THE EXPERIENCES OF INDIGENOUS NURSING STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Submitted By

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ABSTRACT

Australian Indigenous people have serious health concerns and are more likely to die younger and experience chronic illness such as diabetes, cardiac disease and renal failure (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010). As a result, the 'Closing the Gap' strategy was endorsed by the Australian Government in March 2008 following the social justice report of 2005, with an aim to achieve Indigenous health equality within 25 years (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2005). A key strategy of 'Closing the Gap' is to increase the number of Indigenous people in the healthcare sector (West, Usher, & Foster, 2010a). However, there continues to be an imbalance in the health care sector whereby there is a low representation of Indigenous nurses compared to non- Indigenous nurses (Best & Stuart, 2014).

Although enrolments may have increased in tertiary institutions, the attrition and completion rates for Indigenous students continues to be low. For instance, approximately only one third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students complete nursing degrees, compared with two-thirds of non-Indigenous students (Alford, 2015). It is acknowledged that low completion rates are not indicative of the efforts that have been made to assist Indigenous people progress and achieve at university. Strategies such as Indigenous Support Units have been implemented in all universities in Australia in addition to other processes (Pechenkina, 2014).

The research presented in this thesis is an exploration into the experiences of a group of Indigenous nursing students. The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the participants' encounters as a tertiary student with the aim of identifying strategies to improve retention, attrition and completion rates. Phenomenology was employed as the methodology and findings from this research aim to provide evidence to assist with the development of processes to effectively manage the university experience for Indigenous students. The aim of this research was to use interpretive Phenomenology and the Indigenous framework "Dadirri" to explore the experiences of the participants. The experiences of the participants were deemed significant and relevant to the development of strategies to enhance the experiences of future Indigenous nursing students in order to contribute to their success. Overall,

the goal of this study is to improve the education experiences of Indigenous nursing students to build an Indigenous workforce for the future.

Key findings indicated a mismatch between commencement numbers of Indigenous nursing students and the completion of tertiary study by Indigenous nursing students. Research to date has been largely quantitative with very little qualitative data documented. Therefore, this study provides the qualitative data that is absent in the literature surrounding the experiences of a group of Indigenous nursing experiences at University. This study concluded that a common thread existed between the Indigenous nursing students involved in this study such as misperceptions, feeling different and internal conflict. However, there were many similarities identified in relation to the experiences of Indigenous nursing students and non-Indigenous nursing students such as knowledge limitations, lack of study skills, family demands and commitments, financial restraints and time management which impact on tertiary study at university.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

This thesis is entirely the work of _Kim Henschke_ except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Student and supervisors signatures of endorsement are held at USQ.

A/Professor Jennifer Kelly
Principal Supervisor

Professor Cath Rogers
Associate Supervisor

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When I first undertook writing this thesis, it became obvious to me that as an Indigenous researcher it was important that my research is supported by an Indigenous framework. The learning curve has been steep and challenging but rewarding. My journey has made me resilient and given me the tenacity to complete this thesis. To the participants of this study, thank you for trusting me to share your experiences and views. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the following for their contributions and support.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
NAHS	National Aboriginal Health Strategy
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Work relations
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal economic policy research
INEWG	Indigenous Nursing Education Working Group

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Attrition Rates | A factor, normally expressed as a percentage, which reflects students that successfully complete study at tertiary level (Harris, Rosenberg, Orourke, & Marilyn, 2014).

Cultural Responsibility | The obligations to the kinship and family structures that are the cohesive force which binds Aboriginal people together.

Cultural Safety | Ensuring that there is no assault on a person's identity and providing a culturally safe atmosphere for people from the same culture

Cultural Wellbeing | The vitality that communities and individuals enjoy through participation in recreation, creative and cultural activities. It is the freedom to retain, interpret and express their arts, history, heritage and traditions.

Dadirri | The practice of inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. It is a 'tuning in' experience with the specific aim to come to a deeper understanding of nature. It recognises the inner spirit that calls us to reflection and contemplation of the wonders of all god's creation.

Indigenous | Originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native.

Indigenous Elder | A person who has gained recognition as a custodian of knowledge and lore, and who has permission to disclose knowledge and beliefs.

Indigenous Identity | Is where Indigenous communities, peoples and nations, having a historical continuity with pre- invasion and pre- colonial societies that develop on their territories, consider

themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them

Matrix Chart	Is a visual grouping of two, three or four types or categories of information. A matrix chart shows how each piece of information is connected to the others and is signified by arrows or lines connecting each group.
Murri	A name used by some Aborigines to refer to themselves; Murri pertains to those Indigenous people born in Queensland.
Pedagogy	The method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept.
Retention Rates	The percentage of a school's first-time, first-year undergraduate students who continue at the school the next year.
Yarning	Is an informal conversation that is culturally friendly and recognised by Aboriginal people as meaning to talk about something, someone or provide and receive information.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research

Education and learning are central to all people and all communities across the world but may be impeded for a variety of reasons. Indigenous Australians have been identified as being among the three most disadvantaged groups in Australian higher education. The other two disadvantaged groups are people from regional and remote areas and those of low socioeconomic backgrounds (Bradley & Noonan, 2008). Indigenous Australians are more likely to share one or all of the characteristics impacting on access to tertiary education and learning (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). The characteristics that impact on access to tertiary studies include, remote locations, low socioeconomic circumstance, financial hardship, academic readiness and aspirations (Bradley & Noonan 2008 & Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011).

Historically, learning and education of Aboriginal people in Australia has been guided by the misperception that being part of a disadvantaged group affected Indigenous people's cognitive and linguistic ability (Tripcony, 2000). More recent studies suggest that factors that impact on Indigenous students' achieving and learning are family support, financial hardships, health problems, racist attitudes and low levels of Indigenous students' academic readiness and aspirations (Pechenkina,Kowal & Paradies, 2011). Furthermore, past trends in Indigenous tertiary education suggest that there is a mismatch between commencement and successful completion of tertiary study. Although over time there has been a steady increase in completion rates in health-related courses, the completion rates remain at 2.6 per 10,000 Indigenous students compared to 4.8 per 10,000 non-Indigenous students (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report, 2014).

This thesis will explore the views of a small group of Indigenous nursing students surrounding their experiences at university. Nursing students were selected for this study because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be under-represented in the health workforce and it is essential to improve the support to Indigenous students while in tertiary education in health related disciplines such as nursing (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report, 2014). Therefore, a study to explore the experiences and views of the Indigenous nursing students studying at university was considered significant and timely.

Purpose of the Research

This study aims to identify strategies to best support and enhance the educational experiences of Indigenous nursing students. An Indigenous framework was used (Dadirri) in conjunction with Interpretive Phenomenology to provide a balance of understanding, trustworthiness and reciprocity between the researcher and the participants.

Findings from this research could provide evidence from a series of interviews and analysis to assist with the development of processes to effectively manage the university experience for Indigenous students. The findings from this study could also inform other stakeholders of Indigenous education of methods to improve Indigenous participation in programs to ensure successful outcomes.

Significance of the Study

The key significance of this study is to discover relevant and current information surrounding Indigenous nursing student's experiences while attending university. This study is relevant because it has the potential to determine strategies to promote learning thereby increasing attrition rates of Indigenous nursing students to assist the supply of Indigenous healthcare professionals. Moreover, the significance of this study is that findings may assist all Indigenous tertiary students enabling there to be a greater proportion of tertiary prepared Indigenous people.

However, the most noteworthy significance of this study is to provide evidence where there is currently none or very little research. Presently, there is limited information surrounding the experiences of a group of Indigenous nursing students and there is limited qualitative data surrounding strategies to assist Indigenous nursing students complete their nursing degree at university. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to current research into Indigenous nursing attrition and retention rates by identifying factors that could assist tertiary study. Finally, the ultimate significance of this research is the potential to increase the number of Indigenous nursing graduates and health care professionals to meet future demand in the health sector workforce.

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. The chapter (Chapter 1) provides an introduction and brief overview of the current trends in attrition, retention and completion rates for Indigenous nursing students at university. This chapter also highlights the purposes and significance of exploring the experiences of Indigenous nursing students. Chapter 2 reviews the literature surrounding historical and current research into pedagogy, attrition, and retention and completion rates outlining the slow and steady increase in attrition rates and a decline in retention rates. This review of the literature also identified the lack of qualitative research into Indigenous nursing student's experiences while completing tertiary studies at university.

Chapter 3 outlines the design of the study and explains the qualitative methodology selected for this research. The use of an Indigenous framework is described in relations to the intention to provide authenticity to this Indigenous research. This study will use purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews to elicit and explore the experiences of the Indigenous nursing students. Chapter 4 presents the data, data analysis and findings. This chapter explains and examines the themes and sub-themes identified from the in-depth interviews and interpretation of the data.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, provides a discussion of the research combined with what was previously known about this topic. Chapter 5 also outlines recommendations from the key findings and proposes future strategies to enhance the experiences of Indigenous students. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the need for future research in this area and limitations of this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relating to the concepts of learning and culture in particular, the complexities and experience for Indigenous tertiary students. Another major focus of this chapter is the means and methods surrounding learning and most significantly, the learning experiences of Indigenous nursing students. The potential of increasing Indigenous nursing student numbers in order to positively affect Indigenous health is addressed in line with the attrition and retention rates of nursing students. Finally, the literature presented in this chapter discusses the impact of culture, families and the community in relation to tertiary education together with the learning and teaching styles of non-Indigenous people compared to the learning styles of Indigenous people. However, the first section of this literature review outlines that for Indigenous health students ensuring a quality educational tertiary experience is critical to addressing the health care needs of Australian Indigenous people today, and in the future.

Australian Indigenous People

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report in 2008, Australian Indigenous people continue to experience poor health, higher death rates and an increase in chronic diseases (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2008). In response to this, the Government recognised and acted upon a statement of intent towards achieving equality of health and life expectancy for Indigenous Australians by proposing that to 'Close the Gap' on health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. A key outcome identified as being essential is the need to provide well-trained and educated Indigenous nurses for the healthcare sector (Indigenous Nursing Education Working Group, 2002; Goold, 1995; Getting em n keeping em Report, 2002; Usher Lindsay, & Mackay 2005a; West, Usher, & Foster, 2010a).

Providing Indigenous nurses in the health sector will have multiple benefits such as improving navigation and access to health services for Indigenous people. Healthcare needs would be supported by Indigenous nurses who are culturally sensitive, respectful of Indigenous peoples needs and culturally informed (West, & Usher, 2010). Increasing the number of Indigenous healthcare employees facilitates "Walking in both World's", whereby Indigenous nurses make a valuable contribution to ensure improved health outcomes of Indigenous people through Western medicine.

Hinton and Chirgwin (2011) argue that Indigenous health and education has been discussed and researched for as long as politics itself has been in existence and that Aboriginal Australians continue to experience much poorer health than the general population (Indigenous Nurse Education Working Group, 2002; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2005; Hinton & Chirgwin, 2011). Presently, there continues to be a low representation of Indigenous nurses in Australia and in particular their participation and retention in undergraduate nursing degrees in universities (Pechenkina & Anderson 2011). Studies have identified the correlation between the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people, the issues faced by the Indigenous people and that improvements in Indigenous health can be achieved by increasing the participation of Indigenous people in the health professions (Usher, Lindsay, Miller & Miller, 2005). Furthermore, Pechenkina and Anderson (2011) and West and Usher (2010) claimed that widening access and providing strategies and support networks will ensure that students have the best chance of success. The success of Indigenous nurses in the health sector will have multiple benefits including navigation and access the health services for Indigenous people.

However, to provide a higher Indigenous representation in the health workforce there needs to be a significant improvement in the delivery of culturally safe health education programs for Indigenous students (Rigby, Duffy, Manners, Latham, Lyons, Crawford, & Eldridge, 2011). At present, there is a lack of clarity as to approaches to learning employed by Indigenous students and whether the learning processes employed by Indigenous students are considered within the tertiary sector. However, awareness is needed as to the learning styles and the

influence of culture and customs for Indigenous people if there is to be an increase in Indigenous nurses for the future.

Learning

Kolb's Learning Style Inventory which is a revised approach to Kolb's Experimental Learning Model is possibly the most well-known to educators. Kolb's four stages of learning described as Concrete Experience, Abstract Conceptualisation, Active Experimentation or Reflective Observation are used to define how an individual approaches learning (Cassidy, 2004). However, there exists many learning theories and models on pedagogy with the most simplistic being the seven learning styles. This descriptive approach indicates that individuals use one or more of the seven learning styles (http://www.learning-styles-online.com/overview; Rassin, M., Kurzwell, Y., & Maoz, Y, 2015).

- Visual (spatial): people learn through the use of pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- Aural (auditory-musical): individuals learn through sound such as music.
- Verbal (linguistic): learning occurs through the use words, both in speech and writing.
- Physical (kinaesthetic): people learn through the use of their body, hands and sense of touch.
- Logical (mathematical): learning occurs through logic, reasoning and systems.
- Social (interpersonal): people learn via groups or with others.
- Solitary (intrapersonal): an individual prefers to work alone and use self-study (http://www.learning-styles-online.com/overview; Rassin et al., 2015).

Some students learn best by hearing, seeing, doing and some by learn by using a combination of these techniques. Therefore, it is important that students are aware of the learning style that best facilitates their own learning. It is equally important that the relational, emotional, moral and personal dimensions of the teaching and learning process are an integral part of the notion of pedagogy (Van Manen, 2002). Knowing how people learn is highly relevant (at all levels of education) and the educational experiences of students may contribute to changing

their conceptions of learning (Boulton-Lewis & Wills, 2001).

Learning and Culture

Education and learning is central to the economic, physical, social and cultural wellbeing of all people and all communities across the world (Griffiths, 2011). However, access to education and learning may be impeded for a variety of reasons. An important way to improve access for groups is to facilitate the movement of examining culture and learning and incorporating this into educational curriculums (Bandias, Fuller, & Pfitzner, 2011). Nursey-Bray and Haugstetter (2011), revealed that in today's world, it is imperative to operate in multiple and culturally diverse contexts. Further, Nursey-Bray and Haugstetter acknowledged that an intercultural approach to education prepares students to work internationally.

The issue of cultural diversity and education of Indigenous people in Australia has had limited focus until recent years. The Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, released in 2008 identified that Indigenous Australians were among the three most disadvantaged groups in Australian higher education, the other two being regional and remote students and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Bradley & Noonan, 2008). Of note, Indigenous students may share more than one of these characteristics impacting on access and learning (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). For instance, an Indigenous student could be from a remote location and low socioeconomic circumstance.

Indigenous students often possess attitudes towards learning which conflicts with the individuality that is encouraged in contemporary Australian education systems (Boulton-Lewis & Wills, 2001). Moreover, learning for Indigenous students often relies on repetition and listening as opposed to current learning practice which may be less structured and focus on self-inquiry and verbalising (Boulton-Lewis & Wills, 2001). The different approaches and foci of Indigenous students compared to non-Indigenous raises questions as to whether the learning styles of Indigenous students are considered within the tertiary sector given the trend in attrition (Price & Hughes, 2009). Pechenkina and Kowal (2011) identified several factors that lead to the premature withdrawal from studies that included financial pressures, social or

cultural alienation caused by the academic demands of study and the insufficient academic support. These findings by Pechenkina and Kowal support outcomes from the Aurora Project (2010), where a key barrier was the inadequacy of a total investment in the students' educational life-cycle. The Aurora project reports the need for a concentrated effort to promote Indigenous students commencing education rather than supporting the students throughout the duration of their studies to ensure a culturally appropriate quality experience.

Indigenous Learning

Education for Aboriginal people in Australia has been guided by the misconception that Indigenous Australians suffered from *cultural deprivation* or *deficit* which had the effect of impoverishing their cognitive and linguistic ability (Tripcony, 2000). This perception has led to the trends in Indigenous learning to be formed around remedial programs. Remedial programs were introduced to address these deficits and to shift the accountability away from institutions and focus on the life style, culture and the communities (Ekermann, 1987). Pechenkina and Anderson's (2011) research found that the performance of Indigenous students in higher education is not an opportunity without effective support. As such the provision of quality student experience and providing adequate support networks factor are essential in Indigenous students' success in higher education.

Widening access and enhancing access with strategies and support networks to ensure that students have the best chance of success is vital to achieving positive outcomes (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). However, questions raised by Nakata (2011) asked whether it is the lack of education and the problems that surround education of Indigenous people or is it the ignorance that exists in relation to the culture of Indigenous people. Much of the literature and research suggests that the best approaches or ways for learning to occur in Indigenous students is to understand that there is a strong link between culture and how people think and learn (Cole & Means, 1981; More, 1990; Evans, 2009). For example, past literature suggests that characteristics of Indigenous learning styles suggest that Indigenous students learn more effectively when consideration and action is given to approaches to learning such as imagination, kinaesthetic, contextual, person

orientated and co-operative learners (Craven, 1996; Nichol, 1998).

Furthermore, nearly two decades ago Schwab (1998) and Fordham and Schwab (2007), outlined that Indigenous people deconstruct, negotiate and interpret information according to their needs and desires. In general, information and education is seen as a means of developing the skills and knowledge to deal with the dominant culture (Schwab, 1998; Fordham & Schwab, 2007). Therefore, the literature clearly suggests that the approaches employed by Indigenous students are varied and as such need to be considered in particular, by the tertiary sector. For instance, learning by Australian Indigenous people is ongoing and knowledge is gained through listening, reviewing, observing, sharing conceptualising engaging thereby, applying knowledge learnt from others (Chilisa, 2012).

Most importantly, there are significant barriers directly related to Indigenous students' achieving and learning in the tertiary sector (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). One significant barrier identified in Pechenkina and Anderson's report was called *Family Support* and revealed that the lack of family support is a crucial factor behind not succeeding. Educational support is fundamental and there exists a significant need for a support network or sufficient alternative networks to enhance the success for Indigenous students at tertiary institutions (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). Other barriers included financial hardship, health problems, racist attitudes, and low levels of Indigenous students' academic readiness and aspirations (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). These barriers remain the main issues aligned with the trends in Indigenous tertiary education which can prevent Indigenous students from learning and ultimately succeeding (Pechenkina & Kowal, 2011). However, more recent studies suggest that this disconnect between contemporary pedagogy and how Indigenous students learn has been the most significant barrier to success at university (Rigby et al., 2011; Usher et al., 2005) Furthermore, the lack of cultural safety, respect and dis-connection with the institution, peers and lecturers is a significant barrier to success (Deravin-Malone, 2016). Despite the evidence surrounding barriers to Indigenous students learning and achieving, education is clearly the catalyst for change. However, recent studies such as Pechenkina & Kowal, (2011); Rigby et al. (2011); Hinton & Chirgwin (2011); Deravin-Malone, (2016); Nakata, (2007) and Walter (2012) have found that for this catalyst to

advance it is vital that tertiary educators working with Indigenous people need to understand, appreciate and value cultural differences (O'Toole, 2014).

Trends in Indigenous Tertiary Education

Current trends in Indigenous tertiary education suggests that there is a mismatch between commencement and successful completion of tertiary study. For example, some universities perform well in recruiting Indigenous students but perform poorly in retention and successful completion (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). The trends in Indigenous tertiary education over the past five years at one university is illustrated in Table 1. The data compares commencement rates (Access Rates) and completion rates of Indigenous and Non Indigenous students across the university (in order to protect the identity of students the data is not indicative of campuses).

Table 1: Trends in Indigenous tertiary education USQ

	Indigenous Status	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Access Rate	Indigenous	1.99%	2.25%	2.27%	2.17%	2.58%
	Non Indigenous-Domestic	98.01%	97.75%	97.73%	97.83%	97.42%
Retention Rate	Indigenous	72.45%	66.30%	65.07%	62.63%	
	Other students	70.84%	69.35%	69.60%	70.88%	
Completion (number)	Indigenous	34	27	48	38	
	Other students	4872	4597	4739	4235	
Progress Rate (Success Rate)	Indigenous	72.93%	63.30%	62.85%	61.23%	57.63%
	Other students	82.43%	81.80%	78.49%	77.95%	77.41%
Headcount	Indigenous	317	377	412	422	476

(Sustainable Business Management Improvement [SBMI], USQ, 2013)

The data in Table 1 indicates that commencement rates have improved but retention rates for Indigenous students over the five years have declined. From 2008 to 2011 there is nearly a 10% difference in the retention of Indigenous students. When compared with Non-indigenous student's retention rates, the percentage of students who remain at University remains constant or nearly the same. Therefore, there is a definite trend between the years of 2008 and 2011 for poor retention rates of Indigenous students.

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Additionally, the attrition rates (progress rate / success rate) in Table 1 show the steady attrition of Indigenous students each year. For instance, a comparison of the percentages in 2012 indicates that just over one half of the Indigenous students completed their study compared to 77.41% of those categorised as *other students.* These trends in retention and attrition rates clearly show the need for further research to be undertaken to determine possible reasons for the declining trends and to implement changes to provide more Indigenous students with the opportunity to achieve in higher education. Pechenkina and Anderson (2011) five year review of higher education access and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people revealed similar results to the figures presented above in Table 1.

However, Pechenkina and Anderson's study also explored Indigenous education trends, initiatives and policy implications from forty Australian higher education institutions from 2004 to 2009. Of note, this extensive five year study found that there is a strong emphasis on attracting Indigenous students into university but little appropriate support provided to retain students.

Literature suggests that universities and other stakeholders in Indigenous education need to focus on how to increase Indigenous access and participation without sacrificing the completion outcomes (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). More recent studies have identified that to attract new students there needs to be an increased emphasis on educating high school students on the transition into tertiary study and the requirements that are needed in addition to determining key issues that confront Indigenous people across Australia (Rigby et al., 2011; Hinton & Chirgwin, 2011)

Indigenous students and Tertiary Study

Over the past two decades, research has also identified many factors that influence Indigenous students' poor educational outcomes. These include but are not limited to geographical location, social alienation, parent's occupation and education, overcrowding in homes and low English proficiency (Hunter & Schwab, 1998; Hunter & Schwab, 2003a, 2003b: Schwab & Anderson, 1999). However, a recent qualitative exploratory study by Rigby, Duffy, Manners, Latham, Lyons,

Crawford, and Eldridge (2011), identified barriers to Indigenous students successes within the university environment. The participants in this study claimed that there was a lack of knowledge of academic expectations and the challenges these expectations presented. This report identified that there was lack of information about university life, study and the culture. A lack of pre-entry knowledge was outlined as one of the identified barriers to their success (Rigby et al., 2011).

Rigby et al. (2011) claimed other notable factors also impacted on tertiary education success such as educators' lack of understanding of Indigenous learning styles and lack of flexibility, as previously reported by Goold in 1995. Other research identified that university lecturers reported that Indigenous students were less able to speak or write good grammar (Usher, Lindsay, Miller, & Miller, 2005). Additionally, students lacked grammatical skills causing them difficulty with subjects that involved reflective practice (Usher et al., 2005). Years later, Hinton and Chirgwin (2011) conducted a study and found participants (who held degrees or Vocational Education Training Certificates and completed year twelve), had good skills in speaking and grammar before commencing tertiary study, did not have an issue with subjects that involved reflective practice (Hinton & Chirgwin, 2011).

A New Zealand study by Wilson, McKinney and Rapata-Hanning (2011), investigated the retention of Indigenous nursing students in New Zealand and found there was a correlation with similar studies done in Australia. Similarities identified included concerns about distances to travel to study; family commitments and prioritising family over study; concerns about approaches to teaching and learning and the benefit of providing a culturally safe environment; Indigenous/ Maori role models and mentors.

Furthermore, a recent study found that there needs to be a move to incorporate more Indigenous cultural awareness programs into nursing curriculum as a strategy which will simultaneously educate non-Indigenous people about social issues, cultural safety and respect around Indigenous culture (Deravin-Malone, 2016). Nakata, (2007) and Walter (2012) concur that curriculum delivery in universities lack Indigenous knowledge and there is complacency to how and what Indigenous knowledge is recognised. Furthermore, there is a need for ongoing

support which should include emotional, motivational, financial, study, literacy and transitional needs (Oliver, Rochecouste, Bennell, Anderson, Cooper, Forest, & Exell, 2013). The education of Indigenous students' needs to be the business of everyone. Providing Indigenous students with the information, guidance and tools about preparation for tertiary study and tertiary skills is vital.

Empowering Indigenous students prior to entering university will give them the confidence that they need to succeed. Recent studies have outlined that with the introduction of Indigenous centres and a greater emphasis on providing essential support at pre-entry level, increasing involvement and presence of universities with high schools and educating on transition to tertiary study are creating that bridge to successful tertiary education outcomes but, individuals had to be willing to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Anderson, 2012).

Identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

Encouraging Indigenous students to declare their Indigenous status for more accurate and timely data gathering, and support at university is often not simplistic. In a study by Weaver (2001), participants identified that they struggled with racist attitudes and stereotyping. Therefore, many students were discouraged and found it difficult or were reluctant to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students (Usher, Turale, & Goold, 2005). Furthermore, Oliver et al. (2013), found that the issue of identity and cultural safety of students Indigenousness was due to racism and lack of understanding of Aboriginal issues. Most of the participants in Oliver et al.'s. study had been stereotyped and had experienced prejudice not only by peers but by academic staff. Participants stated experiencing being ridiculed when making complaints and reported a lack of understanding of their needs. Interestingly, this study also extended to include experiences surrounding the Aboriginal centre at the university. Participants claimed that Indigenous students also experienced exclusion based on the stereotypic ideas of the appearance or lack of typical dark skinned black haired Aboriginal appearance which prevented Indigenous students engaging with the centre (Oliver et al., 2013)

In comparison, the New Zealand study by Wilson et al. (2011), found that

Indigenous students experienced an affirmation of their cultural identity through being respected and valued and having a formal traditional Maori greeting. This made them feel welcome. Conversely, there was also a large number of participants who reported they did not feel respected and valued (Wilson et al., 2011). Of note,, the literature has revealed that identifying or not identifying as being Indigenous has not been a key issue. However, where lack of willingness to identify is apparent, it is predominantly attributed to isolation, racism, fear of being expected to speak on behalf of others about family or Indigenous commitments (Goold & Usher, 2006; Wilson et al., 2011). Another important issues identified in the literature is family support and family commitments (Goold et al., 2006).

Family support and family commitments

Family support has been identified as affecting retention and attritions rates of Indigenous students. As in many cultures family support is seen as integral to the individual (Power, Geia, & West, 2013). For Indigenous students there are higher social, emotional and cultural issues which impacts on their learning which includes, family, community and cultural commitments that affect the retention and attrition rates (Cameron, 2011). Hinton and Chirgwin (2011), claimed that providing family support was identified as an obligation for Indigenous people. Similarly, a study by Wilson et al. (2011) found participants identified that when family commitments were not a barrier, this linked to high achievements in study and assessment requirements. Family support includes providing childcare, being supportive of academic demands, provision of teaching and learning approaches and financial hardship as a challenge to continue in the program. However, 59% of the participants identified that family commitments were also a barrier (Wilson et al., 2011). In addition, Rigby, Duffy, Manners and Latham's, 2011 study outlined that the lack of family members who had participated in tertiary education and the lack of role models was perceived as a barrier to going to university and classified by the participants as lack of family/community support (Rigby et al., 2011).

Often students become distressed if they have chosen study over family in particular in the context of illness or death. Likewise, Oliver et al. (2013) identified that students when a family did not support the area of study that was chosen they

were not understood by their family and a disconnection occurred. Additionally, the pressure to achieve at university can mean that many students can experience a lack of support and understanding from family and isolation from the community because of the pressure to succeed (Oliver et al., 2013).

Family support and family commitments for Indigenous students involves social, emotional and cultural commitments whereby students cannot be at university all of the time. The significance of Indigenous commitments need to be recognised and supported by the tertiary sector to enable effective attendance and outcomes at university. Of note, more recent studies have identified that isolation and dis-connect with family and the wider community is also common because students are often torn between their commitment to tertiary study and family.

University support, peers and lecturers

Vass (2012), a phenomenological ethnographic researcher investigated educators' approaches to providing teaching and support as well as their educational practices and curriculum development in relation to indigenous education. Vass outlined that Indigenous education and the provision of support for students is viewed as a problem when compared with mainstream education. Further, Vass argues that Indigenous education has been constructed in ways that largely serve non-Indigenous purposes. According to the literature (Fielder, 2008; Langton, 2008; Pearson, 2009), identified that many of the non-Indigenous lecturers had an approach to providing teaching learning support for Indigenous students that incorporated an approach of rescuing and co-dependency. Later in 2012, Plater claimed there exists disconnect between non-Indigenous lecturers and their approach to teaching and learning support

Recent research now focuses on strategies to best support Indigenous students to complete tertiary studies. For instance, Cameron (2011) identified that a range of strategies were developed by Indigenous staff with assistance from Newcastle University to support the Indigenous nursing students. The attrition rate decreased and retention rates increased as a result of providing improved tutoring, counseling, mentoring, and intensive support programs for students deemed at risk

(Best & Stuart, 2014). Additionally, Cameron recommends culturally appropriate accommodation for students was provided for students who had to relocate from their communities (Cameron, 2011).

A nursing Aboriginal Academic Liaison Officer was found to occupy an important role in assisting with scholarships, enrolling, class timetables, tutorials and introduction to University culture (Cameron, 2011). Other studies at other universities have also correlated the findings of Cameron (Hinton & Chirgwin, 2011; Usher et al., 2005; Usher, Turale & Goold, 2005; Rigby et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2011) Furthermore, Rigby et al's. (2011), participants gave high praise to Indigenous lecturers are beneficial due to the support received to complete culturally specific initiatives related to developing ownership of their journey through memorial paintings and a making a DVD talking about their journey (Rigby et al., 2011). Therefore, having Indigenous Academic staff (and Non Indigenous Academic staff) who provide opportunities to develop culturally relevant teaching learning support for Indigenous students is noteworthy.

Research has also identified that there needs to be new ways of teaching to support Indigenous students (Bat & Fasoli, 2013). For example, Bat and Fasoli (2013) propose that there needs to be culturally appropriate, literacy combined with teaching methods that are culturally contextual. Furthermore, a combination of Western and Indigenous world views to promote inclusion and diverse perspectives and pedagogy needs to be a key consideration (Bat & Fasoli, 2013). Guenther and Hargreaves (2011) also advise that contemporary teaching and learning needs to be focused on mutual respect of knowledge systems that complement teaching and learning styles of people from all cultures and backgrounds.

Teaching styles learning styles and the needs of Indigenous students.

Indigenous student's satisfaction with learning and teaching experiences at university is a significant issue as this has the potential to influence other Indigenous students to enter university (Shah, 2010). Further, the successful completion of a tertiary education for Indigenous students means that there will be improvements for life changes in relation to employment, self-esteem, improved financial outcomes

and being part of mainstream society (Shah, 2010). Therefore, to achieve, consideration needs to be given to matching teaching styles with the learning styles of Indigenous students. Additionally, the needs of Indigenous students, in relation to their commitment to family and the community, needs to be recognised as this cultural influence can impact on success. Research indicates that Indigenous student's motivation for completing tertiary studies is closely intertwined with the contribution that they wish to make (and at times have to make) as individuals to society and their community (Craven, Tucker, Munns, Hinkley, Marsh, & Simpson, 2001; Ellender, Drysdale, Chesters, Faulkner, Kelly, & Turnbull, 2008).

Conclusion

Understanding teaching styles is vital to the retention and success of all students. Equally significant is understanding their society and their community and having an in-depth understanding of the issues faced by Indigenous students. This understanding will enable students to succeed as they can be provided with access to resources to compete their studies. Ultimately, creating a learning atmosphere where the student feels that the lecturer is part of their community is essential when teaching and learning occur. Recent studies have identified that for academic success and completion there is a need to address issues and provide support regarding identity, cultural safety and students Indigenousness (Devlin 2009; Anderson, 2012). Ongoing support will provide the platform for successful outcomes taking into consideration, emotional, motivational, financial, study, literacy, and transitional needs (Oliver et al., 2013).

This chapter presents the literature surrounding concepts associated with learning and influence of culture on learning. In particular, this literature review has incorporated historical and current studies that have provided in-depth discussion into learning concepts and how education experience and practices can impact on attrition, retention and completion rates in tertiary education. Additionally, this chapter highlighted the complexities associated with culture and learning and the evolution of tertiary education for Indigenous students.

The literature presented in this chapter outlines that the exploration of the educational experiences of Indigenous nursing students attending university is warranted to fill the gap in the literature as to the essence of the experiences of tertiary nursing students. The following chapter presents the research methodology and methods used to explore the experiences of Indigenous nursing students while at university. Data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations and rigour are addressed in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the qualitative methodology selected for this research and the Indigenous framework chosen to explore the data and provide authenticity to this Indigenous research. Content in this chapter includes a detailed discussion about Phenomenology and the relevance of Phenomenology as the research methodology chosen for this study. Indigenous ontology and Indigenous epistemology will be explained to emphasise the impact ontology and epistemology has on this study and why an Indigenous framework will be used in conjunction with the research methodology. Recruitment and selection of participants, ethical considerations, data collection, data analysis and research rigor relative to this study will also be outlined.

Conducting research and the selection of a research method can often be an overwhelming experience and selecting a methodology that aligns with Indigenous (Murri) research adds a further element of complexity. Additionally, understanding how the epistemology of Indigenous people influences this study is essential to the presentation of the research findings. This study is important because it aims to provide a unique Indigenous perspective and more significantly, the impact on Murri people. However, reaching this point necessitated being able to "walk in two worlds" one being that of the Westernised worldview and the other that of the Indigenous worldview.

Research Aim

This research aims to explore the experiences of Indigenous nursing students within the tertiary sector. Further, this study aims to identify strategies to support and enhance the educational experience for Indigenous nursing students. The significance of this topic emerges from the growing concern surrounding the attrition and retention of Indigenous nurses from tertiary nursing education programs. Of

particular note and concern, is that there is limited data to indicate how Indigenous nursing students learn best. Therefore, this study aims to give a voice to Indigenous nursing students through exploring their experiences. The essence of Indigenous experiences will be aligned with current education processes to discover mechanisms to support and enhance tertiary educational experiences for Indigenous nursing students.

Indigenous students' perceptions of effective and ineffective processes to support them at university will also be a focus of this study. As such, a long term outcome of the proposed research is to provide an in-depth understanding which could be used to improve retention rates of Indigenous students, through improving the educational experiences for future Indigenous students. Therefore, the overall objective of this research is to discover approaches that ultimately assist to increase the number of Indigenous health care workers in Queensland and Australia.

Providing positive higher education experiences may lead to more Indigenous health care employees who can aid in improving health outcomes for Indigenous people in Australia (Annual Report Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation, 2011). Therefore, phenomenology will be used to explore the tertiary education experiences for a group of Indigenous nursing students.

The Emergence of Phenomenology

Phenomenology will be employed to explore the essence of the individuals' experience by enabling the researcher to understand the meaning the individual places on the experience. Phenomenology is best suited for this study because to gain insight into this phenomenon the researcher needs to explore the experiences of people such as Indigenous nursing students. Further, phenomenology provides a means for Indigenous pedagogy to be explored and considered to assist with identifying possible future directions for nursing education for Indigenous people.

Phenomenology was designed for the purpose of qualitatively exploring the lived experiences of humans and what these experiences meant (Polit & Beck, 2010, 2014). Phenomenology is considered a philosophical means of inquiry grounded in care and caring philosophy (Reiners, 2012). Phenomenology was

originally developed by Husserl then expanded and redeveloped by Heidegger.

Later, van Manen and Gadamer sought to embed a further focus to include caring relationships and the human experience (Reiners, 2012). Therefore, phenomenology is a methodology frequently used by health professionals because phenomenology seeks to describe the meaning of the experience of people, to understand their experiences and equally acknowledge human and environmental relationships that are integral in the lives of individuals (Polit & Beck, 2014; Reiners, 2012).

There are two different approaches to phenomenology. The original approach to phenomenology was descriptive phenomenology which was developed by Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl believed that phenomenology was related to consciousness and based on the meaning of the individual's experience and how individuals' thoughts, memory, imagination and emotion create the question "what do we know as persons?" (Dahlberg, Drew, & Nystrom, 2008). Husserl was primarily concerned with epistemology and argued that objects in the external world exist independently making this information reliable.

Additionally, Husserl claimed that people can be certain about how things appear or present themselves to their consciousness (Polit & Beck, 2014; Reiners, 2012). Husserl's intention was to study consciousness and how phenomena in the world are constituted by the human consciousness. Furthermore, Husserl described how phenomena appear to the subject and how from this the experience is established (Davidsen, 2013). Husserl's aim was to describe and create a universal phenomenology that had the foundation to critique knowledge (Davidsen, 2013).

Husserl insisted that preconceived theories should not form our experience but rather let experience determine theories. Therefore, Husserl's approach is to ensure the essence of participants experience are explored and described to truly understand a phenomena.

Davidsen (2013), also reported that Husserl believed it was necessary for the researcher to suspend or 'bracket' previous experience to enhance the validity of the data reported and the findings. However, theorists such as Heidegger argued that you could never truly bracket all presuppositions because of the mere nature of being in the world (Polit & Beck, 2014; Reiners, 2012). Heidegger (1889-1976), who was a student of Husserl's, expanded and broadened phenomenology and as such, interpretive phenomenology emerged. Interpretive phenomenology disregards the concept of 'bracketing' and includes hermeneutics which involves studying the concept of being in the world rather than knowing the world (Flood, 2010).

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretive understanding with the main focus on context and purpose (Liamputtong, 2013). Two features of interpretive enquiry include 'language' and 'context'. Language is considered the essence of what is said and understood and context is considered the framework of understanding behaviours (Liamputtong, 2013). Therefore, hermeneutics is the interpretation of text where language (written or spoken) is explored to reveal the phenomenon (Liamputtong, 2013). Furthermore, interpretive phenomenology employs a concept called the 'hermeneutic circle' to explore the language of everyday experiences around cultural mores, behaviours, events, actions and relationships between language and social life (Liamputtong, 2013; Flood, 2010; Polit & Beck, 2014).

The philosopher Gadamer further developed Husserl and Heidegger's philosophical approach to phenomenology to include the use of the hermeneutical circle to make sense of an individuals' experience (Polit & Beck, 2014). Gadamer recognised that there was a relationship of language to being, understanding, history, existence and reality (Chilisa, 2012). Gadamer stated that the use of dialogue provides a shared understanding in a research encounter. It is where different interpretations of the phenomenon are brought together through dialogue to produce shared understanding (Higgs et al., 2012; Polit & Beck, 2014). Interpretive phenomenology utilises the hermeneutic circle as a means to assist data analysis to ensure a continual review and analysis within the data. Employing the hermeneutical circle provides the researcher with the opportunity to become immersed in the meaning of the text and ultimately, the researcher becomes part of the phenomenon. Consequently, preconceived ideas or opinions are not bracketed as the researcher's prior knowledge and experience is used to move backward and

forward to learn about the phenomena (Polit & Beck, 2014; Reiners, 2012).

Phenomenology aligns with Indigenous people living and learning in a community and collective way. Indigenous people learn from experience and are educated by hearing, seeing, feeling, believing (spiritual), remembering, stories, deciding and evaluating their place in the community, family and their lives and connections to the land and country (Nakata, 2007). The alignment of phenomenology to Indigenous ways is noteworthy and this can be further heightened by the inclusion of an Indigenous framework to explore this research topic. Incorporating Indigenous epistemology into this study is integral to truly exploring the essence of the experience of Indigenous nursing.

Indigenous Epistemology

A worldview is a particular philosophy of life or conception of the world or in other words a way of seeing things (West, 2012). People establish a worldview as they learn, develop and grow. An individual's worldview is passed down from one generation to the next incorporating knowledge systems that enable people to interact and understand the world that they live (Hart, 2010). Therefore, it would be reasonable to say that worldviews can differ for individuals dependent on how and where they acquired their knowledge system. Hart, (2010) outlined that the emergence of Indigenous worldviews were the result of individuals close relationships with the environment. West, Creedy and Milne (2016), added that knowledge is holistic, cyclic and dependent upon relationships and connections to living and non-living entities. It is also believed that no one entity knows all and that building upon relations and knowledge requires a strong focus on people and entities coming together to help and support and learn from one another through relationships (Amrita, 2014).

Indigenous Australians consider learning as ongoing. Ways of knowing evolve through listening, sensing, viewing, reviewing, reading, watching, waiting, observing, exchanging, sharing, conceptualising, assessing, modelling, engaging and applying and most importantly that this knowledge is relational and that all Indigenous knowledge systems are built upon relations (Chilisa, 2012). Therefore from the three different approaches to Phenomenology, Gadamer's interpretive Phenomenology

was chosen to best address the aim of this research because interpretive phenomenology provides a means to explore the Indigenous nursing student's views and experiences by moving in and out of the dialogue to fully discover meaning. This approach also aligns well with the Indigenous framework of "Dadirri" where deep listening, contemplating and understanding is paramount in conversation in order to reach a deep understanding. Moreover, there is the need to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous worldviews into this research using a process of decolonising and indigenising Western research methodologies (Chilisa, 2012). This research provides an opportunity for the voice of Indigenous students to be heard thereby demonstrating that a blend of Western and Indigenous methodologies is needed to truly understand this phenomenon.

Indigenous Research Methodology

The need to incorporate an Indigenous approach to this research requires explanation. The relevance of providing a platform that outlines the development of a responsible and accountable Indigenous discourse that is theoretically sophisticated and responsive to the needs of the students is also important to explain (West, 2012). According to Bond, Foley and Askew (2016), Indigenous research must incorporate the core Aboriginal principles such as emancipatory, imperative, political integrity, give privilege to Indigenous voices, recognise their worldviews, acknowledge social mores, historical and political contexts which have shaped Indigenous experiences, lives, positions and futures.

Indigenous research occurs through aligning Indigenous worldviews with aspects of western qualitative research frameworks. The move to include Aboriginal principles has evolved over many years due to Indigenous scholars and researchers working tirelessly to conduct research that incorporates values and Indigenous worldviews (Wilson, 2008). Western research models of knowing have been recognised and gained attention from Institutes such as the Collaborative Centres of Indigenous Health Research namely the Lowitja Institute (Reid & Taylor, 2011).

Further, the Lowitja Institute purports that a sharing of knowledge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people will lead to a collaborative, culturally appropriate approach to research that can achieve positive benefits in research validity that gives a voice to Indigenous people (Reid & Taylor, 2011). This alignment gives creditability to both the structure and procedures throughout the research (Wilson, 2008). Adopting a blended process to the proposed research will involve employing phenomenology together with a means to include relational nuances of Indigenous people such as incorporating an Indigenous framework called the Dadirri approach.

Individual face to face interviews were employed to collect data. Interviewing aligns with 'yarning' which is the term used by Indigenous people when they are relaying stories about their beliefs, feelings, their memories, decisions and listening. During this process the researcher was able to move in and out of the imaginary circle while incorporating the "Dadirri" framework to obtain an adequate account of the text by building up the account through identification, deep listening and interpretation of meaning. The "Dadirri" Indigenous framework, used in conjunction with interpretive phenomenological methods facilitated the emergence of themes and subthemes.

Dadirri is useful when analysing data as it provides a means to understanding the self in relationship to others and, the notion of truly listening to others which is pivotal to developing ideas and awareness (West, Stewart, Foster, & Usher, 2012). Understanding the self was achieved through reflection prior to "yarning" with the participants. Therefore, the Dadirri framework provided the tools to explore and analyse the data collected during in depth interviews of Indigenous nursing students.

The Dadirri approach is an Indigenous framework that aligns well with interpretive phenomenology. Dadirri involves deep contemplative listening to another in a reciprocal relationship (Laycock, Walker, Harrison & Brands, 2011). Dadirri is an Indigenous philosophy that reflects an Indigenous processes for investigating something while being respectful and reflective. (Chamberlain, Fergie, Sinclair, & Asmar, 2016). The Dadirri approach informs ethical behaviours in research and aims to promote cultural safety to assist the design of the research (Laycock et al., 2011). Furthermore, the Dadirri approach encompasses knowledge and consideration of

community and, the diverse and unique nature that each individual brings to the community. Dadirri principles include:

. Ways of relating and acting within community.
. A non-intrusive observation or quietly aware watching.
. A deep listening and hearing with more than the ears.
. A reflective non-judgemental consideration of what is being seen and heard (Laycock et al., 2011).

A key characteristic of the Dadirri approach that aligns with phenomenological research is that Dadirri anticipates that having learnt from listening, a purposeful plan to act is shaped. Therefore, actions are informed by learning, wisdom, and the responsibility that comes with knowledge. (Atkinson, 2002). As such, the Dadirri approach will provide a useful and advantageous way to work with the Indigenous nursing students and analyse the data to produce appropriate findings (Laycock et al., 2011). Finally, the recognition and alignment of phenomenology to an Indigenous approach is not only important but is a valid way of conducting this research and assists with informing the design of this study (Wilson, 2008).

Design of the Study

This study will be conducted in a regional area of south east Queensland and involved the recruitment of nursing students who are Indigenous. Using the Dadirri approach, the researcher is immersed into the Indigenous universe to be known to the region for the purpose of transparency (Bond, Foley, & Askew, 2016). For example, recruitment of participants firstly involved introducing one-self to traditional region, family groups and their kinship system. This Indigenous way of introduction, acknowledges obligations and commitment to tradition. Introducing one- self is a part of Indigenous protocol for social engagement and therefore forms an essential part of recruitment (West, 2012). The following section of this chapter outlines ethical considerations, recruitment of participants and rigor and the use of the research methods consistent with phenomenology.

Ethical Considerations

Initially, the researcher obtained endorsement from an Elder Butchulla woman, Mrs Marie Wilkinson, to indicate support for this research due to the Indigenous focus of the study (Appendix 2). Ethical clearance was also obtained for this study prior to data collection from the university Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The HREC was supplied with a rationale as to why the Indigenous Liaison Officer needed to assist with the recruitment of participants. A letter indicating the willingness of the Indigenous Liaison Officer to assist with recruitment is included as Appendix 7.

Evidence that ethical standards are adhered to is essential to conducting all forms of research to protect and safe guard participant's rights. Ethical standards are designed to protect the interest, well-being, emotional safety, confidentially and identity of participants (Liamputtong, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2014). Ethical approval was granted on the 24th March, 2014 (Appendix 1).

To ensure confidentiality every participant was provided with a pseudonym and the participants are only referred to using this pseudonym. All data from each of the participants will be de-identified and only the researcher will know the true identity of the participants. Confidentially will be maintained throughout the duration of the study and in any reports or publications that result from this research. No other individuals will be made aware of the identity of any participant. Confidentiality will also be upheld in relation to storage of data. Data will be stored on the researchers password protected computer and hard documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. All transcripts and audio recordings will be destroyed after five years.

Tacit consent was obtained when the student replied to the email sent to them from the Indigenous Liaison Officer inviting them to participate in the study. Written informed consent was obtained prior to commencement of the interview to indicate a willingness to participate following a verbal explanation about the research (See Appendix 4). All consent forms were signed by participants, collected by the researcher prior to data collection and securely stored by the researcher.

Recruitment of Participants and Sampling

Recruitment of participants for this study employed purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling is commonly referred to as deliberate sampling which encompasses individuals with similar characteristics and is used where participants are needed from within a specific sub culture (Higgin Bottom, 2004; Liamputtong, 2013). Purposive sampling is critical to this study in order to attract and recruit Indigenous nursing students. To ensure information rich data, purposive sampling was employed to guarantee the study included participants that would provide information crucial to the phenomena being studied. It would be impossible to explore the experiences of Indigenous students in relation to their approaches to learning if Indigenous people are not the participants. The key benefit of using purposive sampling is that informative data can be gathered which affords in-depth understanding and insight in-place of empirical generalisations (Liamputtong, 2013). Purposive sampling provides a means of determining the insights into the experiences of Indigenous nursing students enrolled at a regional university in Queensland. The key factor in qualitative research is to select participants strategically as there is no formula to establish a sample size as with quantitative research. Furthermore, in many instances, the number of participants cannot be predicted at the beginning of the research for qualitative research (Liamputtong, 2013).

This study aimed to recruit and include 10 to 12 Bachelor of Nursing students who are Indigenous and enrolled at a regional University in Queensland. A sample size of 10 to 12 participants would be appropriate to provide rich data for analysis (Polit & Beck, 2006). Small participant numbers is consistent with qualitative research whereby data saturation is used as a means for determining participant numbers (Liamputtong, 2013).

Participants were sought by collaborating with the Indigenous Liaison Officer at the university to recruit Indigenous Bachelor of Nursing students. The Indigenous Liaison Officer was asked to email Indigenous nursing students to invite them to participate in this study. Students that indicated a willingness to participate were asked to contact either the Indigenous Liaison Officers or the researcher by email or phone. Additionally, students who indicated an interest in participating in the study

were provided with an information sheet outlining the level of commitment and that they may withdraw from the study at any stage (Appendix 3) and a consent form to sign.

Participants

The recruitment process posed many challenges in relation to attracting the desired 10 to 12 participants. Work commitments for the Indigenous Liaison Officer prevented students being contacted as this was viewed as time consuming.
Additionally, when students were emailed, it was during semester break therefore potential participants may not have accessed their email to be informed of the recruitment for this study. As such, the recruitment process resulted in only four Indigenous students indicating a willingness and agreed to participate in this study.

The participants represented a range of age, life experiences and gender. Also, some of the participants had workplace experience or had obtained qualifications prior to commencing tertiary studies. Three of the participants were women, Charla in her 1st year of nursing, Jone in her 2nd year of nursing and Jillayne who was in her 3rd year of nursing. There was one male participant who was in his 3rd year of his nursing degree. Table 2 displays specific details about each of the participants who agreed to be involved in this study.

Table 2: Participant Demographics

Pseudonym of the Participants	Age	Current year of study at university	Gender	Other relevant Qualifications
Charla	34	1st Year	Female	Certificate IV Aboriginal Health Practitioner
Jone	35	2nd Year	Female	
Jillayne	43	3rd Year	Female	
Seth	45	3rd Year	Male	Certificate in Aged Care

Data Collection

Qualitative research data collection is usually in the form of face-to-face in-depth interviews. Additionally, journals, diaries and other written materials can be used (Polit & Beck, 2010; Liamputtong, 2013). In-depth interviews provide the scope to uncover, explore and understand the phenomena being studied. This form of interview using open-ended questions, promotes rapport, encouraging candour, listening and the ability to pursue other lines of questioning that may develop from the original list of broad questions (Liamputtong, 2013). Historically, qualitative interviewing emerged in the 1970's and 1980's and became the data collection method particularly in health related research (Liamputtong, 2013). Therefore, what students hear, see, believe, feel, remember decide and evaluate can be thoroughly explored using the data collection technique of face-to-face interviews where this form of interviewing has become a popular method for researchers to collect data that allows a mode of systematic inquiry to elicit the participants sense of their experiences (King & Horrocks, 2010; Gobo, 2011; Packer, 2011; Gubrium & Holstein, 2012).

Qualitative research embraces the use of interviews as interviews facilitate in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Liamputtong, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2010). Semi structured, using open ended interview questions were used to promote conversation, build rapport and elicit rich data. Building a rapport with the participants is essential and using semi structured interviews allow the researcher to clarify answers with further questions and, if necessary, may lead to another line of inquiry (Liamputtong, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2010). However, there remains the importance of maintaining the distinct role of interviewer and interviewee without controlling or leading the conversations but allowing the direction to be driven by the participants (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Interviews were employed as the only data collection strategy because they are more aligned with the Indigenous culture whereby Indigenous people are known to *yarn* (an informal conversation that is culturally friendly and recognized by Aboriginal people as meaning to talk about something, someone or provide and receive information). Interviewing allows the researcher to *yarn* in order to elicit the experiences and essences of the Indigenous participants (West, 2012). One-to-one

interviews were conducted for approximately 40 to 60 minutes with each participant. The first two interviews were conducted at a place that suited the participants and involved meeting them in a quiet garden. Two of the interviews were conducted via Skype as the researcher had relocated to Arnhem Land. The interview consisted of semi structured questions to encourage and promote conversation (see Appendix 6). All interviews were recorded and recordings transcribed by the researcher in order to enable the researcher to become immersed in the data to assist with data analysis.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research and in particular, data analysis, provides a framework for the researcher to work with text to present a cohesive representation of the data that cannot easily be represented in numbers. Data gathered often relates to the concepts and behaviours of people interviewed that cannot be explained quantitatively or in simple terms (Liamputong, 2013). Key considerations surrounding data analysis for qualitative research is that the technique used needs to be transparent, rigorous and thorough, while remaining 'true' to the participants' accounts (Liamputtong, 2013; Noble & Smith, 2014). There are numerous approaches to making sense of qualitative data. The most common approaches include, Coding, commonly used in Grounded Theory research; Content analysis which is used to look for trends in written work such as text books or newspapers; and Discourse analysis, which aims to find meaning in text or conversations. However, Thematic analysis which is also referred to as Interpretive Thematic analysis, is the most common approached used in qualitative data involving the identification of patterns within the data (Liamputtong, 2013).

Data analysis involves an interactive process whereby data is systematically reviewed and analysed in order to provide an interpretation of the phenomena (Liamputtong, 2013). This process, known as Gadamer's Hermeneutic Circle, is used in interpretive phenomenology and underpins the hermeneutic interpretation proposed by Heidegger which enables the interpretation of the texts to obtain a valid and common understanding of their meaning (Flood, 2010). Gadamer's theoretical model and perspective allows data to move in and out of the circle whereby the dialogue from interview questions can provide insight into the experience that is not

clearly understood (Ivey, 2013). Furthermore, Gadamer suggested that there exists a fusion of horizons, where there is the blend of historical knowledge and new knowledge which provides a platform from where an understanding of the experience develops (Liamputtong, 2013). As such, prejudices in this context do not hinder the interpretations but are integral to understanding the history of the phenomenon. Using an Indigenous approach of Dadirri alongside Interpretive Phenomenology aided data analysis. This dual approach involves deep contemplative listening to each other in a reciprocal relationship (West, 2012). It promotes and aligns with Phenomenology of sharing a story, listening, contemplating everything you hear, self-reflecting as you listen and then acting on what you have registered (Gabb & McDermott, 2007).

Ultimately the researcher offers a respectful and reflective way to work with Indigenous people that immerses them within an Indigenous universe (West, 2012). Immersion within the research and phenomenon being studied is a positive and important as it will add rigor to the language and data analysis (Liamputtong, 2013). Gadamerian hermeneutics focuses on the premise that language is revealing and contributes to understanding and interpretation (Liamputtong, 2013). The process of in-depth interviewing supports and encourages conversational relationships that develop between the researcher and the participant thus, creating trust (Liamputtong, 2013). Overall, incorporating an Indigenous framework such as the Dadirri with Gadamer's hermeneutic circle will provide the rigor for this study that is recognises an Indigenous approach as a valid way of conducting research (West, 2012).

Research Rigour

Qualitative research rigor is essential for establishing trust and/or confidence in the findings of a research study. Rigor, in qualitative research, can be explained as the journey of explanation and discovery that does not have stiff boundaries (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Therefore, the success of a study may be improved by remaining rigorous to the analysis and remaining focused on a single experience/experiences, not to generalise to other subjects or settings and to ensure full exploration of the phenomenon (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Strategies utilised to ensure rigour include purposive sampling, respondent validation, and transparency

of the method of analysis (such as using a Matrix chart) have been used to ensure rigour within this study (Ryan-Nicholls & Will, 2009).

This research will utilise a matrix chart to assist with the identification of themes. Additionally, Gadamer's hermeneutic circle will be employed to guide the interpretation of the Indigenous nursing students' experiences. A matrix chart is used to ensure rigour during data analysis because a matrix chart assists with the identification and creation of concepts in order to create themes and subthemes. The illustration of the concepts via a matrix chart can enable comparisons and explanations to evolve to reflect the essence of the experiences of the participants and provides evidence of the analysis process employed (Liamputtong, 2013).

Rigour within this study is further enhanced by the utilisation of Gadamer's hermeneutical approach and the Dadirri framework used during the data collection and data analysis processes. Gadamer's approach provides the researcher with the tools to process the data in a respectful and reflective way (West, 2012). This blended process of using Gadamer and Dadirri adopted for this study promotes cultural safety and creditability to ensure the findings truly reflect the experiences of the participants (West 2012). Rigour is also enhanced through techniques such as member checking. Therefore, after transcribing the data, transcripts were clarified with participants and validated to ensure and strengthen the accuracy of the data (Liamputtong, 2013).

Conclusion

This study utilised Gadamer's Interpretative Phenomenology and an Indigenous perspective known as the Dadirri framework to respectfully and reflectively discover the essence of Indigenous nursing student's experiences during tertiary studies. The blending of the research methodology chosen for this study, and the Dadirri approach provided a voice for Indigenous nursing students. This chapter has provided an overview of the research methodology employed combined with the Indigenous framework to be used to explore the experiences of Indigenous nursing students. The relevance of phenomenology to this study has been discussed and the methods used in the design of this research such as, the recruitment and selection of participants, ethical considerations, data collection and

data analysis have been outlined. Data analysis utilised a matrix chart to assist with the identification of themes and to ensure rigour, and Gadamer's hermeneutic circle to guide the interpretation of the Indigenous nursing students' experiences. The following chapter presents the findings from this study and explores the key themes identified and associated subthemes.

CHAPTER 4

# PRESENTATION OF DATA AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter outlines the data and analysis of findings of this qualitative research. Gadamer's Interpretive Phenomenological study was undertaken to explore the essence of Indigenous nursing student's experiences while completing a tertiary degree. Phenomenology was the chosen methodology for this study because knowledge and understanding of Indigenous nursing student's experiences at university was being sought. The participants for this study included four Indigenous nursing students. The participants varied in age, gender and point of their study they had attained. The findings are presented in alignment with the literature that was reviewed prior to the conduct of this research. Currently, the literature suggests that there is a mismatch between the commencement of Indigenous nursing students and successful completion of their nursing degree (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). Furthermore, the literature suggests that ongoing support from peers, the university and family is critical (Best & Stuart, 2014).

Data Analysis and Findings

Identification of the relationship and commonalities between each participant's comments about their experiences as a tertiary student occurred during data analysis. Surprisingly and unexpectedly a significant finding was the misperceptions that exist between Indigenous students and university processes. Analysis of data revealed three key themes with each key theme consisting of two subthemes. The first key theme revealed that Indigenous nursing students claimed they felt different and their experience at university impacted on their cultural wellbeing and Indigenous identity. The second key theme identified the participants experienced that the participants encountered internal conflict surrounding community and cultural responsibilities resulting in a lack of engagement with peers, the university and the wider community. The final theme related to the misperceptions that the

participants identified as influencing their experience at university. For instance, participants were unaware of the skills required to undertake tertiary study and be successful at university. Key themes and subthemes identified following data analysis are discussed in detail in the following section and illustrated in the figure below (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Themes and Sub-Themes

Experiences of Indigenous Nursing Students
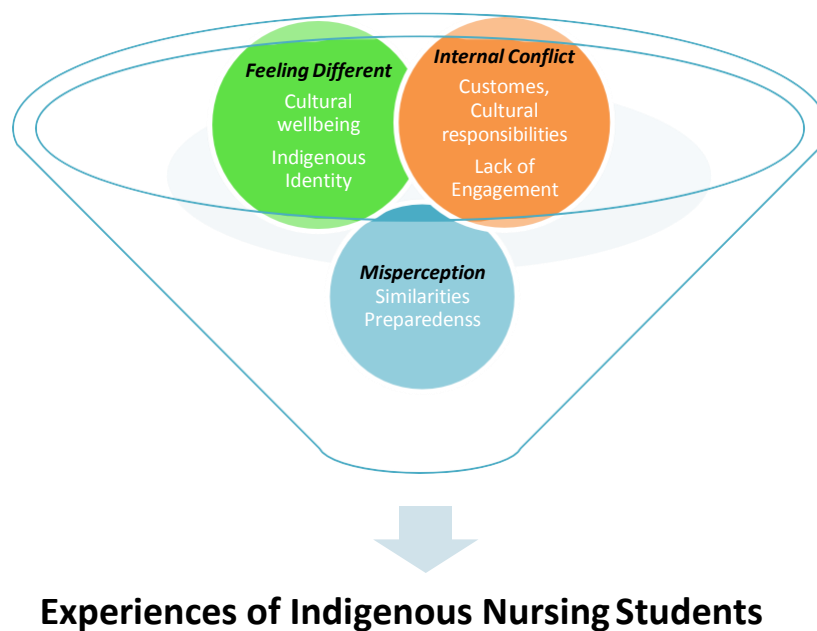
Feeling Different

Findings revealed that the participants were overwhelmed with the cognitive perspective of Feeling Different from other students. Feeling Different was experienced by three out of the four participants and included the perception that the participants had little capacity to regulate what was happening within the university environment and were challenged by a system that caused them stress as students. For instance, Charla, Jone and Jillayne outlined that because there were very few Indigenous nursing students they encountered Feeling Different which negatively impacted on their experience.

The three participants that reported Feeling Different claimed that not feeling the same as other students affected their confidence and adaptation as a student.

Jillayne revealed that there was a stigma associated with Indigenous students whereby it was perceived that "they get everything, they get extra help and they have an advantage over others". Jilayne claimed these perceptions led to negative attitudes towards Indigenous nursing students and therefore made the students feel as though they were indeed different.

Findings also revealed that Feeling Different led to some participants fearing rejection due to being perceived as "different". Further, the fear of rejection created a barrier for Indigenous students involved in this study that prevented them from feeling comfortable with non-Indigenous students and prevented them from accessing university assistance designed to help Indigenous students such as tutoring. Charla claimed that she did not want to seek help from the Indigenous Unit at the university for tutoring and other things because the "non-Indigenous students say that Aboriginal people get everything and it's not fair". A similar concern was echoed by Seth who said, "non-Indigenous students think that Indigenous students get everything for free, they think we get it easy" and Charla stated that she did not want the other students to treat her differently, even though she knew that she would benefit from the extra help available from the staff in the Indigenous Unit.

The theme of Feeling Different incorporated the sub themes of Cultural Wellbeing and Indigenous Identity. These two subthemes emerged as being significant due to noteworthy comments made by the participants during interviews. For example, Jillayne said "I feel there is lack of understanding of Indigenous culture with the other non-Indigenous students and some of the lecturers". Jone also stated that "there was a lot of stereotyping and negativity towards Indigenous people in the class setting; this is why I don't like to Identify as Indigenous". Jone added that identifying as Indigenous made her feel uncomfortable when she was with non-Indigenous students. "I don't want to be noticed, if I tell someone I am Indigenous, I will be seen as different".

Finally, Feeling Different was identified by the participants as a barrier faced by the Indigenous students that made it difficult to adjust to the university system and learning demands. While this research identified that Feeling Different was a perceived barrier related to succeeding, the student's experiences fostered other

issues that are presented as subthemes. The subthemes of Feeling Different included, cultural wellbeing and Indigenous identity and include concepts pertaining to the participants learning, acceptance and engagement involving the culture of the university and their own culture.

Table 3: Feeling Different

Theme 1	Sub-themes
Feeling Different	Cultural Wellbeing Indigenous Identity

Cultural Wellbeing

Cultural Wellbeing was identified as a subtheme because there was a common thread throughout the data whereby the participants provided a range of responses surrounding the concept of cultural wellbeing. For example, Jillayne said, "I was not prepared for the attitude towards Indigenous people" and "I was unaware of the attitudes others had towards Indigenous students". Furthermore, Charla added that she "found it hard to trust other students and some of the faculty due to the unwelcoming and unsupportive environment I experienced". The importance of relationships, connections and interactions is a key part of attending university and the student's experience. Feeling welcome, supportive and trust facilitates more than learning or teaching, it creates an environment that provides support to navigate the systems and processes of the university (Best & Stuart, 2014). Comments made by two of the participants indicated that they employed strategies to protect their cultural wellbeing. Further, Charla stated that "there was always the chance of being singled out if you identify as being Indigenous because as an Aboriginal you get free stuff. Therefore, as a means of protecting her wellbeing, Charla did not access any resources offered by the university to avoid her culture being obvious to others. Of note, half of the participants elected not to use or access resources offered by the university to maintain their cultural wellbeing.

In summary, Cultural Wellbeing incorporated how the participants experienced inner conflict due to not wanting to access available resources and chose not to form relationships, connections and partnerships despite these being fundamental to assisting Indigenous students to successfully complete their nursing

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degrees. Protecting their cultural wellbeing was significant to these participants because this related to their Indigenous identity.

Indigenous Identity

The subtheme, Indigenous Identity emerged from comments by the majority of participants who questioned and tried to make sense of themselves as students. Indigenous Identity is shaped and nurtured by interactions between families, land, and storytelling and is evidenced by Indigenous people constantly asking "what's your name, where do you come from?" Seeking this affirmation leads to Indigenous people forming their Cultural Identity. Some situations or circumstances challenged the Cultural Identity of the participants of this study. For instance, Jone stated "because I am unable to openly acknowledge my Indigenous identity, it feels like everything I know does not fit in with the culture of the university". Furthermore, two participants perceived that their Indigenous identity was often questioned in terms of their appearance. Meaning, the two participants did not have a stereotypical Indigenous/Aboriginal appearance in relation to the colour of their skin or the community where they came from. Because the two participants did not 'look' Indigenous they perceived their Indigenous Identity was being challenged.

People who identify as being Aboriginal can vary in appearance as people may have dark skin and hair and broad noses, others may have light skin, blonde hair and blue eyes. Appearance continues to be an issue that is difficult to eliminate because over time the appearance of Indigenous people has changed due to the increase in relationships of non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. Jone, does not have a stereotype Aboriginal appearance, she has fair skin, light brown hair and hazel eye, stated,

> I don't like to openly identify to other students about my Aboriginality and I know of other Aboriginal students who do not identify as Indigenous when they enrol because they do not want to be singled out in class or asked questions about how fair they are just because their skin is not dark.

Another participant, Charla said, "Sometimes the non-Indigenous students

never think about what they are saying. Like they say, you're Indigenous and you are in second year?" Meaning, because the student discloses that they are Indigenous it appears surprising they could be a second year student. Therefore, the participants in this study found that their Indigenous identity was questioned if their appearance was not stereotypical of aboriginal and their ability to be a second year student. Genberg et al. (2008) characterises stigma as an attribute that is deeply discrediting, which can lead to an individual feeling different due to their identity and place within a society being tarnished and discredited.

A fundamental finding from the theme of Feeling Different was that the participants viewed that their cultural wellbeing and Indigenous Identity were an issue that caused mixed emotions and challenged their ideations as an Indigenous nursing student. The participants revealed that they had experienced feelings of frustration and helplessness based on what they had encountered at university and with their families and the wider community. Participants reported that they questioned their identity and whether to disclose their culture because they did not wish to be treated differently to non-Indigenous nursing students or be identified. The majority of the participants in this study communicated a sense of internal conflict with their identity and cultural backgrounds that led to them experiencing a lack of engagement and isolation from other students, peers and the institution.

Internal Conflict

The major theme Internal Conflict emerged from the data due to the perceived pressure to do well at university due to being Indigenous. Although being Indigenous can be a motivator, it can also mean that Indigenous students experience more pressure to succeed from family and the community (The Aurora Project, 2010).

Further, it is often commonplace for Indigenous students to travel away from communities and family to complete tertiary education which heightens the expectation to succeed despite not being prepared for relocating and entering university (Oliver et al., 2013). Preparedness and knowledge of university requirements in addition to not being in contact with other Indigenous students created a means for the participants of this study to lack engagement. Lack of

engagement is one of the two subthemes.

Table 4: Internal Conflict

Theme 2	Sub-Themes
Internal conflict	Lack of engagement Community/Cultural responsibility and Conflict

Lack of Engagement

Lack of engagement reflected the participant's comments in relation to their lack of connection with other students and the institution. Moreover, throughout the data there was a common thread of the lack of relationships and support with peers, family, community and the university. Jillayne said, "I do not know any other Indigenous nursing students at this university and I have now been studying here for two years". Jillayne did not explain why she had not engaged with other Indigenous nursing students and why she was unaware of other Indigenous nursing students.

Supportive learning environments, such as the Indigenous Education Support Unit and the students' relationships with peers are vital in the student's journey through tertiary education (Asmar & Page, 2009). Therefore, not engaging with Indigenous peers for two years and not connecting with the Indigenous Education Support Unit was a missed opportunity. Further, two of the four participants stated that they experienced a lack of relationships and supportive connections with their peers and the university environment. These two participants expressed a strong view that the lack of connection and support were key factors in the disengagement they experienced as students and led to them not wanting to seek assistance. Charla stated,

> I was too embarrassed to ask for help because I did not want to be seen as a dumb Aboriginal person. Because of this I did not know where to get help with enrolling and fumbled my way through this process. I became very overwhelmed and felt like throwing it in.

The relationship between Indigenous nursing students and the Indigenous Education Support Unit is considered an important factor with regard to the assisting

Indigenous students to successfully complete a degree program (Anderson, 2012). An Indigenous Support Unit provides support to Indigenous students by way of focused study areas, tutoring, and a liaison between academics, the wider community and other Indigenous students. However, despite the objective of the Education Support Unit being the first point of contact for Indigenous students and a resource to ensure that the Indigenous students did not feel isolated, the participants in this study voiced their reluctance to access resources or engage with this service.

One of the participants was aware of the Indigenous centre but stated, "even though I knew of the Indigenous centre at the university would provide help to me, I did not want to be seen as receiving tutoring for free and be seen as getting special treatment". Despite the awareness of the Indigenous centre this participant was prepared to not access the tutoring and not be perceived as receiving special treatment. Of note, all of the participants stated that they thought that having an Indigenous mentor or academic at the university would help bridge the gap and provide that point of contact for new Indigenous students and promote engagement and resolve inner conflict.

Community / Cultural Responsibility and Conflict

The participants struggled with managing commitments to their culture, the community, family and university commitments due to the perceptions of lack of understanding and support. West (2012), found that it is common for Indigenous students to experience conflict with regard to what is expected of them and what is achievable. The data indicated that the participants were motivated by wanting to make a difference to their family, communities and the overall health of their people but these factors also caused conflict during their journey to complete the course.

Three out of four of the participants' found their cultural identity, aspirations and dreams were challenged because they were unable to complete cultural, community or family obligations. For instance, Jilayne, Jone and Charla all had aspirations to make a difference to the health outcomes of Indigenous health and wellbeing. They believed that their desire to improve the health of Indigenous people gave them the confidence and strength to study nursing and empower them to meet the challenges of university life. However, the external environment such as cultural

and families responsibilities in addition to their role in the community placed additional pressure on them as students. Jilayne claimed, "it was sometimes hard and a struggle between family commitments and university commitments" because her family did not understand that she had to attend university and study instead of undertaking family commitments. Jone added, "Sometimes I feel guilty because I should be with my family and not studying". Furthermore, the challenges associated with being Indigenous and wanting to be respectful of their identity was voiced by two participants in relation to family and the wider community. Jone explained,

> Sometimes it's hard to be at university all the time. When one of our mob is sick or there is a funeral it is very disrespectful not to be there for family. If I stay at university and not go to funerals I struggle and feel distressed. It is hard sometimes and I don't feel supported and understood by my family.

Being valued by family, community and the university is an important part of the student's self-worth, confidence and competence. Jillayne, Jone and Charla strongly indicated that they wanted to give something back to their families and community and it was important to maintain a balance between their family and the university if they were to be successful in their studies.

Three of the four participants stated that they wanted to do nursing to help their people and improve their health and be role models. It is not uncommon for Indigenous nursing students to have a desire to make a difference to the health of their community and this characteristic and motivation can often be the prerequisite for commencing tertiary studies and to overcome challenges and barriers. Jone said, "I want to give something back to my people, my Aunt and cousin are Nurses and they believe in me and I am not going to let them down". Similarly Charla voiced, "I want to do more to help our mob. I am an Aboriginal Health Practitioner but I can only do so much. Sometimes I am treated like the driver so I want to be more skilled so I can help our mob". Moreover, one of the participants claimed that receiving financial support made a difference to their ability and motivation to successfully complete the course. Charla spoke of her scholarship as a key motivator for her success when she said, "I am very lucky to have received the scholarship and that makes me more determined to do well and complete my nursing degree. It gives me purpose and I know that I have pre-determined guidelines that I must meet".

During the analysis of data, there was an underlying sense of vision and resilience of the participants to navigate their way through tertiary study to progress to completion. For instance, Jillayne's declared, "I am the first in our family to go to university and I want to be a role model for them and for my children and I want to make a difference". But, despite wanting to make a difference, there was a misperception of the demands of being a tertiary student and the requirements associated with completing a degree such as nursing.

Table 5: Misperceptions

Theme 3	Sub-Theme
Misperceptions	Preparedness Similarities

Misperceptions

The final theme of Misperceptions includes the subthemes of Preparedness and Similarities regarding the participants experiences as Indigenous students. The most prominent misperception was that Indigenous people learn differently. Meaning, that there is the perception that contemporary pedagogy does not complement how Indigenous people learn. Data revealed that none of participants identified that they had difficulty with how they learnt. Contrary to the literature which claims that pedagogy is an issue that affects the success and Indigenous student's experiences at university these four participants asserted that they felt more comfortable in classes where there were more non-Indigenous students in the group (Boulton, Lewis & Wills, 2001; O'Toole, 2014). The key issue apparent in the data was that these Indigenous students did not learn differently to non-Indigenous students and they want to help others and want to achieve but questioned their preparedness which is the same as non-Indigenous students.

Preparedness

The sub-theme of Preparedness emerged from the data due to the consistent

and significant dialogue from the participants surrounding their knowledge limitations about university and study skills requirements. All of the participants involved in this study were mature aged students and prior to commencing university were unaware of the academic skills and knowledge levels regarding mathematics required to attend university. As all of the participants were mature aged student there existed benefits and enablers such as life experience however, there were challenges associated with having been out of the education system for long periods of time. Jillayne spoke about being a mature aged student and single mother and coming back into tertiary study after a long time. She stated, "It was a struggle, I didn't know much about the internet and I knew nothing about computers. It was also really hard to learn how to write essays and do assignments".

Although all of the participants identified and acknowledge that their knowledge and skills required improvement, the issue of preparedness for tertiary study was not a consideration when deciding to commence a degree at university. Furthermore, although the issue of not being prepared for maths, science and academic writing was thought about, it wasn't an important element to preventing tertiary study (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). One participant stated, "I didn't know anything about university. When I got accepted, I was so surprised and had no idea about what to do, who to ask for help from. It was very overwhelming for a Murri".

Charla also said, "I had no real idea about what tertiary study was, even though I had a family member who was attending university. I had no idea about the discipline that it would require". Acceptance into university was a positive experience for these participants and previous work experience was a key factor behind their willingness to enter tertiary study despite the low level of academic readiness and preparedness.

Three of the participants perceived that the qualifications that they had in the health industry such as Aged care workers and Aboriginal Health Practitioner would assist them complete a nursing degree. Previous work experience was a motivator for choosing to study a nursing degree. Seth explained that he thought that being an aged care worker would help him to be prepared for the nursing degree stating, "I was not prepared for how structured the subjects would be and therefore my experience and knowledge as an aged care worker was not an advantage. I was

behind the eight ball from the start and am struggling". Therefore, previous work experience was not an advantage just as repeating subjects was not an identified benefit.

Tertiary institutions may normalise the issue of students having to repeat subjects or units they are studying by ensuring that there is flexibility to how and when the subject is repeated. Flexibility was apparent for these participants, so that they could continue with their study and not feel that repeating some subjects was a sign of failure. However, it is noteworthy to mention that two of the four participants revealed that a critical element to their ongoing success was that this was their second or third attempt at commencing the nursing degree. Seth, who was attempting to complete a nursing degree for a third time stated, *"*I was not prepared for the amount of time needed to study and how important it was to have good time management, I never really understood how university worked. Jone, had commenced her nursing degree for the second time and stated that she was more prepared. Jone commented, "My family are very proud of me for hanging in there, they have been very encouraging and my children are very supportive". Therefore, repeating courses was not perceived as negative but viewed as positive because this demonstrated commitment and a pathway to success. Findings ways to reduce stress and succeed was indicated by all participants. For instance, Jillayne stated,

> I thought that I could do the maximum number of subjects to hurry along and through the course. But I had to drop one subject in the first year as I was unable to manage four. I appreciated the flexibility and help I had with deciding which subject I could drop and pick up later. It took a lot of stress off me.

Similarities

All of the participants accepted that online study was an integral part of completing a nursing degree. Charla claimed, "I really like online learning, I can take my time and get my head around it better, I actually learn better this way". Additionally, Jone and Jillayne shared, "I enjoy the online forums and feel more comfortable asking questions and participating in the forums". Seth explained, "I make sure that I do the online quizzes and readings before class. I attend class and learn better doing things hands on. It makes sense then". Furthermore, two of the

four participants preferred to have face to face interaction with lecturers in smaller groups and felt that they learnt better this way. These findings illustrate that although there exists the perception that Indigenous (nursing) students learn differently, there are more similarities than differences.

All of the participants in this study stated they enjoyed the "hands on" clinical practice component of the nursing program. This finding is also similar to non-Indigenous students where the consolidation of theory into practice can often complete the process of learning as is more enjoyable. Similarities in other areas identified by the participants included, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students experience family demands and commitments, both could be mature aged, and the need to manage time and finance.

Therefore, the misperception that Indigenous students are different or dissimilar to non-indigenous students is not accurate. Many of the things that non-indigenous students experience are commonplace for Indigenous students. All of the participants indicated a willingness to access academic support services and they found using the services to be a successful way of learning and ultimately aided in the completion of the course. However, the use of support resources and services by Indigenous students may be equally significant to non-Indigenous students.

Summary of findings

The focus of this study was to explore the experiences of four Indigenous nursing students completing tertiary studies. The findings from this study revealed that three key themes that reflected the experiences of the participants. Each key theme has two subthemes which provide and describe the challenges that these participants encountered and factors that were impacting on their success at university. The key themes and subthemes are summarised in the Table 3.

Table 6: Summary of Findings

Key Themes	Sub-themes

1 Feeling Different	Cultural Wellbeing
	Indigenous Identity
2. Internal conflict	Lack of engagement
	Community/Cultural responsibility and Conflict
3. Misperceptions	Preparedness
	Similarities

The participants described feeling different from non-Indigenous students and that they elected not to use or access resources offered by the university to maintain their cultural wellbeing. A lack of awareness and stereotypical views of Indigenous people was identified as a factor that affected the Indigenous identity of the majority of these participants, had been questioned around the stereotypic idea of what an Aboriginal person looked like and their intelligence. Of note, findings revealed that the participants experienced internal conflict that resulted in decisions being made not to access support resources and not to connect with other Indigenous students. Further, the participants experienced conflict due to wanting to maintain their cultural obligations to community and needing to meet university requirements. Finally, findings from this study indicated that these participants were not prepared for commencing university and there are misperceptions surrounding the learning needs and styles of Indigenous people. Moreover, despite perceptions, Indigenous nursing students have similar learning preferences as non-Indigenous nursing students.

The data and findings provide qualitative evidence that it is essential that Indigenous students feel comfortable and safe to enable them to identify as Indigenous in order to access support services and Indigenous peers. The participants of this study indicated that misperceptions and a lack of awareness influenced their experience of tertiary study at university.

Conclusion

Careful analysis of the experiences of these Indigenous students has been undertaken whereby it is evident that there can be significant factors that influence

the experiences of Indigenous people undertaking tertiary study. In conclusion, this study validates the findings of Price and Hughes (2009) who claim that little is known about what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students see as the qualities of effective teaching and the need for further research into the learning styles of Indigenous people is essential. The following chapter discusses the underlying interpretations of the data in relation to the experiences of this cohort of four Indigenous nursing students.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Throughout the past decade, there has been little growth in Indigenous nursing student participation in pre-registration university courses. As expected, there has been no increase in completion rates (Department of Employment Education and Workplace Relations Higher Education Statistics Unit (DHESU), 2009 a,b,c,d). As such, there remains a lower number of Indigenous registered nurses compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts (AIHW, 2010). The Indigenous Nursing Education Working Group (INEWG 2002) proposed that one way to achieve equality of health for Indigenous people is by providing a well-educated, culturally capable Indigenous nursing workforce. This correlates with West and Usher, 2010 in the literature review who also confer that providing Indigenous nurses in the health sector will have multiple benefits including increasing the number of Indigenous healthcare employees who are able to facilitate "Walking in both World's". This valuable contribution provides improved health outcomes of Indigenous people through western medicine delivered by well-educated and culturally capable Indigenous workforce. As such, there exists the potential to improve health service delivery to Indigenous people when health services are culturally appropriate and respectful of Indigenous peoples' needs (West et al., 2010). Additional benefits of increasing the number of Indigenous registered nurses is the expansion of role models and the opportunity to enhance the understanding of non-Indigenous nurses as to the importance of delivering culturally appropriate, respectful health care (West et al., 2010).

This study employed qualitative methods and an Indigenous framework to explore the experiences of four Indigenous nursing students. The use of an Indigenous framework was chosen to add strength to the study and provide an approach to ensure the findings were complimentary to the study topic. This approach gives strength to the study as it acknowledges the conversational method or oration within the "Dadirri" framework which is essential in interpretive

phenomenology to discover and explore the dialogue of the participants. This informal approach or "yarning" with the participants aligns with the conversational approach often used in qualitative research. It has provided a blending of an Indigenous framework and western research methodology that gives rigor to the study.

Findings

This research led to the identification of three major themes and six sub-themes. One of the major themes that emerged from the participants was Feeling Different because the participants felt different due to their cultural wellbeing and Indigenous identity being challenged. Historically, cultural wellbeing around identity, stereotyping and feeling different has conditioned Indigenous people to be wary, defensive and non-challenging (Usher et al., 2012). Findings from this study also identified that the participants 'experienced internal conflict which led to a lack of engagement by participants in addition to the participants struggling with being unable to meet cultural and community responsibilities. Experiencing internal conflict resulted in the participant's ineffective use of resources offered at the university that could promote effective and successful pathways to study.

Literature indicates that it is important to provide an Indigenous student with support whereby students can access services such as study skills, computers, tutors and internet (Hossain et al., 2008). However, the participants of this study indicated that even though these resources were available and they were aware of them, accessing them was not an option due to not wishing to be identified as Indigenous. The reluctance to utilise support networks was identified by West (2012) which reports largely negative experiences of Indigenous nursing students with other students, peers and the institution.

Finally, the findings from this study indicated there is an underlying lack of preparedness for Indigenous students entering tertiary study. The participants identified they lacked knowledge of the academic skills that were required of tertiary students. Furthermore, the participants of this study identified that there were many similarities around the pedagogy employed at the university and the learning

preferences of the participants. The misperception that these students learn differently or do not have similar experiences as that of non-Indigenous students was a key finding.

Analysis of Key Findings

This study led to a number of key findings which have overlapping and interconnecting concepts and contexts. As such, deeper analysis of the data and use of the Dadirri approach resulted in key findings which highlighted and brought together the essence of the participants' experiences. The participants' experience was largely influenced by three main factors which have been titled, The Significance of Culture, Mystification and Same-Same.

Figure 2: Summary of Key Findings
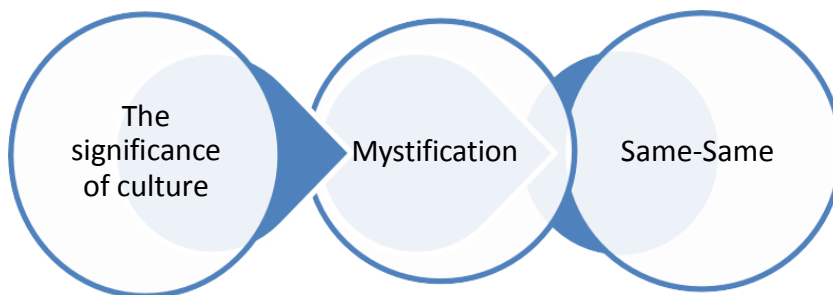
The Significance of Culture

From the outset of this research, the serious issue of Indigenous health and the urgent need for the health discipline to improve Indigenous health has been outlined. Evidence suggests that one means of improving Indigenous health is to ensure the existence of an Indigenous health workforce. Increasing the number of Indigenous nurses and midwives in health care delivery will directly improve health outcomes for Indigenous people (Best & Stuart, 2014; West et al., 2010). However, currently there is a shortage of Indigenous nurses therefore, the message that having a cultural specific healthcare workforce needs to be implicit in order to improve health outcomes for Indigenous people (Best & Stuart, 2014). Relaying the

significance of Indigenous healthcare workers is of paramount importance.

The significance of culture is evident by the flow-on effect that is afforded by having positive role models. The presence of Indigenous nursing academics and nursing students would strongly communicate to tertiary students that successfully completing their studies is achievable. The overt presence of influential role models such as Indigenous nursing academics and nursing students provide Indigenous students with motivation and encouragement to succeed in their studies (Stuart & Gorman, 2015). The literature presented in Chapter Two clearly defined that several studies such as, Cameron (2011), Usher et al. (2005) and, Hinton and Chirgwin, (2011), that having positive role models at all levels of the tertiary journey provided the support for Indigenous students to provide them with the skills to successfully navigate and complete their studies.

Mystification

Findings suggest that most of the participants elected not to disclose their Indigenous identity in order to avoid being challenged about their Indigenous identity and protecting their cultural safety. The fact that not identifying as Indigenous was mystifying because of the consequences such as, the lack of engagement with peers and the university, was not considered by the majority of the participants. Lack of engagement led to feelings of isolation and not accessing support resources that impeded on their studies. This finding aligns with the literature which identified that encouraging Indigenous students to Identify is often not simplistic. Weaver (2001) and Oliver et al. (2013), found that participants struggled with racist attitudes and stereotyping and a lack of understanding of Aboriginal issues which led to feelings of isolation and exclusion and hence, not identifying as Indigenous.

Findings from this study revealed the participants experienced internal conflict surrounding the inability to attend to customs, and cultural responsibilities was a concern. There is evidence in the literature that indicates that factors such as disruption to family life, attending funerals and cultural obligations to the community can impact negatively on a student's ability to succeed (Stuart & Gorman, 2015). However, it is noted that the issues of cultural wellbeing and maintaining cultural responsibilities did not deter the participants from continuing with their nursing

studies.

Same-Same

The title of Same-Same is aligned to factors that are common place among the majority of university students thus, not specific to Indigenous tertiary students. The participants identified that they struggled with family commitments, being mature aged students, difficulty with time management and financial issues. These factors are common for most university students and very few students would not encounter these concerns. Similarly, the participants of this study acknowledged the need for family support and wanting to be good role models.

Other findings that are similar to non-Indigenous students are that personal ambition, life experiences, previous work experience and a commitment to helping others are the driving forces behind wanting to achieve in their tertiary study. Additionally, the lack of educational preparedness and identifying awareness of academic skills is not unique to Indigenous tertiary students and non-Indigenous may encounter the same experiences.

However, most noteworthy was the finding that the participants indicated that they enjoyed online study and online forums, and learning in practice settings.

Questions exist as to whether Indigenous students learn differently or require different and additional support but these participants learn the same as non-Indigenous students and would like to be equally regarded.

Summary of Key Findings

The findings from this study suggest that these Indigenous nursing students expressed specific cultural needs that influenced their tertiary experience. Indigenous identification and customs, cultural responsibilities (internal conflict) is indicative of these participants having to navigate cultural boundaries while maintaining their own identity and self-esteem. Emotional, motivational, internal conflict factors can result in a lack of engagement and influence cultural wellbeing and identity and the need to be accepted influenced the experience of these participants at university. The participant's reluctance to identify as Indigenous and

lack of engagement with their peers and support systems at the university were the most significant findings of this study. Findings indicated that these Indigenous nursing students learnt best from online study and hands on classes. These findings are not surprising considering that Indigenous people have a strong preference for oral learning. Conversely, the participants also indicated a preference for digital learning and electronic mediums as affectively contributing to their learning (O'Toole, 2014).

The key findings of this study indicate that the experiences of Indigenous nursing students are somewhat complex but otherwise not uncommon to non-Indigenous nursing students. Furthermore, key findings suggest that there is an underlying feeling of wanting to be part of a network of Indigenous nursing students and access support to minimize the feeling of isolation to ensure success. The need for reciprocal relationships and supportive connections with peers, family, community and the university are conducive to a positive learning environment and can contribute to the future direction of research in this area.

Recommendations and Future Strategies

The major recommendation from this study is the need to further explore strategies that support Indigenous nursing students to succeed at tertiary study. As such, it is recommended that further research be undertaken to explore the perceptions of lecturer's and their experiences educating Indigenous students. This research could provide data around preferred teaching and learning styles associated with educating Indigenous students at university.

Equally important is the need to encourage Indigenous students to identify as being Indigenous. Accessing support mechanisms and dissemination of information about university resources is fundamental. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be undertaken to become informed about why Indigenous university students choose not to disclose their Indigenous identity. Evidence from this research could be used to develop well-informed strategies that could lead to partnerships between the university and the Indigenous education support units.

Partnerships between research academics and Indigenous support units

could facilitate ease of access for Indigenous students and increase engagement by Indigenous students with vital services and resources. Furthermore, Indigenous people who have successfully completed tertiary studies should be actively sought by Indigenous education support units and personnel to provide support, mentoring and advice to current students. The development of Indigenous support groups may be another means of assisting students through their studies.

A strategy worthy of consideration for Indigenous and non-Indigenous student is clearer dissemination of information around the academic skills requirements necessary to commence tertiary studies. Preparation programs are needed to ensure that potential university students are fully equipped with knowledge of pre-requisites such as english, maths and science that will enhance the motivation and desire to make a difference to the health of their community. Furthermore, strategies to assist students following commencement at university could be further researched to ensure applicability to contemporary pedagogy.

A critical strategy that emanates from this research is the need to continue to implement cross-cultural awareness programs for non-Indigenous students and academics. A core component of the curriculum in schools and universities should be the inclusion of Indigenous subjects, delivered by Indigenous people to help inform non-Indigenous people about the significance and breadth of Indigenous culture and heritage. Finally, the use of positive Indigenous role models should be encouraged and promoted. It is imperative that there is a strong representation of Indigenous role models (such as Indigenous staff) at events such as university and hospital open days, orientation and all public initiatives.

Limitations

The key limitation of this research is the lack of generalisability due to the small number of participants. However, the lack of generalisability and small cohorts is synonymous with qualitative research (Liamputtong, 2013). The small amount of participants in this study can only show a snapshot in time and are not representative of all Indigenous nursing students attending universities. As a result of this small cohort, it is highly likely that there are other factors and experiences that

impact on Indigenous students while studying at university that have not been revealed.

A further limitation of this study is that recruitment of participants to join this study was impeded by a number of factors. For instance, the researcher was reliant on the Indigenous Liaison person to email nursing students and provide them with the Information Sheet and researchers contact details. Emailing students to invite them to participate is problematic because students do not regularly access their university email making it unlikely they will respond to the request to participate in a research project. A further complication was that the interviews needed to be scheduled prior to the researcher relocating to a remote area therefore, interviews were scheduled during the semester break. Hence, poor timing of the interviews may have contributed to a lack of willingness to participate in this study.

A final and significant limitation was the potential or perceived impact on cultural wellbeing whereby Indigenous nursing students may have been reluctant to participate due to a perceived risks or repercussions. Indigenous nursing students may have wanted to keep their Indigenous identity to themselves and did wish to disclose their Indigenous identity. Furthermore, despite confidentiality being thoroughly explained and the reassurance of anonymity, some nursing students may have perceived there could be consequences that would impact on their time at university if they participated in this study.

Conclusion

This study has explored the experiences of Indigenous students enrolled in a Bachelor of nursing program. This study explored the experiences of Indigenous nursing students through in-depth interviews whereby common themes and subthemes were identified. This research highlighted that cultural wellbeing, reluctance to identify as Indigenous and lack of engagement were major issues for these participants. These issues led the participants to experience internal conflict which impacted on the student's journey through university. Additionally, a lack of awareness and understanding of Indigenous culture, customs and appearance by non-Indigenous students was identified by the participants as impacting on their confidence and willingness to access support mechanisms to enhance their

education experience as Indigenous nursing students.

Key findings of this study included the notion that there is *Cultural Significance* to this research topic. The cultural significance is the urgent need for Indigenous health care workers in particular, nurses. An increased understanding of factors that influence the educational experience of Indigenous nursing students could result in an increase in graduates from nursing programs. The second key finding termed *mystification* reflected the participant's unwillingness to disclose their Indigenous identity which resulted in their lack of engagement with other Indigenous students and the services that are available to Indigenous students attending university. Finally, this study revealed that there are a number of similarities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students which was termed *Same-Same*. For instance, university students struggle to meet university, family and community commitments and finances, time management regardless of their cultural background. However, the most significant finding was that Indigenous relate to the same teaching and learning strategies and methods as non-Indigenous students.

Finally, the aim of this study was to give a voice to Indigenous nursing students through the exploration of their experiences while studying a Bachelor of Nursing degree. An Indigenous framework, the "Dadirri" approach, was aligned with interpretive phenomenology to explore the essence of the student's experiences to provide a culturally safe and respective way of eliciting data and presenting findings. The implementation of aligning an Indigenous worldview with western qualitative research methods has provided a platform to enable outcomes from this study. In conclusion, the resilience of the participants and their determination to succeed, despite education and cultural challenges, is noteworthy. This study has outlined approaches and future recommendations that can contribute to the increasing the number of Indigenous nursing students to increase the Indigenous health care workers in Queensland and Australia in order to improve health care delivery and health outcomes for Indigenous people.

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Appendix 1 - USQ Ethics Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTHERN
QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

25 March 2014

Mrs Kim Henschke
PO Box 910
HERVEY BAY QLD 4655

Dear Kim

The USQ Human Research Ethics Committee has recently reviewed your responses to the conditions placed upon the ethical approval for the project outlined below. Your proposal is now deemed to meet the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* and full ethical approval has been granted.

Approval No.	**H14REA010**
Project Title	Reconciling pedagogy for Indigenous students: Strategies to best support nursing students complete tertiary studies
Approval date	24 March 2014
Expiry date	23 March 2017
HREC Decision	**Approved**

The standard conditions of this approval are:

    (a)   conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC

    (b)   advise (email: ethics@usq.edu.au) immediately of any complaints or other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project

    (c)   make submission for approval of amendments to the approved project before implementing such changes

    (d)   provide a 'progress report' for every year of approval

    (e)   provide a 'final report' when the project is complete

    (f)   advise in writing if the project has been discontinued.

For (c) to (e) forms are available on the USQ ethics website:
http://www.usq.edu.au/research/ethicsbio/human

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the *National Statement (2007)* may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You may now commence your project. I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

Annmaree Jackson
Ethics Coordinator

Copies to: Kim.Henschke@usq.edu.au

Appendix 2 - Letter of Support

FACULTY OF HEALTH, ENGINEERING AND SCIENCES
Kim Henschke
Phd Candidate
PHONE: 0429677197
EMAIL: kim.henschke@usq.edu.au

19 December 2013

Marie Wilkinson
505 Boat Harbour Drive
Torquay, QLD. 4655

Dear Aunty Marie

Re: Approval for Study

Dear Aunty Marie,

I am enrolled in the Master of Science Research (MSCR) at USQ and I am currently preparing the necessary documentation to gain ethical clearance from the HREC (at USQ).

The study I plan to undertake is qualitative research to explore how Indigenous nursing students approach learning and learn best. This phenomenological study will aim to identify strategies to support and enhance the educational experience for Indigenous nursing students. Overall, the proposed research seeks to explore mechanisms to improve retention and rates of Indigenous students through improving the educational experience of Indigenous students of the future.

It is envisaged that 10 to 12 bachelor of nursing students who are Indigenous and enrolled at the University of Southern Queensland (Fraser Coast campus) will need to be recruited as participants.

I intend to collaborate with the Indigenous Liaison Officer at Fraser Coast campus

to request Indigenous Bachelor of Nursing students are emailed to invite them to participate in this study.

Students that indicate willingness to participate will be advised to contact either the Indigenous Liaison Officer or myself by email or phone. Additionally, students will be provided with an information sheet outlining the level of commitment and will be notified that they may withdraw from the study at any stage.

I am respectfully requesting your support as a Butchulla Elder within the Fraser Coast region for this research. As you are aware, the need to improve attrition and retention rates of Indigenous students at Tertiary level will give them the opportunity to succeed in the wider community in employment. This research aims to explore how Indigenous nursing students learn best. Also, this study aims to develop strategies to support and enhance the educational experience for the Indigenous nursing students. Overall, the proposed research seeks to improve retention rates of Indigenous students through improving the educational experience of Indigenous students of the future. Addressing identified barriers and developing processes to effectively manage the entire University experience of Indigenous students will be a paramount focus of the outcomes of this study.

I wish to thank you for your support in this study.

Yours sincerely

Henschke

Kim Henschke
Phd Candidate
University of Southern Queensland
19-12-2013

> I Marie Wilkinson, Butchella Elder and community member hereby support the research study by Kim Henschke as stated in the above letter of approval for study.
>
> Name: Marie Wilkinson
>
> Signature: M. G. Wilkinson
>
> Date: 19-12-2013

Appendix 3 - Participant Information Form

Dear Participant,

Thank you for considering to volunteer as a participant in this study as a representative of Indigenous Nursing Students enrolled at the University of Queensland, Fraser Coast campus. Please read this Participant Information Form carefully.

The purpose of this Information Sheet is to explain as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this qualitative phenomenological research design which is being undertaken to explore the experiences of Bachelor of Nursing, Indigenous students. This information is being provided so that you can make a fully informed decision as to whether you are willing to participate. You are welcome to ask any questions about the information in this document. Additionally, you may wish to discuss the project with a colleague or supervisor before agreeing to participate.

Once you understand the details of the project and if you agree to take part, it is asked that you sign the Consent Form. By signing the Consent Form, you indicate that you understand the information provided and that you give your consent to participate in the research project.

1.   **About the Project**

This research aims to explore how Indigenous nursing students learn best. Also, this study aims to develop strategies to support and enhance the educational experience for the Indigenous nursing students. Overall, the proposed research seeks to improve retention rates of Indigenous students through improving the educational experience of Indigenous students of the future. Addressing identified barriers and developing processes to effectively manage the entire University experience of Indigenous students will be a paramount focus of the outcomes of this study.

Current trends in Indigenous tertiary education suggests that there is a mismatch between commencement and successful completion of Tertiary study therefore, the key outcome of this study is to develop a holistic understanding of the learning experience of Indigenous nursing students, which can then inform the development of pedagogical and other support approaches which will

ultimately improve the retention rates of Indigenous nursing students. A further outcome is to provide Indigenous students with improved learning experiences that align with learning styles and culture. Finally, the product of this study will be to identify strategies to promote learning and decrease attrition for all Indigenous tertiary students.

Finally, the scope of this research is ultimately to increase the number of Indigenous health care workers in Queensland and Australia. Providing positive higher education experiences will lead to more health care employees that can aid in improving health outcomes for Indigenous people in Australia.

2.   Procedures

Your voluntary participation in the study will involve attending one (1) face-to-face interview which will be conducted for approximately 40 minutes. All interviews will be recorded and recordings transcribed by the researcher. The interview will consist of semi structured questions to promote conversation. These interviews will be held wherever the participant feels most comfortable. The purpose of recording the interview is for data collection and to inform the development of the program.

3.   Confidentiality

Any information obtained in connection with this project will remain confidential. Your personal information will not be divulged. Additionally, each student will be provided with a pseudonym (a false name) therefore your identity will be protected at all times. The researcher will be the only person to know your true name. The data collected during the study will be used for publication of journals articles and or conference presentation. In the event of a publication or conference presentation, you will only be referred to by the pseudonym.

4.   Voluntary Participation

Participation in this qualitative phenomenological research is entirely voluntary. **If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to.** If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. However, all prior contributions will be retained as the data will be unidentifiable.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your student status or your relationship with the University of Southern Queensland (USQ).

Before you make your decision, the researcher will be available to answer any questions you have about the research project. Additionally, you are welcome to ask for any additional information. Please sign the Consent Form only when you have had a chance to review the Participant Information Form, raise any questions and receive satisfactory responses.

5.   **Queries or Concerns**

Should you have any queries regarding the progress or conduct of this research, you can contact the principal researchers:

Kim Henschke	**A/Professor Jennifer Kelly**
PhD Candidate	**Associate Director of Science (Fraser Coast)**
Faculty of Health, Engineering	**Academic Coordinator (Academic Experience)**
and Sciences	**Discipline Leader (Midwifery)**
Registered Nurse/Midwife	**School Coordinator Learning and Teaching**
Ph: +61 0429677197	**Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences**
Email: kim.henschke@usq.edu.au	**Fraser Coast Campus**
	Room: W552
	Ph: +61 7 41943121
	Email: jennifer.kelly@usq.edu.au

If you have any ethical concerns with how the research is being conducted or any queries about your rights as a participant please feel free to contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer on the following details.

Ethics and Research Integrity Officer
Office of Research and Higher Degrees
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba 4350
Ph: +61 7 4631 2690
Email: *ethics@usq.edu.au*

Appendix 4 - Consent Form

University of Southern Queensland

The University of Southern Queensland
Consent Form

To:	**USQ Bachelor of Nursing Indigenous Students**
Full Project Title:	**Reconciling pedagogy for Indigenous students: Strategies to best support nursing students complete tertiary studies.**
Principal Researcher:	**Kim Henschke, Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences**
Associate Researcher(s):	**A/Professor Jennifer Kelly, School of Health, Nursing and Midwifery.** **Professor Cath Rogers, Head, School of Health, Nursing and Midwifery, University of Southern Queensland.**

- I have read the Participant Information Form and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to participate.

- I understand the purpose of this research and my involvement in the project.

- I understand that the individual face-to-face interviews will be recorded.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my student status or relationship with USQ now or in the future.

- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.

- I understand that information gained during the study may be published however, I will not be identified and my personal details will remain confidential.

  Name of participant……………………………………………………………….......

  Signed……………………………………………………….**Date**………………………

If you have any ethical concerns with how the research is being conducted or any queries about your rights as a participant please feel free to contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer on the following details.

Ethics and Research Integrity Officer
Office of Research and Higher Degrees
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba 4350
Ph: +61 7 4631 2690
Email: *ethics@usq.edu.au*

Appendix 5 - USQ Research Poster Kim Henschke

An Invitation to All Indigenous Nursing Students to participate in a Study and represent Indigenous Nursing Students who are enrolled at USQ – Fraser Coast

Contact Details

Please feel free to contact me for more details or if you have any queries or concerns. You can also contact me through the Indigenous Development Officer CAIK USQ.

Kim Henschke
PhD Research Candidate
e-mail: KMHenschke@bigpond.com
Phone: (M) 0429677197

Linda Wondunna-Foley
Coordinator (Indigenous Development)
e-mail: FraserCoastCAIK@usq.edu.au
Phone: (W) 07 41943199

My Name Is Kim Henschke

➢ I am a Registered Nurse, Registered Midwife and a Rural and Isolated Practice Nurse.

➢ I am a descendant from the Butchulla people of Fraser Coast and from the Waanyi people from the Gulf of Carpentaria.

➢ This Research aims to explore how Indigenous Nursing Students learn best.

➢ This study will endeavour to develop strategies to support and enhance the educational experience for the Indigenous Nursing Students.

➢ Overall the proposed research seeks to address identified barriers and developing processes to effectively manage the entire University experience of Indigenous students.

What you need to participate:

• *Must be Indigenous*

• *Can be 1st, 2nd, or 3rd year Nursing Students*

• *Be available for a one to one Interview (approximately 30-45 minutes) with myself at a time and place that suits you*

This is an opportunity for Indigenous Students to have a voice and provide valuable data that will be included in recommendations at the conclusion of this study

Kim Henschke
PhD Research Candidate
USQ

Appendix 6 - Semi Structured Questions

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Semi-Structured interview guide

De-Identified Interviewee: _____ Location: _____

Date: _____ Age _____

1. Can you tell me what is has been like to be student at University?

2. Can you tell me about what you knew about tertiary study before you commenced at Uni.

3. What do you recall not being prepared for?

4. Tell me about the difference between what you perceived university would be like and what university is actually like?

5. When you attend classes what helps you understand the content?

6. Can you tell what things stop you from learning?

7. What styles of teaching do you think help Indigenous students to learn?

8. What learning support have you obtained from the University, peers and lecturers?

9. How would you advise a new Indigenous student on how to cope at University?

10. Can you tell me what ways your family has affected your attendance and continuation in Tertiary education?

Appendix 7 - Approval to Engage Students

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Linda Wondunna-Foley
Coordinator (Indigenous Development)
PHONE +61 7 4194 3199| FAX +61 74194 3105
EMAIL FraserCoastCAIK@usq.edu.au

14 July 2016

Dear Kim

Re: Approval to engage Indigenous Nursing students

I am pleased to advise that your request to engage Indigenous nursing students from the Fraser Coast campus in your study has been approved.

I commend you for proposing research that seeks to explore mechanisms to improve the retention rates of Indigenous students, and am happy to support you through my role as Coordinator (Indigenous Development) or my SRO role at the Fraser Coast campus in any way possible.

I wish you the best of luck with your research. Please feel free to contact me if you need to discuss anything further.

Yours sincerely

Linda Wondunna-Foley
Coordinator (Indigenous Development)
University of Southern Queensland