pointing out intricate details” (L. Carr, 1994, p. 718). Through the employment of Yarning methodology within a CGT framework, I was able to privilege the voices of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, allowing theory to emerge from their stories. However, while depth is a clear benefit of this methodological approach, there lacks a breadth of data that would better allow for the formulation of generalisations and theories, if these are seen as important. Similar studies including a larger sample of participants conducted in independent boarding schools across the country that offer scholarships to Indigenous young people would perhaps enable a broader understanding and appreciation of any overarching needs and issues that need to be addressed.

Future research therefore may include a quantitative exploration of aspects of self-efficacy and identity exploration. Having a strong sense of academic self-efficacy is accompanied by a strong sense of agency (Zimmerman, Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2005) and is predictive of successful performance (Lane and Lane, 2001). The Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJES) is an instrument available to measure student self-perceptions of their academic self-efficacy and has been utilised by classroom practitioners as well as Masters and Doctoral researchers (Jinks and Morgan 1999). An adaptation of this instrument and possibly the instrument described by Lane and Lane (2001) might provide a basis for future research aimed at quantifying the academic self-efficacy of Indigenous scholarship students over the time of their boarding experience. Importantly, as Zimmerman et al (2005) stress in

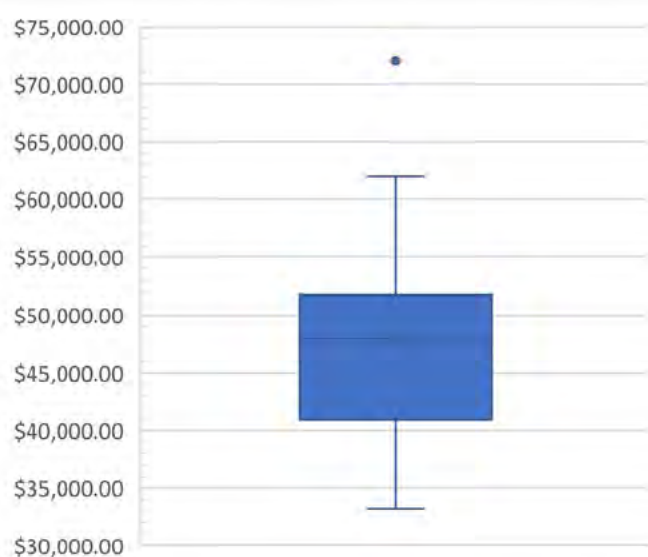
their paper discussing a methodology that can be employed when seeking to measure self-efficacy, any instrument needs to be tailored to the unique characteristics of the participants. Similarly, instruments are available for modification that can be utilised to measure REC identity development and stages. Jimenez-Camargo and Alberto (2011) examine the effect of ethnic identity on academic efficacy utilising Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) first developed by Phinney (1992) in a study of the relationship between ethnic identity and esteem issues in ethnically diverse American high schools. Dandy et al (2008) describe their utilisation of a version of the MEIM in a study of Australian students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. They report the MEIM as reliably measuring aspects of identity formation and belonging.

In June 2019, Grant Thornton Australia Limited provided a report to the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) of the Australian Government commissioned by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Grant Thornton Australia Limited, 2019). This report provided an analysis of the financial investment in boarding schools catering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The report found that the average cost per Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding student from 2015 through 2017 attending a mainstream boarding school was \$19,381 (p. 8). Considering that in 2017 there were around 2,350 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending 121 mainstream boarding schools (Independent Schools Australia, 2018), this represents a financial outlay of over \$45,500,000 on boarding costs per annum. Figure 8.2 illustrates the combined boarding and tuition fees for the 14 boarding schools attended by the participants in this research, with a median of \$48,000 per annum. Extrapolating this median amount across all 2,350 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students boarding in similar schools brings a total of \$112,800,000 per annum in combined tuition and boarding fees paid for by government, corporate sponsors, boarding schools, scholarship organisations, and private individuals. Research

providing a broader analysis of the benefits of these programs in relation to the questions raised in this project examining REC identity and academic self-efficacy may assist both government and non-government agencies involved in these boarding programs in the development of policy and practice.

Figure 8.2

Annual Boarding and Tuition Fees – Research Participants' Schools



In terms of demographics, there is some diversity within the sample of student participants who shared their stories in this project. The 33 student participants were from 23 different rural, regional, and remote communities across all five mainland states, the Northern Territory, and the Torres Strait. They were enrolled in 12 different boarding schools spread across Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia (see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.2 in Chapter 4 indicating the distribution of home communities and school locations). These students do, however, have some commonalities.

These students, along with their families, have all made the choice to apply for an Indigenous Education Scholarship through Yalari, and were all successful in their applications. The process involved the completion of an extensive application form (available

online at <https://www.yalari.org/scholarships/>) along with an interview process involving the student, their family, and Yalari representatives. These students also made the free choice, for several different reasons, to participate in the Biennial Cherbourg Memorial Walk. Given this, it could be argued that they do not represent a random sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship students attending boarding school. Future research may build on these limitations by expanding the participant cohort to include scholarship recipients representing organisations other than Yalari, such as the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation and individual school foundations. In addition, there is some indication from the Yarning sessions that exploration of and commitment to REC identity is undertaken by mid-to late-adolescent participants more so than by the younger participants. Opportunity exists for further investigation of this phenomenon to determine at what stage REC identity becomes a focus for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Finally, although the male students in the Yarning groups reported that their friends from their home communities missed them and, in the case of Noah, wanted them to stay and finish schooling with them at home, there was a consensus that their friendships still remained intact when they returned home from the school holidays. This sits in contrast to the experiences of the girls who reported that when they returned to their home communities, they experienced friendship breakdowns and discriminatory behaviours towards them from their former friends. As this is a qualitative study with a relatively small sample size, there is no intention to develop a generalised theory on the effect boarding school has on community peer relationships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; however, these findings do highlight a potential opportunity to investigate the relationship between gender, community relationships, and the transition to and from boarding school. For example, while Mander et al.'s (2015a) research involving the transition of Aboriginal boys in Western Australia to boarding school found, for the most part, that their home friendships remained

intact, some of the participants in that research project also reported difficulties maintaining these friendships. Given these examples, more investigation into this area could be warranted.

In conclusion, a fundamental strength of this project was the intentional focus on privileging the voices of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students themselves. A broader picture of the efficacy of these programs could be assessed through observations, interviews, and surveys of parents, community members, boarding schoolteachers and staff and, possibly, non-Indigenous boarding students at these schools. While researchers such as Mander et al. (2015b), Guenther et al. (2016), and Bobongie (2017c) have included such participants in their boarding school research, that research has not focussed on identity development and academic efficacy, thus, making this study unique.

8.5 Considerations for Boarding Schools

Recent research into the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in boarding school has found that “boarding schools are doing considerable work towards improving the ways they manage and promote Indigenous students’ health and wellbeing” (McCalman et al., 2020, p. 11) As these schools continue to improve and enhance their provision of educational opportunities for these students, several considerations that emerge from Yarning with the Yalari students may assist in the improvement process.

8.5.1 *Developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)*

Yalari currently has 30 partner schools across seven states and territories (Yalari, 2020). Of these 30 schools, four have a reconciliation action plan (RAP) developed and easily identified on their website. Other partner schools may have developed and implemented a RAP; however, if that is the case, they are not easily accessed by a visit to the schools’ websites. A RAP provides a framework designed to assist in developing tools and processes that can be utilised by members of an organisation to strengthen positive

relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Schools that have implemented a RAP report “increases in cross-cultural competencies of their staff” (Tedeschi, 2009, p. 2).

While many of the schools have evidence of celebrating occasions such as NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week, the commitment to reconciliation is clearly more advanced in those schools that have developed a RAP. Development, implementation, and maintenance of a RAP requires commitment across the organisation and provides opportunities for the growth of cultural competence of all community members.

From the evidence of the Yarning sessions, the resilience of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is clear. However, rather than placing too great a reliance on the resilience of these young people to ensure the success of the Indigenous Education programs in these schools, schools that are yet to implement a RAP might consider doing so. The commitment to the development and implementation of a RAP will help ensure an empathetic and holistic approach to the social-emotional and academic wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in their boarding communities. As has been discussed in section 7.5, levels of private and public regard will impact upon the REC identity development of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diasporic students. Through the cultural competency gained by an organisation’s members as a consequence of the development of a RAP, these students may perceive a heightened level of public regard. This heightened public regard is likely to result in an increased level of private regard for the students, positively influencing their REC identity development and their level of general self-efficacy.

In a study of staff perceptions towards the transition of young male Aboriginal boarders into their schools, Mander et al. (2015b) found “a highly Western centric view

dominated their concerns about readiness for boarding school. Critically, this study also revealed that both overt and subtle incidences of prejudice, stereotypes, and racism were perceived as common” (p. 324). These staff were aware of the socio-economic and educational disadvantage experienced by these students and were aware that they faced significant cultural challenges on transitioning to boarding. They were supportive of the programs that their schools had instituted to provide educational opportunities for young Aboriginal students. However, in the absence of institution-wide staff cultural competency professional development, the onus is left on the students to develop the tenacity and resilience to survive and, indeed, thrive in the boarding environment.

8.5.2 School Support for Peer-Led Cultural Programs and Initiatives

There are opportunities also for the schools that enrol these young people to improve their practice in overtly recognising and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. For example, Sophia explained that while she loved when the school celebrated NAIDOC week and Reconciliation Day, she felt that this was the only time the school celebrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture:

I love when we celebrate NAIDOC week, Reconciliation Day, all of that. I love it when the school does it. But that’s the only time the school does that.
(Sophia)

While some students, such as Katie, have taken it upon themselves to demonstrate they are sufficiently self-confident, efficacious, and culturally aware to ask for opportunities to showcase their cultural heritage, for various reasons not all students may feel as empowered to do so.

Leading staff and educators at these boarding schools could do more both to educate themselves and to provide more opportunities, support, and resources to enable students to

support each other. For example, boarding schools might provide additional support for peer-to-peer leadership groups that actively encourage and support cultural interactions. This may help to eliminate tokenistic gestures that leave students like Jack feeling “reluctant to apply [for a leadership position] because I don’t want to be, you know, considered for tokenism”, instead providing necessary resources and support for students who are willing to establish such groups themselves.

The Mana Allawah group formed by Ella and supported by her boarding school friends and peers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, is an excellent example of a student initiative supported by her school that encourages cultural sharing in a forum that is led by the Indigenous students. Students such as Jack, Ella, Sophia, and Katie are looking for opportunities to express their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities and cultures. Schools might benefit through proactively encouraging cultural interactions and expositions initiated and designed by their Indigenous student cohort.

8.5.3 Formalising an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peer Support Program

These potential cultural initiatives and interactions described above are supportive of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who work with school personnel to bring them to fruition. Through the actualisation of these initiatives, these students satisfy the three basic psychological needs, autonomy, competence and relatedness, described by Deci and Ryan (2008b). They enable the students involved to experience self-determination through intrinsically motivated behaviours and provide opportunities for non-Indigenous students and staff to deepen their understanding of the cultural lives of their Indigenous peers and students. Opportunities to deliver these initiatives are particularly efficacious for students such as Kate, Jack, Ella and Sophia as described earlier. However, while these initiatives are inclusive of the non-Indigenous members of the boarding school communities, other Indigenous students

may not yet experience these high levels of efficacy, confidence and self-determined motivation to succeed academically and thrive culturally in the boarding environment.

Throughout the Yarning sessions, reference was made by the Yalari students to the support they received from other Yalari students and, in turn, the support many of them provided to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as they commenced their boarding school journey. These young people spoke of the importance of connection with community. Sheffield et al. described how boarding schools provide a “home away from home”, asserting that “boarders formed not one but two kinds of primary bonds, one with their family and the other with their boarding house, and that boarders’ personal values were drawn from both the family and from the boarding house” (2013, p. 44). Boarding staff may choose to implement a formalised peer support program among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the boarding house. Such a program may ease the transition and help develop a sense of connection with the boarding community that does not contradict the cultural values that the students bring with them from their home communities.

An example of a highly effective mentoring program available to Indigenous high school students is the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience, AIME. This program engages and trains university students to be mentors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students. AIME mentees have been shown to have significantly higher levels of school enjoyment, efficacy and aspirations to complete Year 12 studies and to transition to university (Bodkin-Andrews et al, 2013). The program curriculum, designed by young Indigenous mentors:

focuses on skills and values that support engagement in education; for example, respect, empathy for teachers, self-esteem, confidence and communication skills; goal-setting, time management and leadership. The programme curriculum also

focuses on cultural history and identity and promoting that ‘Indigenous = Success’ and there are many ways to be successful (McMahon et al, 2017, p.48)

While the mentees in the AIME program are all young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students, the mentors are from diverse cultural backgrounds and are mostly non-Indigenous university students with a desire to positively influence the retention and completion rates for Indigenous high school students (O’Shea et al., 2016).

8.5.4 Professional Development in Cultural Competence and Anti-Racism Education

High levels of public regard lead to correspondingly high levels of private regard, as described in Section 6.5. Heightened positive private regard can result in desired outcomes for these young people including enhanced social-emotional and academic outcomes and reduced levels of anxiety. Schools are able to equip boarding and teaching staff with the tools they can utilise from a greater understanding of the cultural conflicts faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Doing so will encourage empathetic interactions and understanding while maintaining appropriately high academic and behavioural expectations. In turn, this will lead to perceptions of positive public regard by these young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, resulting in a positive impact on their private regard. Boarding staff need to be aware of cultural obligations such as Sorry Business that may place these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in conflict as they navigate the two worlds in which they live. As “the adults in the room”, boarding and teaching staff need to possess the cultural competence to empathise with these students and support their cultural imperatives, hence relieving any anxiety that may arise as these two worlds are navigated.

As they transition from primary to secondary schooling, students also transitioning to a boarding school community experience more frequent emotional challenges, stress, and anxiety than their day school peers (Heyeres et al, 2017; Mander, 2012). Young Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander students from remote and regional communities face additional challenges as they confront clashes in cultural and social norms. Heyeres et al (2017) have identified four strategies that these boarding school can implement in relation to staff professional development. These strategies can be adapted and implemented by scholarship providers in working with schools, scholarship students and their families. These are:

1. Training in cultural competence and cross-cultural awareness as discussed above. Private providers, organisations such as the Centre for Cultural Competence, Australia (CCCA, 2021), nationally recognised training through Colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE NSW, 2021)
2. Peer mentoring of boarding staff facilitated Indigenous educators and colleagues experienced in the challenges faced by these young people as they discover how to thrive in two worlds;
3. Training in reflexive practices, encouraging staff to reflect on their present preconceptions. Through this training, place emphasis upon the importance of creating an environment that provides structure and support with clear, high and realistic expectations, natural consequences for actions and respectful relationships. All of which support the ongoing development of each student's REC identity and academic self-efficacy.
4. Provision of structures that enable networking, professional growth and supportive, educative communication between staff in similar roles in similar schools, working with these young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These networks and structures can exist in the virtual world of email and social media sites as well as the real world of interactive workshops and conferences.

Crucially, in order for these strategies to be effective requires more than knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultural worldviews. Non-Indigenous staff in boarding schools with young Indigenous boarders need to be prepared to move from a Western, Eurocentric perspective to a position that privileges the lens and life experiences of these young people. These staff, through this reflexive practice, can consider their positionality and their life journey and circumstances that have led to their current roles, working with these young Indigenous students. While overt racism is likely to be recognised and called out, more subtle, possibly unintentional covert racism and racist microaggressions that lead to a perception of discrimination can have a detrimental influence on Indigenous students (Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015). Boarding and teaching staff need awareness training in identifying and dealing with incidents that may occur. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) leading to greater perseverance and self-discipline has been shown to be a more rigorous predictor of academic outcomes than measure of intelligence (Duckworth and Seligman, 2005; Duckworth, 2006). Through developing the professional capacity of boarding school staff in the delivery of SEL, in addition to the fostering of their empathy for the cultural dissonance faced by the young Indigenous people, these students can develop skills that will help them assertively manage and report instances of overt and covert racism and micro-aggressions, should they occur. Boarding school staff who have received SEL training, Family Wellbeing Training (FWB), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid Training (MHFA) and resilience skills training have reported confidence in their support of students facing conflict and crises in boarding through supporting student resilience (Heyeres et al, 2018).

8.5.5 *Understanding the Gap*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living and learning in remote communities face significant equity issues with the quality of educational opportunities

available to them. These inequities have been described by educational leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education (Sarra, 2011; Sarra et al., 2018), are illustrated in the “Closing the Gap” Prime Minister’s reports (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018, 2020), and are evidenced by the discrepancies seen in the ICSEA values between the participants’ community schools and their boarding schools (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2012; Guenther et al., 2019). The participants in this research project have themselves identified these issues of educational inequity that are consequential to living in remote and regional communities. Importantly, staff in boarding schools who are providing these scholarship opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attend need to understand that the “Gap” in these young people’s academic knowledge and understanding reflects the discrepancy in opportunity, not cognitive ability. While the participant students recollect their academic success and strong academic self-efficacy through their primary school years in their home community, they are clear in stating their under-preparedness for the academic rigour they faced upon their commencement of their secondary schooling journey at boarding school.

The student participants, through the Yarning sessions, indicated their gradual improvement in their academic self-efficacy over time after struggling in the classroom initially on entering their boarding schools and they recognise the support, in the main, that they received from their classroom teachers. While they left their community school with a strong sense of academic self-efficacy, having experienced success, many of them found themselves underprepared on entering the academic environments of their boarding schools. “Well at [school name] they were like pretty understanding and there was a bit of leeway at the start” (Jack). Given this, while teachers need to maintain high but realistic expectations, as reported by the participants, there is opportunity to benefit these students’ transition through appropriate diagnosis and intervention to assist them in maintaining their academic

self-efficacy at the levels they describe when they first joined the boarding communities. As illustrated by Olivia, “I was like, the bottom. I was so dumb; I did not keep up until like Year 10. Year 11, I finally knew what I was doing, how to study properly.” Be cognisant of the Pygmalion effect (Friedrich et al., 2015; Loftus, 1995): A teacher’s expectations can influence behavioural and academic outcomes. High but realistic expectations (Sarra et al., 2018) combined with appropriate skill development aimed at overcoming academic deficit resulting from previous educational experiences will provide the environment needed for these students to flourish academically, socially, emotionally, and culturally.

8.6 Endword

My objective from the time I commenced this research project through to the completion of this thesis was to privilege the voice of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who were the recipients of scholarships enabling their enrolment in independent, private, traditional, Eurocentric, mostly single-sex, urban boarding schools. Through the voice of these young people, I looked to evaluate the efficacy of these scholarship programs offering educational opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living in remote, rural, and regional communities in relation to the development of academic self-efficacy and REC identity. I have considered these young people to be partners in this research, with the intent that any positive outcome of this research would benefit these participants and their peers as they negotiate the complexity of the environments into which they have been thrust. As this project ends, I wish to acknowledge the professional and personal growth I have experienced, made possible through the generosity, trust, and openness of these young people who have so openly shared their educational journeys and boarding experiences.

The young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who participated in the Cherbourg Commemorative Walk and who gave their time, thoughts, and insights to this project have displayed courage, perseverance and resilience as they journey on the way to achieving positive, successful, and healthy life outcomes despite the challenges they have faced culturally and academically. They have bounced back after adversity and adapted to the significant changes they have traversed. They have maintained a growth mindset in both their exploration of their REC identities as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their academic self-efficacy as competent, capable students with hopes, proficiencies, and aspirations. As Floyd stated in the last slide of his presentation described in the Foreword, “... we leave our footprints in the School’s soil for the future boarders to walk on. For them also to gain the learning experiences and knowledge that we have gained.”

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Appendix A: Information Sheet for the Project – Parents/Guardians



Griffith Institute for Educational Research

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Messines Ridge Road, Mount Gravatt, QLD 4122

Telephone +61 (0)7 3735 5683

email: alan.parsons@griffithuni.edu.au

2 July 2017

Information Sheet for the Project

Academic Efficacy and Racial Ethnic Identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Scholarship Boarding School Students

Chief Investigator

Professor Greer Johnson

Griffith Institute for Educational Research

07 3735 5683

g.johnson@griffith.edu.au

Chief Investigator

Alan Parsons

Griffith Institute for Educational Research

07 3735 3458

alan.parsons@griffithuni.edu.au

Dear Yalari Parent/Guardian,

My name is Alan Parsons, and I am both an educator and a doctoral candidate at Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland at the Griffith Institute for Educational Research. I was the Deputy Headmaster at The Southport School on the Gold Coast for a period of 10 years, and had the opportunity to work closely with Yalari and Yalari scholars during this time. This letter is an invitation to your child, a current Yalari scholar, to participate in a research project conducted in partnership with Yalari.

Across Australia there are near 2000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote and rural communities enrolled on scholarships in urban independent boarding schools. Despite these numbers, there is limited research on the influence the independent boarding school environment has upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners' academic self-efficacy, that is, their belief that they are able to succeed with their school studies, and their sense of identity as Indigenous Australians.

In order to address this gap, this research seeks to investigate the influence the independent boarding school environment has had upon your child's perceptions of their identity and academic self-efficacy. Your child's participation in this research will help educators and organisations such as Yalari to better reflect upon how their practice contributes towards the development of the academic self-efficacy and the identity formation of Indigenous youth.

If you agree to participate in this study, your child will be invited to take part in a Yarning session with the researcher during the Yalari Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg between Friday 22 September and Thursday 28 September, 2017.

The Yarning Sessions will always consist of a group of up to 6 students in conversation with the researcher.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary and you and/or your child are free to withdraw at any time. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this research and any information regarding your child's identity will remain strictly confidential. Should you choose to withdraw, any information regarding your child will be destroyed.

This research project has the support of Yalari and will be conducted in partnership with Yalari. Throughout the research process, researchers will work with Yalari to ensure that the wellbeing of students participating in the research is paramount at all times. All participants will be considered to be partners in the research and will be given full access to the final research report. In addition to the full report, a plain language summary report of the research will be lodged with Yalari and will be made available to all parents/guardians and participants.

The Ethics Committee of Griffith University has reviewed our project and given us clearance to proceed with the project (Griffith University GU Ref. 2017/495). The conduct of this research involves the collection, access, and/or use of identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal, or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your student's anonymity will at all times be safeguarded.

For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at:

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan>

or telephone (07) 3735 4375. Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project please contact Greer Johnson (07 3735 5683, email: g.johnson@griffith.edu.au) or the Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Greer Johnson

Chief Investigator

Griffith Institute for Educational Research

Email: g.johnson@griffith.edu.au

Phone: 07 3735 5683

Alan Parsons

Chief Investigator

Griffith Institute for Educational Research

Email: alan.parsons@griffithuni.edu.au

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Appendix B: Consent Form – Parent/Guardian



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Email: alan.parsons@griffithuni.edu.au

12 May 2017

CONSENT FORM: Parent/Guardian

Academic Efficacy and Racial Ethnic Identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Scholarship Boarding School Students

Please return this form using the reply-paid envelope.

(GU Ref. 2017/495)

- ☐ I have read and understand the Information Letter provided
I understand that the purpose of the research project is to evaluate Academic Efficacy and Racial Ethnic Identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Scholarship Boarding School Students
- ☐ I understand that participation in the project is voluntary and that I can withdraw consent at any time
- ☐ I understand that my child's confidentiality will be protected.
- ☐ I understand that data will be de-identified and securely stored for a period of five years and will then be destroyed
- ☐ I understand that if I have any further questions, I can contact the research team
- ☐ I understand there are no foreseeable risks associated with my child's participation in this research

- ☐ I understand that outcomes of the research may be used for public presentation and publication by the researchers
- ☐ I understand that I can contact Alan Parsons (email: alan.parsons@griffithuni.edu.au or the Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au
- ☐ I agree to allowing my Yalari Scholar child to participate in this project
- ☐ ***Participants will be invited to take part in Yarning with the researcher during the Yalari Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg between Friday 22 September and Thursday 28 September, 2017.***

Child's Name:	
Parent/Guardian Name:	
Parent/Guardian Signature:	
Date:	

Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet – Student Participants



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2 July 2017

Participant Information Sheet for the Research Project:

Academic Efficacy and Racial Ethnic Identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Scholarship Boarding School Students

Dear Yalari Scholar,

My name is Alan Parsons and I am both a school teacher and a student at Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland. I have worked with Yalari and Yalari scholars for ten years in my role as a teacher at a Yalari partner school. This letter is an invitation to you to participate in a research project conducted in partnership with Yalari. The Ethics Committee of Griffith University has reviewed our project and given us clearance to proceed with the project (GU Ref. 2017/495). All Yalari students participating in this year's Cherbourg Commemorative Walk have been invited to participate.

Who is conducting the research?

Chief Investigator

Professor Greer Johnson

Griffith Institute for Educational Research

07 3735 5683

g.johnson@griffith.edu.au

Chief Investigator

Alan Parsons

Griffith Institute for Educational Research

07 3735 3458

alan.parsons@griffithuni.edu.au

Why is the research being conducted?

Currently across Australia there are near 2000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students such as yourself from remote and rural communities enrolled on scholarships in urban independent boarding schools. Despite these numbers, there is limited research on the influence the independent boarding school environment has upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners' belief that they can succeed with their school studies, and their sense of identity as an Indigenous Australian. To address this gap in our understanding, this research will investigate how the independent boarding school environment has affected your sense of identity and academic confidence.

The expected benefits of the research.

By taking part in this research, you will help Yalari and its partner schools to understand how their programs affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' academic confidence and sense of identity. The research results may then be used by Yalari and its partner schools to improve their programs.

Your participation is voluntary.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Should you choose to withdraw, your information will not be used in the research report.

What you will be asked to do.

Participants will be invited to take part in Yarning with the researcher during the Yalari Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg between Friday 22 September and Thursday 28 September, 2017. Each of the student groups on the Walk will be invited to take part in a Yarning Session. These sessions will be conversations where group members will be asked to share their experiences of boarding school as an Indigenous Australian student. At the start of each Yarning session, participants will be asked to agree to keep the conversations private and confidential. The sessions will take around 30 to 40 minutes and will be held at the campsite after each day's walk.

Risks to you.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this research.

Your confidentiality and privacy.

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access, and/or use of identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal, or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will always be safeguarded. All audio recordings will be erased after transcription. All other research data will be kept in a password-protected electronic file at Griffith University for a period of five years before being destroyed. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at <http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan> or telephone (07) 3735 4375.

The ethical conduct of this research.

The Ethics Committee of Griffith University has reviewed our project and given us clearance to proceed with the project (Griffith University GU Ref. 2017/495). Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project please contact Greer Johnson (07 3735 5683, email: g.johnson@griffith.edu.au) or the Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

This research project has the support of Yalari and will be conducted in partnership with Yalari. The researchers will work with Yalari representatives throughout the implementation of the research project to ensure that the wellbeing of all participants is paramount always. The research results will be used to complete my PhD thesis and may also be published as a journal article. All participants will be partners in the research and will be given full access to the final research report. A plain language summary of the research findings will be given to Yalari for distribution to all participants. Participants can request a copy of the report and/or the summary by emailing alan.parsons@griffithuni.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

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Griffith Institute for Educational Research
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Phone: 07 3735 5683

Alan Parsons
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Appendix D: Consent Form – Student Participants



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 Email: alan.parsons@griffithuni.edu.au
 2 July 2017

CONSENT FORM: Student

Academic Efficacy and Racial Ethnic Identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Scholarship Boarding School Students

Please return this form using the reply-paid envelope.

(GU Ref. 2017/495)

- ☐ I have read and understand the Information Letter provided
 I understand that the purpose of the research project is to evaluate Academic Efficacy and Racial Ethnic Identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Scholarship Boarding School Students
- ☐ I understand that participation in the project is voluntary and that I can withdraw consent at any time
- ☐ I understand that my confidentiality will be protected.
- ☐ I understand that data will be de-identified and securely stored for a period of five years and will then be destroyed
- ☐ I understand that if I have any further questions, I can contact the research team
- ☐ I understand there are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this research
- ☐ I understand that the outcomes of this research may be used for public presentation and publication by the researchers
- ☐ I understand that I can contact Alan Parsons (email: alan.parsons@griffithuni.edu.au or the Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au)
- ☐ I agree to participate in this project
- ☐ ***Participants will be invited to take part in Yarning with the researcher during the Yalari Commemorative Walk to Cherbourg between Friday 22 September and Thursday 28 September, 2017.***

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix E: Yarning Stimulus Questions

A group of researchers from the Queensland University of Technology undertook a project examining the positive self-identity of Indigenous Australian school students and its relationship to schooling outcomes.

Through a detailed review of the literature followed by visits to 45 schools across all Australian states and the Northern Territory involving consultations with teachers, students, parents and carers, the researchers found that:

“When young people have positive conceptions of themselves both as Indigenous people and as students, attachment and commitment to school and successful school performance will be more likely outcomes than when there are excessive contradictions or tensions between the various aspects of self.” (Purdie et al., 2000).

This research will employ a Yarning methodology within a Constructivist Grounded Theory framework, to explore the 4 Identity Statuses paradigm as described by James Marcia, based on the extent to which an individual has undertaken exploration of and made a commitment to identity (Klimstra et al., 2010; Marcia, 1966, 2009; Phinney, 1989).

Exploration involves the recognition and investigation of alternative expressions of identity and the selection of appealing alternatives and is ideally followed by a commitment to engage in actions needed to adopt the selected alternatives (Klimstra et al., 2010).

Combinations of these dimensions of exploration and commitment lead to individuals’ positioning in one of four identity statuses (Klimstra et al., 2010; Phinney, 1989):

1. Diffuse identity
 - No exploration of identity
 - No commitment to an ethnic identity
2. Foreclosed identity
 - A commitment to identity is made without exploration
 - This commitment is most often based on unquestioning adoption of parental and family values
3. Moratorium identity
 - The individual is involved in the process of exploration of identity alternatives but has not yet made a commitment

4. Achieved identity

- Following a period of significant identity exploration, the individual has made a firm commitment to an identity
- This status is regarded as the most sophisticated.
- This status is characterised by an individual's acceptance and internalisation of ethnic identity

The proposed Yarning Stimulus Questions are designed to encourage a conversation that will explore the Yalari students' current state of identity exploration and commitment and their academic self-efficacy beliefs. As the Yarning Sessions are intended to be free-flowing conversations rather than structured focus group interviews, which stimulus questions are used and how they are worded will change depending upon the flow of the Yarning.

Yarning Stimulus Sample Script and Questions:

My name is Alan Parsons and I'm a schoolteacher and a post graduate student at Griffith University. I'm involved in a research project partnering with Yalari looking at how boarding school might influence your belief that you can succeed with your school studies and how you perceive yourself as a young Indigenous person.

All of you have travelled from different towns and communities across Australia to attend city boarding schools. I know from the Orientation Camps held at The Southport School where I was a teacher for many years, and from teaching the boys who came to Southport, that boarding school is a very different community to your home community.

General:

1. If you remember back to your first few months after starting boarding school, can you share some of your best experiences from those early days?
2. Can you share what you might have found to be the most challenging or difficult things about boarding compared with home?

Academic Efficacy:

3. Teachers sometimes might have different expectations for different students in their classes. How do the expectations of your teachers for their Yalari students compare with their expectations for their other students?

4. What about your own expectations? Has boarding school had any effect on your confidence in your academic ability compared with before you started boarding? How confident are you that you can be successful at school?
5. How will you know if you are successful at school?

Ethnic Identity

Group esteem/regard

6. Now you are at boarding school, you must spend time mixing with different groups of people. How comfortable do you feel in a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people compared with just Indigenous people?
7. Is it more important to you to be thought of as an Indigenous person or simply an Australian?

Exploration

8. Do you and your friends ever talk about what it means to be an Indigenous Australian? Do you think that is very different than being non-Indigenous?
9. Do you know much about your history as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian? How do you know? How important is your history?
10. Can you think of any examples of a conflict between your cultural values and the values of the education system at your school?

Commitment

11. What would you describe as the greatest strengths of Indigenous Australian cultures?
12. Can you tell me about any things that you especially like or enjoy about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures?
13. What makes you feel good about being an Indigenous Australian?

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Appendix F: Sample Yarning Conversation: Senior Girls

Facilitator	<i>Thank you, everyone. We're recording now. We're going to have a conversation about your experiences as young Indigenous people who are studying at boarding school as Yalari scholars. There are no right or wrong answers, we really are just having a yarn about the experiences, Okay? So, we'll start, we'll go around the table and please just say your name, and your school. That's just so that I can recognise your voice when I transcribe our conversation later.</i>
Sabrina	Okay, Sabrina. And I'm from [School].
Facilitator	<i>Thanks Sabrina.</i>
Jessica	Jessica. I go to [School].
Sienna	I'm Sienna, [School].
Facilitator	<i>Sienna from Geelong</i>
Sienna	[School], yeah.
Facilitator	<i>Okay, so we have two students here from Geelong. You and Noah, is that right?</i>
Sienna	Yep.
Ivy	Ivy. [School].
Facilitator	<i>Ivy from [School].</i>
Ruby	Ruby, from [School].
Phoebe	Phoebe from [School].
Facilitator	<i>Thanks, Phoebe.</i>
Phoebe	Yep.
Facilitator	<i>Okay. And, Phoebe, you're from the Torres Strait?</i>
Phoebe	Yeah, me and Jessica are from Thursday Island.

Facilitator	<i>So, do you identify as Torres Strait Islanders?</i>
Phoebe	Yep.
Jessica	Yep.
Facilitator	<i>So, let's go back to when you first started boarding school, which was probably about five years ago now, wasn't it?</i>
Phoebe	Four and a half
Facilitator	<i>I guess there were a lot of thoughts going through your head, but what were you looking forward to? Anything exciting about starting off at boarding?</i>
Phoebe	For me it was being in a new environment and being in the city. And meeting new people. I thought that would be exciting.
Facilitator	<i>Anybody else?</i>
Ivy	Independence. Like just a sense of being, like, on your own and I kind of enjoyed it.
Facilitator	<i>Okay.</i>
Sienna	I think just going away, like the reasons behind it, like for our education, that was something that I was looking forward to, just to know that you were going away to better yourself. In that sense.
Facilitator	<i>Anybody else? Okay. So, what about challenges then? What did you find the most difficult thing when you very first started?</i>
Ruby	Homesickness
Jessica	Yeah, definitely being away from home and your family. And things that you're used to. The whole life change.
Facilitator	<i>And in what way would that be different to the other kids in the boarding house? Or would it not be different?</i>
Ivy	I guess everyone feels homesick, like Indigenous kids and the non-Indigenous kids, but.

Ruby	Like being Indigenous, like you come from like a more bigger group of like people. And like, I don't know but you just call everyone your family and stuff and I don't know how to say it.
Sienna	I feel like the specifics is too, like the culture's different, so that things that we, like our culture's different, so where we come from and where we go to school it would be different. Whereas for non-Indigenous Australians, it wouldn't be much of a difference from where they came from and where they're going to school. Whereas I don't know, like traditional foods, that would be different. And things that you do with your family, that's traditional, that would be different.
Phoebe	Even like the language as well I'd say.
Sienna	Yep, even the language and having to.
Phoebe	Yeah, passin as well. Passin means, like, attitude, like in the Torres Strait it's very centralised, like respect your Elders, everyone's Aunty and Uncle and stuff like that.
Sienna	And like your actions; the way you behave around other people. That was all different. Like, seeing how other girls behave in different situations, like very different to home and I think that was something that was a bit of a challenge, trying to adapt, yep.
Phoebe	And another challenge I'd say is even going home, because when you're Down South you've changed so much, you've experienced a lot, and then you come up there.
Sienna	You're growing up basically.
Phoebe	Yeah, you're growing up.
Sienna	And then you go home and sometimes people don't really understand the changes that you go through and just very quick to judge.
Phoebe	They think you're being snobby.
Ivy	Or being White or...

Phoebe	Yeah, I get, the term Oreo gets used, thrown around a lot.
Facilitator	<i>Oreo?</i>
Phoebe	Yeah. Black on the outside, White on the inside.
Facilitator	<i>Okay. Does that happen at home now?</i>
Phoebe	Yep.
Sienna	It gets worse when you're older.
Facilitator	<i>Really?</i>
Sienna	Yes.
Phoebe	It's like, "Oh what, you couldn't stay here?"
Sienna	Yeah. Or "You think you could do it?"
Phoebe	Yeah, "you think you could go to boarding school?"
Sienna	Because you travel around Australia.
Facilitator	<i>So how do, Sabrina how do you deal with that?</i>
Sabrina	I don't know, I just don't really think about it. I've been at [School] for four years now, so it doesn't really like bother me. Like.
Sienna	It just seems to be the same people.
Sabrina	Yeah, like, or, the Indigenous, all the Indigenous kids at my school had the chance to go for it. But the ones that thought they were too good for it, you know, didn't want to do it. So, it's their problem, not mine.
Facilitator	<i>Ruby, is that your experience?</i>
Ruby	Yeah. Like, I don't know. I just, like I go back, and they'll be like, "Oh, so you're going to a big White school!?", or something like that. I just ignore it. I just don't associate with people who talk to me like that.
Facilitator	<i>So, have you maintained friendships still when you go home?</i>
Ruby	Yeah.

Sabrina	Not really.
Ruby	Yes and no.
Sabrina	Yeah, not as many.
Ruby	I feel like I've just, narrowed down to like a few, like real people that would always be there for me.
Sabrina	And like your cousins and so.
Jessica	And like your actual friends, who no matter what you're going through, like they'll still be there for you. And aren't quick to judge.
Ruby	I hate that Oreo and stuff, like, what is that even supposed to mean? Like you act White, like just because you speak, like, proper English does not mean you are.
Sabrina	I'm educated.
Ruby	Yeah, exactly. That's racist within itself.
Sabrina	That's racist saying that Indigenous people are not educated, and calling us like, Oreos, being educated.
Ruby	I hate the term, "Oh she doesn't act Black!" Like what, are you saying? that I have to act ghetto to be Black or something like that?
Sabrina	Yeah, or like when you go back. Either way for me, when you go home from boarding you get "Oh, like you talk White", like you get, like that. All that stuff.
Ruby	Like why do you speak English so much?
Facilitator	<i>What do you call it? Hell White?</i>
Sabrina	No, like why do you act like so White? Like why are you acting like that? Because when you go home, all your family have, like, a way, a certain way of how they talk and like, their lingo. And then when you go back to boarding, you go back to boarding and you talk like that and then everybody

	is like, you know what I mean? And so, it takes you a while to change in between.
Ruby	Yeah, you have to learn to change, like, your accent and stuff like that.
Sienna	So, when you call your parents on the phone...
Ivy	And then, when you're back at home you're like, mission as!
Sabrina	Because if you go in to boarding and talk the way we talk. But yeah.
Jessica	Because it takes, like, when I go home it takes me two or three days to get back into speaking Creole again and then going back to school, having to always speak English.
Phoebe	Yeah, but then even sometimes, like, I'll talk Creole at home and the kids will like laugh at me and be like, "You sound White!" And I'll be like, "Aargh."
Ivy	Like that whole accent being, it's like, you don't.
Facilitator	<i>So that's a challenge that's been going on since you started, a few years ago.</i>
Ruby	Yeah, definitely.
Facilitator	<i>Okay, is that going to be with you when you finish?</i>
Sienna	Yep. I think it will still follow us if we go to university as well.
Ivy	There's nothing you can do about it. Like, there's always going to be someone out there and like, the White kids back at our school are always going to think it's so weird, because they're nothing like us. They go home and it's just the same for them. They're the same all around, where we're like two different people in two different places.
Ruby	Yeah, like we've got to adapt to different cultures.
Sienna	And it's so hard!
Facilitator	<i>And how do you do that, Ruby? How do you change when you go from home to school, to home to school?</i>

Ruby	Well, I know that when I go back to school, I make sure that I spend like, the first week with the Yalari kids. So, you know, I'm like, Yalari kids but also like, it's hard to explain. Then I can have someone who won't judge me for like, you know, but we'll work together to get back into the habit, of like talking in the other accent. Yeah.
Facilitator	<i>Okay. Ivy? I'm sorry Ivy. Tell me.</i>
Ivy	Yeah, because I always do that with the girls, like the first two weeks or week or so I always just stick to the, all the Yalari girls. Because then, that makes five us now. And like I just stick to them for the first week. I don't really, well I do but only when necessary like I talk to them. And so, like, I could actually get back in to like the habit of talking properly and stuff. Because in class I always get pulled up, all the time, for always talking Black, and I'm like, "Well it's me, that's who I am!" and stuff.
Facilitator	<i>So, you're getting challenged at home and then you're getting challenged at school.</i>
Ivy	And two different, like opposite, polar opposites. At school you're too Black, but at home you're too White.
Sabrina	And you're getting told two different things. And you don't want to act White at home because that's where you have your whole family and you don't want these little kids calling you a coconut, specially when they're your family, you know? And then like, you've only got like....
Facilitator	<i>So, have you overcome that? Are you able to survive happily in two worlds?</i>
Sabrina	Yeah, now it's just a joke. Like, now it's not even funny. The people who say it, I'm just like, you know what? Who cares? The people that aren't really going anywhere. Like they're people that aren't going anywhere in their own life, so they just want to make everyone else as miserable.
Ivy	Yeah, like joke's on them.
Sabrina	And it doesn't even make sense. Like you're like, how? You know what I mean?

Facilitator	<i>Okay, so is there a big difference between being an Indigenous Australian and being a White Australian?</i>
Phoebe.	Yes.
Sabrina	Yeah.
Sienna	Definitely.
Facilitator	<i>Can you tell me about that, what your experience might be, that makes that so different? Do you want to tell me about how you feel about your culture?</i>
Sienna	I just, I feel like being away at school, surrounding yourself with non-Indigenous people and not always thinking about home, you tend to pull away from your culture. And not always having that constant reminder, like, your family and you know, doing the little things that are traditional. Like.
Ivy	Cooking some more chicken or something, or just cooking our traditional food.
Sienna	Yeah, cooking traditional dishes or going out hunting or something. Like, being away for two to three months each time and then only getting a little bit when you go back home, like that's something that I guess is different to the non-Indigenous people that you're around. Because when they go home, they pretty much live the same life.
Facilitator	<i>Okay. So, with all that sort of cultural clash that you talk about, coming home and going back to school, what do the schools, do any of your schools do anything to try and help you?</i>
Ruby	No.
Ivy	It's more of a mental game in life I think.
Sienna	There's nothing the school can do. They all help, like, if you need them they will help, but like it's just something, especially that, you need to deal with yourself.
Sabrina	You need to deal with it on your own

Sienna	You need to like, help the other young kids.
Jessica	I guess having moral support is good, but there's not necessarily anything that anyone else could do. It's more of a how you deal with yourself and whether like, you'd help another Yalari student out.
Phoebe	Jo really helps me and stuff like that at boarding school.
Facilitator	<i>Okay, so building on that then, if you hadn't have gone off to boarding school, do you think that you would, identify differently? Has boarding made a difference?</i>
Phoebe	It shouldn't matter how you act or where you live or whatever the situation is. At the end of the day you're still Indigenous, it doesn't matter if, I could be living in Canada or have a Chinese accent, but at the end of the day I'm still Indigenous. I can't just take that culture out of me.
Jessica	As long as you know where you're from, and identity isn't about where you live, it's about where you come from and what you think of yourself as a person.
Sabrina	And it should never be something you want to give up. Especially our culture, because it's so old and like.
Ivy	Rich.
Sabrina	Yeah, it's like, you should never give it away.
Facilitator	<i>60,000 years.</i>
Sabrina	And even if I was still living up at home, I'd think of myself still the same as today, if I didn't go to boarding school.
Phoebe	And I've got a cousin who's like pale White, grew up on the Sunshine Coast. But he like, still sees himself, like he calls himself Torres Strait Islander and stuff like that. If you choose to identify and recognise it then you're Indigenous. Doesn't matter if you don't, like act, in quotations, yeah.
Jessica	If anything, I think being away from home and still staying connected with my culture, it's made me want, like, it's made me identify as more of an

	Indigenous person. Because I'm wanting to stay in contact with my culture...
Ivy	But then again at school, like you're known as the Black girl too, so like...
Jessica	Yeah, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. And it keeps you thinking, like, but even going home and seeing a lot of the kids up at home, they don't necessarily do a lot of things to stay in contact with their culture because they're always around it. Whereas us being away, I guess you put in effort, which makes you, like want it more, just to stay in contact with it.
Ivy	It was so hard, even coming to the walk, it was so hard because I wanted to stay at home longer. Because I only get to go up once a year. So, when I do it's usually just for a week, but I got just two weeks there this time and I really didn't want to come on the walk.
Jessica	Even for me, someone who goes home every holidays, having to, you know, take time out from being at home to do this, it is hard. But...
Facilitator	<i>So why are you here? Why would you choose to give up your holiday to come here?</i>
Jessica	I just thought it would be a nice way to catch up with everyone. And a good like, it's not necessarily a bad way to spend your holidays. Even though you're not with family, you're still...
Ruby	With another family.
Sabrina	Yeah, and you're identifying with your culture as well, considering...
Facilitator	<i>So how powerful is that for you Ruby? That, that Yalari is our family. What does that mean? That's where you connect?</i>
Ruby	Just like, yeah, I feel like every person we meet, like it's way easy for us to get along. With Yalari. Like, I don't know, Yalari's such a good organisation...

Ivy	Because it really like, it brings everyone together. We're all going through the same thing. And like we've all been there, done that. And like everyone can relate and stuff to it, so. Yeah.
Facilitator	<i>So, when you're talking with your friends over there, or when you meet up, do you talk about the good times and the bad times at school?</i>
Ruby	Yes, that's all we talk about.
Jessica	And it's good, because that's like another network, like support that you have.
Ivy	Like another support system. Like, yeah, Yalari's helped us gain friendships where we can just like, we can have other people that can relate to us that aren't in our school. We have Yalari students at our school and stuff like that, but like if we don't want them to talk to, we always have Yalari students from all over Australia. And I think that's really good. And I like that Yalari gives us opportunities to do that.
Sabrina	And it's nice to have connections from all over Australia and not just where you're from.
Phoebe	And even like I was talking to Jessica today, and in the Torres Strait Islands we don't really have many Aboriginal people, so it's cool to like, get to know a bit more about their culture. Like when we went on the outback camp, we went to a few communities there that were different from our own and stuff. So even that was like so cool in itself.
Sabrina	And it really does open your eyes to see the different types of culture. Because we all identify as Indigenous people, but the two cultures are different. And it's nice to see both sides.
Facilitator	<i>Does that ever bug any of you? That we just sort of talk about everyone as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and just throw you in the bucket?</i>

Jessica	It can be annoying, it's annoying for Torres Strait Islanders because at school we always get Aboriginal. And we always have to explain that Indigenous is both Torres Strait and Aboriginal people.
Phoebe	They always think I'm from another Country. Like ,when I was like, yeah, I'm going back to the Torres Strait, they were like "So you're going back, so you need your passport." and stuff like that. And I'm like, "Oh my god, we're Indigenous!"
Jessica	It's like, "Do you have, like do you have to stamp your passport to leave?"
Phoebe	I remember we were all getting vaccinations done and she's like, "You probably don't need yours because you always fly back here from overseas." And I said, "I'm from the Torres Strait." And she's like "Yeah, I know." And another thing is like when people always talk about, they're like yes, us Indigenous people or us Aboriginal people, and it's like, there's us here too. There's Torres Strait Islanders. But I know that we're really small and the Indigenous population is made up of...
Jessica	But it would be nice.
Phoebe	To get a bit more recognition.
Jessica	Yeah like, because like, we are a part of the First Nations people and like it is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. And just to know, like the difference between the two. And that both are Indigenous.
Phoebe	Both are Indigenous, but both are so different, like so you unique and special in their own ways.
Facilitator	<i>And if you've got Aboriginal heritage, does it matter to you whether it's Koori or Murray or?</i>
Sienna	We call each other different things but we all understand it. Like you say Murrays then, what do you say?
Ruby	Koori
Sienna	Yeah, I say Kooris too.

	<i>Okay, so you know your personal history at all? Does anyone teach you where you came from, like when Waverley talks about where he comes from, does anyone teach you that?</i>
Ruby	My grandmother.
Sienna	A lot of our like grandparents, great, great, great, grandparents, like none of them are around nowadays. Like you know what I mean, they're not. And they're not, because I live with Nan and Pop, and they don't really, like I don't know, it's hard. You never know when to talk about it. It's like you're at school and then they're there and you're doing other things, you know? It is hard, and you don't have like...
Facilitator	<i>Do you ever wonder about it?</i>
Ruby	Yeah, all the time.
Ivy	I just did a family tree, just for fun, a couple of weeks ago.
Jessica	In the Torres Strait we do family reunions and that's when the whole family kind of sits down and looks at the family tree and who comes from where and all that kind of stuff.
Phoebe	Torres Strait's quite small so it's easy to keep, like, track of everyone, kind of. Basically, we just, born on the island, everyone kind of lives on the island, everyone kind of dies on the island. If that makes sense.
Ivy	It's a bit different for us, because there's like, there's the people who like, because my family's like migrated from one side of Victoria to the other and then from there, to like, New South Wales. So, you learn all that stuff. I think it depends on who you talk to, or if they're still alive and have the information.
Jessica	And I guess passing that knowledge down too is really,... it's not rare but it doesn't happen as often as it used to.
Phoebe	I don't even, it's really hard because I don't really know too much about, like, my heritage in the sense that, so both my grandads aren't from the Torres Strait. And then one of my grandmas, the only one that would, my

	only full like, Torres Strait grandma, she died when I was quite young. So, and then my mum and her siblings grew up, majority of their life like Down South. So, then I only know bits. And then there's this thing called island adoption that they do in the Torres Straits, but a lot of people are given up and given to family members, but they don't document it. So, it's really hard to definitely know your, like direct line. Jessica's grandma was island adopted as well; both of our grandmas were. So...
Facilitator	<i>And this is just within the community it?</i>
Phoebe	Yeah, but there's no legal documentation.
Jessica	Yeah, so usually they give it to like a family member, so if, so for example my cousin fell pregnant young and she did island adoption where she gave her baby to her mum. So, she, that little girl's now being raised as her sister. And that tends to happen a lot throughout the Torres Strait.
Phoebe	Yeah, but like I think my grandma was given to like her mum's second cousin, because her, I don't really know and it's hard because I don't really know my, like, direct actual line of that sense.
Jessica	And they usually, because you usually talk about actual blood and then you're still family with who they were given away to.
Phoebe	Like Torres, they can get really antsy, like they really, one of my, my stepdad, he was even given through island adoption and he really dislikes it if you call his biological family his family. Like his adopted family is his family, if that makes sense.
Facilitator	<i>Okay. What about kinship? Do you, understand the kinship system. Have you investigated that? The way, for example, why we would call Waverley Uncle and why we could call Llew Aunt.</i>
Phoebe	Respect.
Jessica	It's respect, it's just a massive respect thing.
Phoebe	All my mum's sisters, we used to call them mum, all of them. And like her brothers, like yeah, Uncle and stuff like that.

Jessica	Or even if like a little kid or, like a, I don't know, like a five-year-old, wants something from an older person but they're not related to them, you'll say oh, go and ask Nan Ruby for that. It's just respect. Like, you would hate for a little kid, if you were at a family reunion and you're Aboriginal and the little kid comes up to you and calls you by your name and you're older than them. In a way that's disrespectful. So, you say oh, call them Aunty, Uncle, cousin. Like I have uncles, but I'm not related to them, if that makes sense. Because I have no sister and it's a thing, you just grew up doing that.
Phoebe	But is that starting with you now? Like I've got little cousins and stuff that are just calling me Aunty.
Facilitator	<i>Yeah, really?</i>
Jessica	Yeah, my nieces and nephews call me Aunty. Well like, but I don't know. They just grow up and you call everything properly.
Phoebe	I'm not related to Jessica's mum, but I always call her Aunt. Like since birth I've called her Aunt. Like my cousins, I'll call them sister. Stuff like that.
Ruby	Yeah, all my mum's sisters' daughters.
Phoebe	Yeah, like in the Torres Strait we call kids 'bala' and 'sissy', like brother and sister, and that's what we like call everyone. Okay bala, can you pass me that thing over there, or sissy, can you pass me that?
Ruby	All my Aunties and Uncles call me sis. Like nobody ever calls me by my name, it's always sis.
Facilitator	<i>Okay. Do you have nieces and nephews yet? You're not an Aunty yet?</i>
Ivy	It's like we don't do it as in our brothers and sister's kids. It's like our, for everyone.
Jessica	For us, like when I explain this to other people, they don't really get it, so when I talk about my nieces, they're like, oh, did your sister have a daughter? And it's like, no, my first cousin has a daughter. So, it's like, it's not just your sibling.

Ivy	And they're like, that should be your second cousin.
Phoebe	Nooooooooo! That doesn't make sense. Do you do that?
Facilitator	<i>First and second cousins?</i>
Phoebe	No, not our ways.
Jessica	Like for us, second cousins is like...
Ivy	Nieces and nephews.
Phoebe	And then your third cousins is your grand, your grandparents, like, grandparents' siblings.
Jessica	So how it goes, my second cousin, so my dad has a first cousin, their kid is my second cousin. So that's how we do it. So yeah.
Phoebe	That's why our families are so big.
Jessica	Yeah, that's why they're so big and why we explain things like second cousin, first cousin. And it's because you know everyone. Like.
Phoebe	Even if you find out you're from the same, like in the Torres Strait if someone has a last name and you know you're related to someone with that same last name, you're just related. Like I was talking Waverley's nieces today and, Erin and Matilda, and we, so their dad's Torres Strait and they said his name was Wap, and I'm related to the Waps, so we must be related, like that's it.
Jessica	But it's like, like even still to this day I'm still finding out that I have family members that I didn't know about. Like you're still learning, because we don't all necessarily live in the Torres Strait. Like because you come from such a big family everyone's kind of everywhere and you tend to, like, like meet each other and rekindle at reunions and say like, before I came down there was a big family dinner at my great grandmother's house, because we had a tombstone coming up, like an opening. And yeah, I was just meeting family members that I hadn't like met before.

Phoebe	Another thing I've also noticed, I had one of my, like Caucasian friends come and hang out with, yeah, White, Caucasian, so I know, one of my White friends come and hang out with me and my family in Cairns. And she was like, "Wow, you guys are so like homely, like your cousins, they're almost like siblings to you." Your first cousins are probably closer to you than me and my like full brother and stuff like that. And that's your Uncle, because my Uncle was giving me money, like "Go and get food and stuff, just help yourself to the kitchen", and all that. You know? And then giving me like words of wisdom, life advice. And then when I went back to her place she actually warned me. She said I don't want you to think that my parents are being rude or anything, this is just how like our families are. And she went, her mum was telling me that Hannah went home and was like why isn't our family close like that? And she was like oh it's because we're White. Like White families aren't as close.
Facilitator	<i>And that's your experience too Ruby?</i>
Ruby	Yeah, same. With my grandad's side. Because I can see this through both sides because my dad's White. And I just notice it pretty easily.
Ivy	Yeah, like you've got like, hundreds of cousins on your dad's side and I've got like one on my mum's side. I've got 12 first cousins on one side and I've got one on the other. My mum, so I've only got one.
Ruby	My mum has seven siblings and my dad only has one. Like, yeah.
Phoebe	But that was really interesting to find, to hear from like Hannah's perspective that she thought that much. And Hannah is White, but she grew up in Papua New Guinea, in Port Moresby. And then she said when she was in Papua New Guinea, she thought that like, families tended to be a bit more, like, nurturing. There was almost a level deeper or stuff. And I think that's why it can also be hard going to boarding school, because you no longer feel like you have that, like family connection.
Facilitator	<i>But when they're calling you Auntie then, that's recognition that you're a young woman and you're an adult now.</i>

Phoebe	You're more than just like a friend, you're not just a friend or you're not just like a family friend, if that makes sense. They're like family. They treat you like family, then that's your family.
Ivy	Yeah, but that's just how they grow up. Like, obviously they're my nieces and nephews and they're meant to call me Aunty, but like they're little, how do they know that? When they're like, little and they grow up, that's like, they call anybody Aunty. They'll go Aunty and then Uncle and then like nan and like grandma, and that's just how it goes.
Ruby	It's just because we were, like we were all raised to be respectful towards other people.
Jessica	Elders, especially Elders.
Ruby	Yeah, people that are older than you, you must respect them.
Jessica	I would never call an old person from the Torres Strait, by even their last name. It's always Aunty or like the, and like my mum would be...
Facilitator	<i>Is that the same for you guys? At home?</i>
Phoebe	Yeah.
Facilitator	<i>You wouldn't call me Alan if I was at your home? You'd call me Mr Parsons or?</i>
Phoebe	No, I'd call you Uncle.
Jessica	Yeah, I'd call you Uncle Alan. Like, my friends who live just down the road, we're just close friends and I just go over there and I'm like, "Hey, mum!" I call their parents mum, their Aunty's mum, their nannas nan. Like I just. It's respect.
Ruby	I do that with all my close Aunties, like ones that I'm really close with. It's like mum or mumma.
Phoebe	Yeah, but like half the time it's them telling you to call them, like nan. You're like "Hey, Rosie!" she went "No, call me Nan Rosie." That's my

	best friend's nan and we just lived around the corner. And I was always there. And she said, "No just call me Nan Rosie."
Jessica	Yeah, that's the same with my friends, like they're "Just call me mum." Every time I have a friend meet my mum, my mum's like "No, just call me Aunty Shell."
Facilitator	<i>Okay, last question. What makes you particularly proud about being an Indigenous person, being an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person? What do you really like?</i>
Phoebe	We just, we have something that no one else has. And will never have. Like, I think that that's something that, like the coolest thing when you think about it.
Ruby	And they can't take it away from us. They tried and they couldn't, so. They tried, but.
Sienna	Do you guys also have, when we're in history class and they're doing like, Indigenous?
Ivy	"Hey, Ivy, do you know the answer to that question?"
Sienna	And all the kids are doing Indigenous history and they look to you for your opinion on it and the whole class just?
Ivy	And we go "It's for your benefit, not mine, we already know this."
Sienna	And I wish they would learn more about like the stuff that we did at the ration shed and stuff like that. Because a lot of people think that Indigenous people are just getting free handouts for like nothing and just complaining.
Ivy	A hundred per cent, that's what they think.
Facilitator	<i>Still?</i>
Sabrina	I get the you can't go over there because you're, like my friend came up to me and was like, "Oh yeah, my mum said you can't come over because you're Black." I said "Thanks." I was like, six.

Sienna	My best friend just dated a guy whose parents are racist, and they don't like her because of her
Jessica	I just remember when I dated like a White guy and everyone was like "Oh, you like dark chocolate?" or yeah, "You getting the Black?" Like they were making jokes. Not like the, it's just that ,I think it's not really more racist, it's more ignorance, if that makes sense. I'm not sure.
Sienna	It's on both parts too.
Phoebe	And it's, I guess, then having something that not other people, yeah, not other people have. But also, like sharing your culture as well, like being away from home. Like you're sharing that with other people and basically, what's the word, like not teaching, but.
Sabrina	Educating.
Phoebe	Educating, yeah.
Sabrina	I'm proud of how like connected we are to the land.
Ivy	Yeah, with our culture still, we don't have a lot, like we don't know a lot about it. But like, I don't know, like. We don't know a lot about our culture, but we do know enough to still be proud (overtalking)
Sabrina	I just love seeing different parts of the land, and this is so good.
Facilitator	<i>Okay, so that connection is real?</i>
Ivy	Yes.
Phoebe	Like you could go to Uluru and you could go with an Asian family, White family, a Malaysian family, but like that is going to be, like at totally different experience for an Aboriginal that goes there.
Ivy	Even if they're not from there.
Phoebe	Yeah, even if they're not from that area.
Facilitator	<i>Were you guys all at Uluru?</i>
Sabrina	It was beautiful.

Phoebe	And even not being like Aboriginal, but still being an Indigenous person and going and seeing all these different things. Even this walk, knowing that so many, like the actual meaning behind it.
Jessica	So many Torres Strait Islanders were shipped to Cherbourg in World War Two. My grandma was. And she was there.
Facilitator	<i>Okay, well thank you very much. Are you all confident with your academics? Are they travelling okay?</i>
Sienna	There was a bit of catch up when I first, because I was considered smart, like back at home, but then.
Jessica	Yeah, and then you start it's like.
Phoebe	You go away and then yeah, definitely a lot of catch up. And like actually getting homework and a lot of all, like it's very different from home. Like I was, I'm so happy that I repeated, because I would have been way behind.
Sienna	I was used to getting like 'As' and stuff in my subjects and I went to [School] and I was getting like 'Cs' and 'B-minuses' and I was like, "Whoa."
Ivy	And actually having to put in the work. My mum was a teacher, and not having her there to help me with all kinds of stuff.
Phoebe	And there were like gaps in some of my education that I think, from being in a remote community.
Sabrina	No sciences, I didn't have any science.
Jessica	Yeah, no proper sciences or anything like that.
Ivy	I never like knew anything about science when I went to [School]. It was just.
Sabrina	And a lot of kids didn't go to like kindy, pre-primary. And I didn't go to Year One and Year Two. Like I was in and out of school a lot because we moved around Albany, Perth and Katanning when I was younger. So, I missed out a lot on that. And it was just harder Like as, I feel like they're

	really important, because that's where you kind of like learn how to read and write and all that stuff. So, it was really hard.
Sienna	Well in Melbourne, I'm not sure about anywhere else, we have, recently like there's two years ago, they started MITS, Melbourne Indigenous Transition School. Like take kids there for Year Seven and teach them to get them ready for private schools in year eight. And my two brothers are there, and they have excelled so much and they're at [School] next year. And they're loving it. And now that they're ready, because when I first started, I was so far behind.
Facilitator	<i>Yeah, Waverley and I were talking about MITS</i>
Sienna	Yeah, my two brothers are there.
Facilitator	<i>They reckon it's going really well.</i>
Ivy	Because at our school we have like prep and stuff, and like everything they learn is, like in Year Six and stuff and like now in Year Ten the teacher will go "Do you remember that from Year Six?" and stuff, and I'm always like, "No, I never learnt that in my life. I wasn't here in Year six or anything." And it's just like...
Facilitator	<i>Did that make you feel bad?</i>
Sienna	Yeah, it does make me feel bad.
Phoebe	In the Torres Strait I'd sit there and I'd go to the high schools in the Torres Strait and I see the conditions that they're under, like they get all this funding but it's like, it's not going to, the teachers and the students are like, yeah, I can get educated but then I feel bad for all the kids that had so much potential that are just, all they can do is work in retail now.
Sienna	It's retail or a trade. There are so many people that have potential then they just, you don't really get anywhere in life. They just go to school and then they'll go home, and they won't do anything.

Ivy	We go to school and then we go back and study. Like you have to study. And it's, I don't know, it's just different. It's harder. Because the kids that go to the school, high school, and that are in the same year as us, like, it feels now that we would be more in front of them because we like... when I first went I didn't know how to like study at all. But now I do, and I know kids that still don't know.
Jessica	I just don't see what's the difference between a high school, say back at home and a high school, say like in Brisbane.
Ivy	But it's so different when you think about it. Like I wish...
Jessica	And why would they be like deprived of having that level of education? Because they didn't have the money to?
Ivy	I shouldn't have had gaps in my education just because I live in a remote community.
Jessica	Why isn't the curriculum the same from a school say in the Torres Strait to one that's in Townsville? Or you know what I mean? Like...
Noah	Oh, I don't want to sit next to you! [laughter]
Ivy	We're doing an interview! [laughter]
Facilitator	<i>That will be in the transcript! Okay, thanks very much for your time, everyone. I really appreciate it. I really appreciate it.</i>

Appendix G: Table Summaries of Relevant Research Papers

Table A1

Summary of 35 Published Peer-Reviewed Research Studies Addressing Aspects of Boarding School, Identity, and/or Academic Efficacy

First Author	Year	ATSI	People	Qualitative Research	Quantitative	Boarding School	Identity	Efficacy
Benveniste, Tessa	2015	1	1	0	1	1	0	
Bobongie, Francis	2017a	1	1	0	1	1	1	
Bobongie, Francis	2017b	1	1	0	1	1	1	
Bodkin-Andrews, G.	2012	1	1	0	0	0	1	
Bodkin-Andrews, G.	2010	1	1	0	0	0	1	
Bodkin-Andrews, G.	2010a	1	1	0	0	0	1	
Bong, Mimi	1999	0	0	1	0	0	1	
Boyce, Jill C.	1983	0	0	1	1	1	0	
Carroll, A.	2009	0	1	0	0	0	1	
Edwards-Groves, C.	2008	1	1	0	1	1	1	
Evans-Campbell, Teresa	2012	0	1	0	1	0	0	
Ferla, Johan	2009	0	0	1	0	0	1	
Gfellner, B.M.,	2012	0	0	1	0	1	0	
Gfellner, Barbara M.	2012	0	0	1	0	1	0	
Gonzalez, John	2011	0	0	1	0	1	0	
Gummadam, Praveena	2016	0	0	1	0	1	0	
Heyeres, Marion	2018	1	1	0	1	0	0	
Kickett-Tucker, C.S.	2008	1	1	0	0	1	0	
Kvernmo, S. I. V.	2003	0	0	1	0	1	0	
Lambert-Pennington, K.	2012	1	1	0	0	1	0	
Luszczynska, Aleksandra	2005	0	0	1	0	0	1	
Macdonald, Mary-Ann	2018	1	1	0	1	1	1	
Mander, David	2015a	1	1	0	1	0	1	
Mander, David	2015b	1	1	0	1	1	0	

Mander, David	2015	1	1	0	1	1	1
Martin, Andrew J	2014	0	1	0	1	1	1
Mooney, Janet	2016	1	0	1	0	1	1
Moran, James R.	1999	0	0	1	0	1	0
Multon, Karen	1991	0	0	1	0	0	1
Nekby, Lena	2007	0	0	1	0	1	0
Neville, H.A	2014	1	1	0	0	1	0
O'Bryan, Marnie	2016	1	1	0	1	0	0
Pirbhai-Illich, F.	2011	0	1	0	0	1	0
Purdie, Nola	2000	1	0	1	0	1	1
Purdie, Nola	2011	1	1	0	0	0	1
Rahman, Kiara	2010	1	1	0	0	1	1
Riley, Tasha	2012	0	0	1	0	0	1
Roberts, R.M., Ali, F.	2013	0	0	1	0	1	0
Rogers, Jessa	2017	1	1	0	1	1	0
Russell, D	1999	1	1	0	0	1	0
Ward, Colleen	2006	0	0	1	0	1	0
TOTALS:		22	24	17	14	27	20

Table A2

Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students and Boarding School

First Author	Year	ATSI	People	Qual	Quant	Boarding
Benveniste, Tessa	2015	1	1	0	1	
Edwards-Groves, C.,	2008	1	1	0	1	
Bobongie, Francis	2017a	1	1	0	1	
Bobongie, Francis	2017b	1	1	0	1	
Heyeres, Marion	2018	1	1	0	1	
Macdonald, Mary-Ann	2018	1	1	0	1	
Mander, David	2015a	1	1	0	1	
Mander, David	2015b	1	1	0	1	
Mander, David	2015	1	1	0	1	
O'Bryan, Marnie	2016	1	1	0	1	
Rogers, Jessa	2017	1	1	0	1	
TOTALS:		11	11	0	11	

Table A3

Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students and Identity

First Author	Year	ATSI People	Qualitative	Quantitative	Identity
Benveniste, Tessa	2015	1	1	0	1
Bobongie, Francis	2017a	1	1	0	1
Bobongie, Francis	2017b	1	1	0	1
Duncan, Barry James	1990	1	0	1	1
Edwards-Groves, C.,	2008	1	1	0	1
Kickett-Tucker, C.S.	2008	1	1	0	1
Lambert-Pennington, K.	2012	1	1	0	1
Macdonald, Mary-Ann	2018	1	1	0	1
Mander, David J	2015a	1	1	0	1
Mander, David J	2015b	1	1	0	1
Mooney, Janet	2016	1	0	1	1
Neville, H.A.	2014	1	1	0	1
Purdie, Nola	2000	1	0	1	1
Rahman, Kiara	2010	1	1	0	1
Russell, D	1999	1	1	0	1
TOTALS:		15	12	3	15

Table A4

Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students and Academic Efficacy

First Author	Year	ATSI People	Qualitative	Quantitative	Efficacy
Bobongie, Francis	2017a	1	1	0	1
Bobongie, Francis	2017b	1	1	0	1
Bodkin-Andrews, G.	2012	1	1	0	1
Bodkin-Andrews, G.	2010	1	1	0	1
Bodkin-Andrews, G.	2010	1	1	0	1
Edwards-Groves, C.,	2008	1	1	0	1
Macdonald, Mary-Ann	2018	1	1	0	1
Mander, David	2015a	1	1	0	1
Mander, David	2015	1	1	0	1
Mooney, Janet	2016	1	0	1	1
Purdie, Nola	2000	1	0	1	1
Purdie, Nola	2011	1	1	0	1
Rahman, Kiara	2010	1	1	0	1
TOTALS:		13	11	2	13

Table A5

Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, Identity, and Academic Efficacy

First Author	Year	ATSI People	Qualitative	Quantitative	Identity	Efficacy
Bobongie, Francis	2017a	1	1	0	1	1
Bobongie, Francis	2017b	1	1	0	1	1
Edwards-Groves, C.,	2008	1	1	0	1	1
Macdonald, Mary-Ann	2018	1	1	0	1	1
Mander, David	2015	1	1	0	1	1
Mooney, Janet	2016	1	0	1	1	1
Purdie, Nola	2000	1	0	1	1	1
Rahman, Kiara	2010	1	1	0	1	1
TOTALS:		8	6	2	8	8

Table A6

Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, Identity, and Boarding

First Author	Year	ATSI People	Qualitative	Quantitative	Boarding	Identity
Bobongie, Francis	2017a	1	1	0	1	1
Bobongie, Francis	2017b	1	1	0	1	1
Benveniste, Tessa	2015	1	1	0	1	1
Edwards-Groves, C.,	2008	1	1	0	1	1
Macdonald, Mary-Ann	2018	1	1	0	1	1
Mander, David	2015b	1	1	0	1	1
Mander, David	2015c	1	1	0	1	1
TOTALS:		7	7	0	7	7

Table A7

Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, Academic Efficacy, and Boarding

First Author	Year	ATSI People	Qualitative	Quantitative	Boarding	Efficacy
Bobongie, Francis	2017a	1	1	0	1	1
Bobongie, Francis	2017b	1	1	0	1	1
Edwards-Groves, C.,	2008	1	1	0	1	1
Macdonald, Mary-Ann	2018	1	1	0	1	1
Mander, David	2015a	1	1	0	1	1
Mander, David	2015	1	1	0	1	1
TOTALS		6	6	0	6	6

Table A8

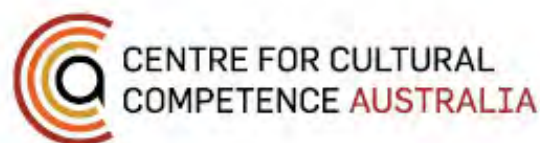
Research Papers Examining Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, Academic Efficacy, Identity, and Boarding

First Author	Year	ATSI People	Qualitative	Quantitative	Boarding	Identity	Efficacy
Bobongie, Francis	2017a	1	1	0	1	1	1
Bobongie, Francis	2017b	1	1	0	1	1	1
Edwards-Groves, C.,	2008	1	1	0	1	1	1
Macdonald, Mary-Ann	2018	1	1	0	1	1	1
Mander, David	2015	1	1	0	1	1	1
TOTALS		5	5	0	5	5	5

**Appendix H: Participant Demographics Showing ICSEA Values for
Participants' Community Schools and Respective Boarding School**

Yearling Group	Participant	Pseudonym	Gender	School Year	School Location	School ICSEA Index	Home Community	Community ICSEA Index	School - Community ICSEA
1	1	Olivia	Female	alumni	Toowoomba, Queensland	1088	Murgon, QLD	846	242
2	2	Amelia	Female	Year 9	Southport, Queensland	1126	Grafton, NSW	932	194
	3	Lily	Female	Year 9	Albany, Western Australia	1075	Cranbrook, WA	970	105
3	4	Mia	Female	Year 10	Toowoomba, Queensland	1088	Thursday Island, QLD	920	168
5	5	Harry	Male	Year 11	Albany, Western Australia	1075	Broome, WA	940	135
4	6	Sophia	Female	Year 10	Sydney, New South Wales	1216	Darwin, NT	1083	133
	7	Isabella	Female	Year 10	Brisbane, Queensland	1158	Thursday Island, QLD	920	238
	8	Ella	Female	Year 10	Sydney, New South Wales	1216	Mungindi, NSW	760	456
	9	Jack	Male	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	1165	Darwin, NT	1083	82
	10	Charlie	Male	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	1165	Derby, WA	918	247
	11	Noah	Male	Year 12	Geelong, Victoria	1152	Lakes Entrance, VIC	921	231
	12	Jacob	Male	Year 11	Albany, Western Australia	1075	Kununurra, WA	820	255
	13	Archie	Male	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	1165	Derby, WA	918	247
6	14	Sabrina	Female	Year 11	Albany, Western Australia	1075	Katanning, WA	860	215
	15	Jessica	Female	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	1158	Thursday Island, QLD	920	238
	16	Sienna	Female	Year 12	Geelong, Victoria	1152	Bairnsdale, VIC	941	211
	17	Ivy	Female	Year 12	Sydney, New South Wales	1140	Cranbrook, WA	970	170
	18	Ruby	Female	Year 12	Adelaide, South Australia	1153	Bathurst Island, NT	680	473
	19	Phoebe	Female	Year 11	Brisbane, Queensland	1158	Thursday Island, QLD	920	238
7	20	Scarlett	Female	Year 10	Orange, New South Wales	1108	Gundagai, NSW	946	162
	21	Chloe	Female	Year 10	Orange, New South Wales	1108	Dubbo, NSW	827	281
8	22	Millie	Female	Year 11	Sydney, New South Wales	1140	Yamba, NSW	981	159
9	23	Matilda	Female	Year 10	Toowoomba, Queensland	1088	Cherbourg, QLD	575	513

	24	Theo	Male	Year 8	Southport, Queensland	1109	Katanning, WA	860	249
	25	Rosie	Female	Year 9	Armidale, New South Wales	1114	Lismore, NSW	925	189
	26	Erin	Female	Year 9	Toowoomba, Queensland	1088	Cherbourg, QLD	575	513
	27	Bella	Female	Year 9	Toowoomba, Queensland	1088	Wondai, QLD	862	226
10	28	William	Male	Year 7	Adelaide, South Australia	1153	Melville Island, NT	680	473
	29	Ethan	Male	Year 7	Adelaide, South Australia	1153	Derby, WA	772	381
	30	Daniel	Male	Year 7	Southport, Queensland	1109	Yamba, NSW	981	128
11	31	Emma	Female	Year 11	Sydney, New South Wales	1140	Lightning Ridge, NSW	833	307
	32	Hannah	Female	Year 9	Adelaide, South Australia	1153	Tennant Creek, NT	732	421
12	33	Katie	Female	alumni	Brisbane, Queensland	1158	Coen & Thursday Island, QLD	920	238



Alan Parsons

has successfully completed the following course:

**A FOUNDATION IN
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

2/9/2015

COMPONENT	STATUS	RESULT
ONE – Why be Culturally Competent	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>
TWO – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>
THREE – Kinship, Culture and Worldviews	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>
FOUR – Initial contact: Dispossession and Extermination	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>
FIVE - Early Colonisation: Protection and Segregation	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>
SIX - Assimilation: Policy and Practice	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>
SEVEN - Aboriginal Agency: Protest and Resistance	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>
EIGHT - Recent Times: Self-Determination, Reconciliation & The Northern Territory Emergency Response	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>
NINE - A Focus on Torres Strait Islander Peoples	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>
TEN - Closing the Gap	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>
ELEVEN - Cultural Education in Practice	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Passed</i>

Appendix J: Statement of Attainment – Course in Aboriginal

Cultural Education



NEW SOUTH WALES TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
AUSTRALIA

STATEMENT OF ATTAINMENT

A Statement of Attainment is issued by a Registered Training Organisation
when an individual has completed one or more accredited units

ALAN PARSONS

has attained

10213NAT Course in Aboriginal Cultural Education

NSWTACE401A

Develop and apply an understanding of Aboriginal cultures to
improve service & program outcomes

NSWTACE402A

Demonstrate protocols and processes to collaborate in
partnerships with Aboriginal peoples in NSW

NSWTACE403A

Identify and analyse legislation, policy and work practices relating
to Aboriginal people

Dated: 9 February, 2015

OPEN TRAINING & EDUCATION NETWORK

51 Wentworth Road
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135

RTO Provider No. 90004
ABN 35459049947

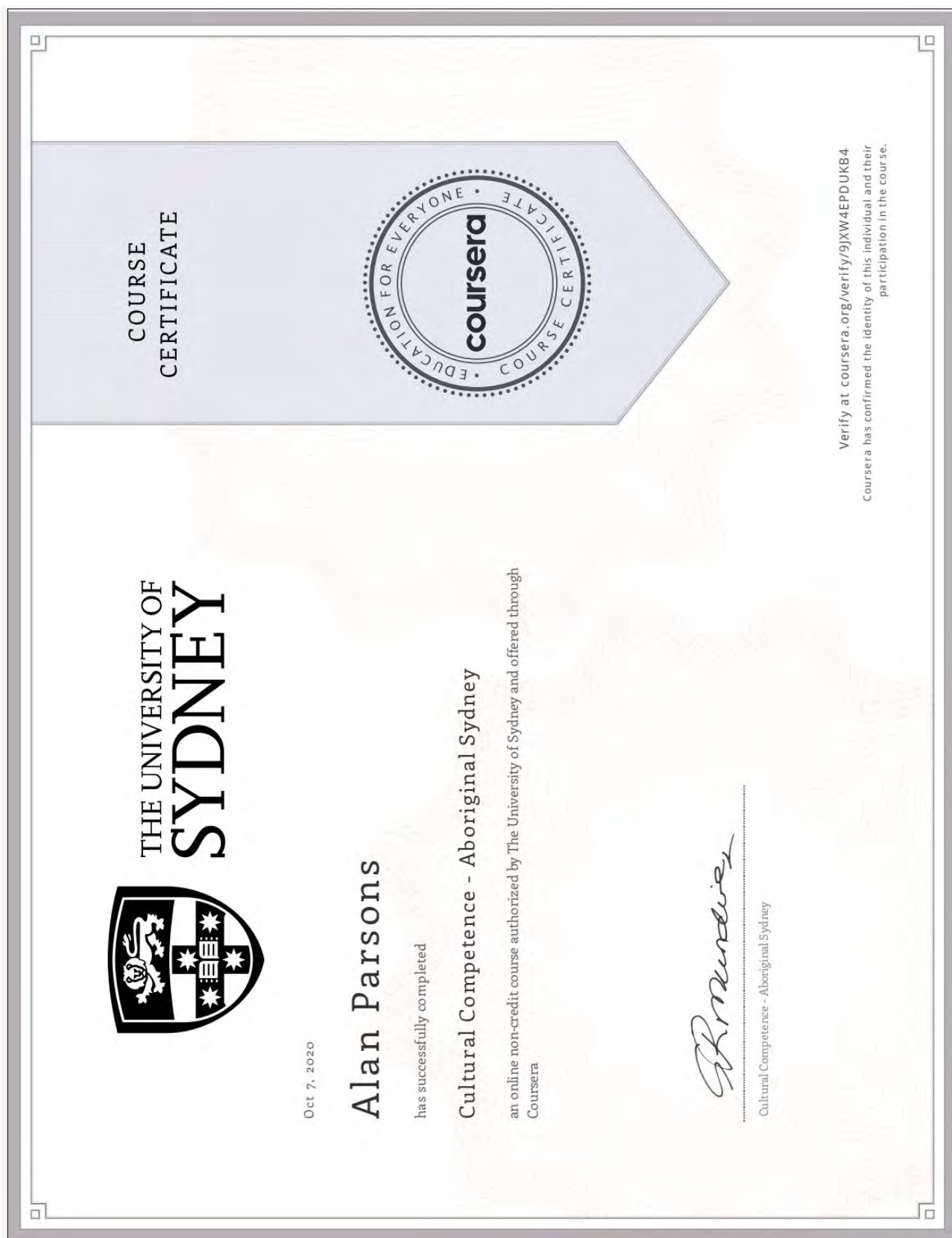


NATIONALLY RECOGNISED
TRAINING

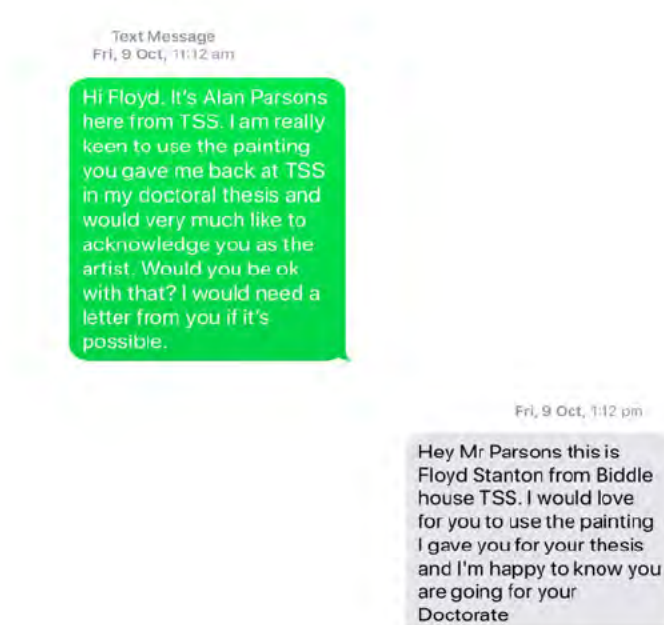
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Managing Director

Appendix K: Coursera University of Sydney Certificate of Cultural Competence



Appendix L: Permission from the Artist, Floyd Stanton, to use Biddle Artwork



Friday, November 20, 2020 at 15:54:13 Australian Eastern Daylight Time

Subject: Permission for Mr Parsons

Date: Tuesday, 3 November 2020 at 2:36:34 pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time

From: floyd stanton

To: alan.parsons@griffithuni.edu.au

To Whom it may concern:

As the artist of the painting, 'Biddle House - My Journey Through Boarding', I give my permission to Alan Parsons to include photographs of my work in his doctoral thesis. This art work represents my journey as an Aboriginal young man as a boarding scholar.

Yours sincerely,

Floyd Stanton.

Appendix M: Permission from Llew Mullins, Managing Director, Yalari, to use Photographs from the Cherbourg Commemorative Walk

