Yarning in Motion:
Relationally responsive processes in filmmaking practice

by

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I am the author of the thesis entitled *Yarning in Motion: Relationally responsive processes in filmmaking practice*

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I would like to start by firstly acknowledging the traditional Custodians of the land on which I have been given the opportunity to gain an education, produce new knowledge and conduct research, this includes the Wadawurrung people of the Geelong region, the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the greater Melbourne region, the Gunditjmara people of the Warrnambool region and the Wilykali people of the Barkindji Nation. I would like to acknowledge Elders both past and present from these Nations. I would also like to acknowledge my own Nations, the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi Nations, and my Elders past, present, and emerging where the knowledge in this research is centered, been developed, and produced.

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this document may contain images and mention the names of people who are deceased.

No offence is intended, and we pay our respect to our peoples who have passed into their ancestral dreaming.
Key words

Relationality, Yarning, Yarning Circle, Aboriginal, Indigenous, knowledge, Agency, Decolonisation, filmmaking, process, lens, gaze.
Positioning

As this research is working in line with Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous research paradigms it is important for me as an Indigenous researcher to position myself within this body of work. The term *positioning* in this document is being used as a means of situating myself, my Country, community, family, ancestors, culture, and knowledge not only in the research but so that the reader (particularly other First Nations peoples) can place me. I am an Aboriginal woman belonging to the Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi Nations. My Grandmother’s Country is Wiradjuri, where my family have lived and continue to live on the Sandhills of Narrandera, New South Wales. Kamilaroi is my Mother’s Country where my family is from in and around Northern New South Wales. I am a regionally based filmmaker with experience working on network dramas, documentaries, commercials, short films and community-based arts and film projects. This experience includes roles in key creative areas including producing, directing, writing, acting and visual arts and design. The significance of this shared understanding is to establish my experiential and lived knowledge as an Aboriginal woman, researcher, and screen practitioner. As a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman conducting research on Country (Wiradjuri) it must be acknowledged that my own experiential knowledge and Ways of Being (ontology), Knowing (epistemology), Doing (methodology) and Valuing (axiology) should not be generalised as representative of all Aboriginal people. I am aware that all Aboriginal Nations’ protocols and practices are diverse and therefore I must acknowledge my experiential knowledge and positioning as situated as a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman. The knowledge, stories and memories shared as part of this research project are connected to the Wiradjuri Nation and the Sandhills of Narrandera, New South Wales. It is important to acknowledge that all stages of this research including the animating of *Sandhill Stories* took place on Wilyakali Country.
Background

As this research is connected and significant to Wiradjuri people, and the Sandhills community, including my ancestors, it is important that I give context and provide an understanding of the relationship between myself (participant researcher), my Elders (participants) and the Sandhills of Narrandera. This is an extension of not only my positioning within the research, but the positioning of all research participants who share a deep connection to the Narrandera Sandhills, its people both past and present and Wiradjuri Country. The Narrandera Sandhills, are located on Wiradjuri Country in central New South Wales, Australia. Sitting along the Murrumbidgee River, on the fringe of the Narrandera township, the Sandhills or Hill 60 as it is also known, was and remains home to many Wiradjuri people (Office of Environment & Heritage 2014).

The Sandhill community has a significant history with the Warangesda Mission also called ‘the campy of Mercy’ located at Darlington Point, New South Wales. This is because many Aboriginal families retreated to the Sandhills when the Mission closed in 1925 (Office of Environment & Heritage 2014). Warangesda mission was established in 1880 by Reverend John Brown Gribble who coined it a home ‘for the poor down-trodden aborigines’ (Gribble 1884: 368; Elphick & Elphick 2004: 1). The purpose of Warangesda was rooted in Gribble’s pity towards mistreated Aborigines and his evident desire to civilize them into white society and convert them to the Christian faith. For this reason, the mission was built to be a self-sufficient farming community that included a girls’ dormitory, schoolhouse, church, and other communal dwellings. The timeline of Warangesda can be divided into two periods. The first being the Gribble years from 1880 to 1885 when it was run as a mission, and the second, upon Gribble’s departure, an Aboriginal station under the Aborigines Protection board of NSW from 1886 to 1925 (Elphick and Elphick 2004: 1-13). What is important to acknowledge is that Warangesda has significant ties to the Stolen Generations, including having its girls’ dormitory as a model for the Cootamundra girls’ home (Elphick and Elphick 2004: 5; Office of Environment & Heritage 2014).
This shared knowledge is significant as Warangesda is where some of my ancestors including my great-great grandmother Lucy Carroll (nee Bamblett), resided before re-locating to the Sandhills after its closure (Office of Environment & Heritage 2014; Elphick & Elphick 2004: 82). The significance of Warangesda and its connection to the research participants is evident in the stories, memories and knowledge shared in this research. In addition to this, it also gives context to the mention of church and religion in both the written and creative work.
Abstract

Through a colonial lens First Nations peoples in Australia have been (mis)represented, marginalized, oppressed, and excluded in the Australian filmic landscape (Langton 1993; Solonec 2005; Rekhari 2007). As a result, Indigenous scholars and screen practitioners have worked towards decolonising the filmic lens both on-screen and off-screen in key creative roles. In a short period of time First Nations peoples have challenged the Western gaze, reclaiming their images, stories, and processes, and impacting the Australian and International film industry by entertaining, educating, and promoting social change (McNiven n.d.A: ‘The rise of Indigenous screen culture’). Building on this progress, I argue that there is still value to be added in the way films involving Indigenous peoples, communities and cultures are being developed, produced, and presented through filmmaking practice. With a focus on cultural preservation, this research provides a vehicle for knowledge sharing, acquisition and production that is premised on relationality. Furthermore, the research has developed a new framework that situates filmmaking, specifically stop motion animation, in relationally responsive processes. Through Indigenous ways of being (ontology), knowing (epistemology), doing (methodology), and valuing (axiology) the research supports the inseparability of method to content (Martin 2017:3). As a result, practice becomes central to knowing, and through a process of making or marramarra filmmaking is re-configured from one of entertainment to a process centered in cultural practices.

Through autoethnography, yarning and practice-led research, the research demonstrated a valid, multifaceted, and emergent approach to filmmaking that supports self-determination, privileges Aboriginal voices, and allows for the development of an Indigenous standpoint. This resulted in innovation at the cultural interface (Nakata 2007), where an intra-active exchange of knowledge and skills occurred, resulting in a higher level of connection between, within, and amongst, Country, community, culture, and kinship. As a result, the research has provided a process for knowledge sharing and production within the practice of yarning and stop motion animation that is of benefit to First Nations peoples, communities and the continuation of culture.
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Language and terms

Aboriginal

A term used to refer to the First Nations peoples.

Bunyip

In Aboriginal culture the Bunyip (known by several different names depending on location) is a spirit creature connected to waterways.

Country

The term Country refers to Aboriginal Nations and all entities.

Didgeridoo

An Aboriginal wind Instrument (know by several different names depending on location).

Elder

Recognised as a custodian of knowledge and lore. It should be noted that the term Elder is also used to refer to people of certain ages, who are commonly called Aunty and Uncle as a sign of respect. This will be differentiated in this document.

Gubba

A term that is a mixture of Aboriginal-English used in Southeast Australia to describe white man. It is derived from the word government.

Indigenous Australians

A term used to encompass Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

Kamilaroi

The Kamilaroi Nation lies within northern New South Wales and southern Queensland. Kamilaroi refers to the Aboriginal people and language group belonging to this Nation.
**Marramarra**

A Wiradjuri word meaning ‘make, do, create’.

**Mission**

Aboriginal Missions were created by religious groups and leaders to *civilise* Aboriginal people into white society and indoctrinate them into the Christian faith. Many missions were established on land permitted by the government for this purpose.

**Mob**

A term used among Indigenous Australian people to describe community, language groups or Country.

**Relationality**

The state or condition of being relational. In an Aboriginal worldview relationality refers to the interconnectedness of People, place and entities.

**Reserve**

Reserves were allocated sites for Aboriginal people to live on, many of whom were dispossessed from their land.

**Wiradjuri**

The Wiradjuri Nation lies within central NSW. Wiradjuri refers to the Aboriginal people and language group belonging to this Nation.

**Ways of Being**

Ways of *Being* is an analogy to used describe Indigenous ontology (Martin 2008).

**Ways of Knowing**

Ways of *Knowing* is an analogy used to describe Indigenous epistemology (Martin 2008).

**Ways of Doing.**

Ways of *Doing* is an analogy used to describe Indigenous method and methodology (Martin 2008).
**Ways of Valuing**

Ways of *Valuing* is an analogy used to describe Indigenous axiology. This refers to spirit, lore and values (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020).

**Yarning**

Yarning is a semi-structured conversation commonly referred to and used within Indigenous culture for storytelling and knowledge sharing.

**Yarning circle**

Yarning circle refers to the space in which people share and exchange knowledge through Yarning.
Please note that the mentions of Indigenous peoples in this research will be referring to First Nations people in Australia, unless otherwise stated.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout Australian film history, there has been a problematic relationship between Aboriginal people, communities, and the Australian screen industry. This is evident in the way Australian films and programs have depicted, (mis)represented, and excluded Aboriginal people, communities, culture, and voices through a colonial gaze and lens (Langton 1993; Solonec 2005; Rekhari 2007). Despite attempts to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in film, Australian and international screens have historically and in recent times shown Indigenous people and communities in roles and narratives that are stereotypical, exoticized, sexualized and Othering. From acclaimed Australian film *Jedda* (Charles Chauvel 1955) to 1960’s animation *Wambidgee* (William Copland 1962) and more recent *Hidden Australia: Black in the Outback* (2017 Sundog Pictures) First Nations peoples, communities and culture have been positioned on screen through colonial accounts. These accounts, as Marcia Langton (1993) describes, are one of creative authority that constructs an audience’s reality (Langton 1993:40). Furthermore, screen practitioners hold a responsibility to examine their own gaze and how this extends to their lens as filmmakers. In turn, the process in which a filmmaker conducts, develops and produces their work should be carefully considered.

What must be acknowledged is the change that has occurred in the way Indigenous stories and content are being made, and a shift in who are telling the stories (Solonec 2005; Screen Australia 2014:‘The Black List’; McNiven n.d.A:‘The rise of Indigenous screen culture).

In a relatively short space of time, Australian films have jumped from depicting Indigenous peoples through racist clichés to Indigenous creatives using film and television to document their cultures, promote social change and to entertain, thus entering the mainstream (McNiven n.d.:A‘The rise of Indigenous screen culture).

This change in screen culture, along with the emergence of with Indigenous rights movements, has paved a pivotal path that has reshaped the way Indigenous peoples, communities, cultures and stories are being presented. Within this movement has come Indigenous cultural protocol documents including those by Terri Janke (2003;2009), Darlene Johnson (2001), Lester Bostock (1997), Chips Mackinolty and Michael Duffy (1987). These
documents have presented essential guidelines for filmmakers regarding ethical and legal issues when working with Indigenous people, communities and culture in screen arts.

Despite this transformation in Indigenous representation on screen and through key creative roles and initiatives, I argue that there is still value to be added in the way Aboriginal stories and knowledge is being developed, produced, presented, and passed on within the filmic space. Filmmaking cultural protocol documents are predominantly targeted to non-Indigenous filmmakers and specific to live action and documentary filmmaking. This research recognizes the significance of this contribution and is designed to extend this discourse further to provide First Nations filmmakers and communities a vehicle for cultural preservation through a filmmaking framework premised on relationality. This does not mean that non-Indigenous filmmakers should not engage with the research and implement the framework into their own practice, but that positionality will impact the way different viewers connect with the concepts and processes presented.

The position of the researcher to this research also offers significant insight as the project design recognizes the value of lived, shared and experiential knowledge. From the position of a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman, researcher and screen practitioner the relationship shared within, between and amongst participants (Elders), Country and culture presents a unique lens. This positionality reframes the value of filmmaking from entertainment to one of cultural preservation, survival, kinship and connection. Here relationality is vital to the research as it not only supports an Aboriginal worldview where people, community, Country and entities are interconnected, it demonstrates this holism by presenting the development and production of a film project as a complete body of work. This brings forward an important point of difference to other film documents such as *Pathways and Protocols: A filmmaker’s guide to working with Indigenous peoples, communities and concepts* (Janke 2009) that presents small case studies from different productions. Furthermore, I assert that this research is directly aimed at First Nations screen practitioners and communities, by offering a holistic examination of both practice and process.

Through the lens of relationality, the research recognizes the reciprocal agency of knowing to doing, where knowledge is not a separate attribute, but emergent, inconstant and intra-active (Martin 2017:9). Furthermore, the examination of filmmaking practice within this research centralises the making or *marramarra* (making, doing, creating) process and its
significance to knowledge sharing, acquisition and production within Aboriginal communities and culture. Supporting this notion was the application of practice led research employed to support Indigenous ideology and cultural practices. This mode of research created new knowledge by generating rich and multifaceted data that would not have been produced within the limitations of objective and separational forms of research (Martin 2017:11). The data, including yarning circle knowledge and creative practice outcomes will be outlined in Chapter 4: Marramarra and Chapter 5: Yarning in Motion.

What is important to acknowledge from the outset is that this research project involved the development and production of a stop motion animation titled Sandhill Stories. The process of stop motion animation framed by Indigenous ways of valuing (axiology), being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and doing (methodology) became beneficial in revealing the significance of relationality to filmmaking practice, and the way tactile and multisensory filmmaking (stop motion animation) can benefit Aboriginal people, communities and families in the continuation of cultural knowledge. As a result, the development of Sandhill stories through stop motion animation, presented insight into new knowledge that other forms of on-screen storytelling such as live action and documentary filmmaking would not have offered.

Overall, the purpose of this research project is to examine relationally responsive processes in the practice of filmmaking when working with Aboriginal people, communities, culture, and content. This includes the examination of stop motion animation and its correlation to knowledge production and preservation through the practice of making, doing and performing in Aboriginal culture. By employing yarning, autoethnography, and practice led methodologies, the research aims to decolonise the filmic lens by presenting a foundation for a new framework or way of practice that merges contemporary filmmaking with Indigenous axiology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

As a result, the research interrogates how situating the filmmaking process within Indigenous ways of valuing (axiology), being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and doing (methodology), is essential and effective in re-shaping the way filmic storytelling is presented, experienced and produced. Through qualitative and practice-based enquiry, the research employs and examines yarning as a tool for consultation, collaboration, and co-production in the filmmaking process.
The significance of this research is the application and intersection of Indigenous axiology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology examined at the cultural interface of filmmaking. From this positioning, this research presents new ways of practice for screen practitioners working with Aboriginal people, culture, communities, concepts, and stories that has not yet been examined or contextualized in the filmic space. Here, Aboriginal kinship is forefront, at the cultural interface of filmmaking, framed by respect, relationships, responsibility, reflexivity and reciprocity. Evidencing the self determination of Aboriginal people and communities, this research privileges Aboriginal voices, supports the development of a relationally responsive standpoint, and examines new ways of producing and passing on knowledge through filmmaking practice. In addition, the research gives new knowledge back to the Wiradjuri and Sandhill community, exchanging skills and achieving innovation and invention in cultural practices. This research concludes that decolonising the lens goes beyond on-screen representation, and inclusivity in key creative roles, but requires the re-configuration of filmmaking practice into an Indigenous paradigm premised on relationality.

The overarching questions that this research examines are the following:

Historically, how has the Western filmic gaze represented Indigenous people in Australia?

Can the colonial gaze be disrupted in contemporary filmmaking?

Can relationally responsive processes support, inform and impact the filmic process?

Can situating filmmaking practice in a framework premised on relationality, support the preservation and continuation of culture?

By employing autoethnography, yarning and practice-based methodologies, the research has examined these core questions through the development and production of a film project made in consultation, collaboration and in co-production with research participants. Furthermore, this asserts that practice is integral to working in an Indigenous research paradigm. Based on the notion that ‘there is no separation between method and content’ in an Indigenous worldview (Martin 2017:3), this research recognizes the agency of knowing (epistemology) to doing (methodology) (Martin 2017:8) and as a result relationally responsive processes are examined through marramarra. Here, the research addresses the overarching questions through an enquiry of yarning and filmmaking positioned in lived, shared and experiential knowledge. It is for this reason that Chapter 2: Methodology is
situated prior to the literature review, anchoring its concepts, theories, and arguments back to relational methodology.

While unpacking key literature and filmic resources, the exegesis attempts to provide significant context regarding the historic and current Australian cinematic landscape. Shaped by key theories, concepts and arguments Chapter 3: Literature Review brings forward the theoretical framework, examining important concepts and arguments regarding the colonial gaze and lens, cultural interface theory, Indigenous standpoint theory, relatedness theory and agency. This examination further positions the research in the filmmaking arena, identifying gaps in knowledge and presenting the foundation for the Decolonising the lens conceptual framework (Figure 2). This framework will be used to draw together the threads of literature throughout the exegesis.

Following this discourse, Chapter 4: Marramarra investigates the practice component of this research, examining the ‘making, doing, creating’ process. Unpacking the development and production of the short film Sandhill Stories, the exegesis demonstrates knowing in action. This is where sharing, gathering, making, performing, watching, listening and presenting enacts an investigation of filmmaking situated in relationally responsive processes. From here we understand how these processes inform, shape and impact filmmaking and cultural practices. We learn there is an interconnection to each of the key concepts from the literature bought together through the yarning and practice-based process.

Extending this enquiry, Chapter 5: Yarning in Motion, presents the yarning circle process, findings, and outcomes. Due to the relationality and interconnectedness of yarning to practice, the yarning circle knowledge draws back to marramarra, further supporting the examination of relationality and its implications at the cultural interface of filmmaking. As a critical component of this research, the yarning provided a vehicle for sharing, acquiring and producing knowledge that went beyond the narrative of storytelling. Here, cultural safety was upheld, facilitated through relationships, respect, responsibility, reflexivity and reciprocity. These key protocols informed how participants including myself (participant researcher) came into ways of knowing.

After unpacking the data and interrogating the yarning and practice-based work, the Conclusion presents a summary and outline of the research findings and outcomes. Here,
relationally responsive processes support, inform and impact the filmic process. In fact, the filmic process becomes re- configured and in turn a new form of cultural practice emerges. As a result, the research positions itself within the current body of knowing illuminating new insight and knowledge into filmmaking practice and cultural preservation.
Chapter 2: Methodology

In an Indigenous worldview there is no separation between method and content. In fact, the “how” is just as, if not more, important than the “what”. (Martin 2017:3).

The body of work presented in this research, being both the exegesis and short animated film, has applied Indigenous ways of being (ontology) knowing (epistemology), doing (methodology) and valuing (axiology) as a framework interconnected with contemporary filmmaking practices (Martin 2008; Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020). To support this, the research project has employed autoethnography, yarning, and practice led research in its design to not only ensure cultural integrity, a safe cultural and creative space, and the self-determination and privileging of Aboriginal voices, but to also examine relationally responsive processes in the filmmaking process itself. It is for this reason that the methodology chapter in this exegesis is positioned prior to the literature review. This is to position the research from the outset and anchor its concepts, theories, and arguments back to relational methodology. This premise is important because it supports the understanding that in an Indigenous worldview our ways of knowing (epistemology) are interconnected to our ways of doing (methodology) – we know our culture, through our culture. As Brian Martin (2017) presents, this understanding resists the notion of separation between ‘method and content’ (Martin 2017:3), and that knowledge is not fixed, but rather knowing in action (Martin 2017:9). For this reason, the research design recognises the relationship that practice, positionality, and relationality have to the acquisition and production of knowledge within Aboriginal communities and culture.

To examine this further, the methodology chapter is revealed though six sections that build on one another to illuminate the relational approach of the methodology and the research. The first section Ways of Being, Knowing, Doing, and Valuing, introduces an understanding of an Indigenous ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology from my own positioning as a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman. This is followed by three sections specific to the methodology employed in this research including Participant Researcher – Autoethnography, Yarning Circle Methodology and Practice Led Research. The conclusion of this chapter will be presented in two sections regarding the research design. This includes
Yarning and Filmmaking which focuses on the specifics and importance of yarning and its relationship to filmmaking practice.

With the aim of this study centred on process, practice led research was used to develop and produce the short film Sandhill Stories informed by yarning circles with research participants from the Narrandera Sandhills, Wiradjuri Country. Conducted as part of the yarning circle process was a continuous dialogue of consultation, collaboration, and co-production with participants throughout each stage of the research project. As the short film was to be a product of the research process, yarning circles were conducted in conjunction with contemporary filmmaking stages (specifically stop motion animation) including development, pre-production, production, and post-production. In combination with this, was the documentation of both the yarning circle process and practice-based work through written notes, voice and video recording, and a visual diary.

It is intended that as an entire body of work, this research project will become a resource and cross-cultural tool for both screen practitioners working with Aboriginal peoples, culture, communities, stories, and concepts, and especially First Nations peoples who may consider film as a vehicle for passing on knowledge within their own communities and families. The design of this research has employed methodologies that are valued by Aboriginal people and communities and establishes the basis for understanding the decolonisation of research and the filmic lens. These methodologies and concepts will be further discussed in this chapter in correlation to the research design.

Ways of Being, Knowing, Doing and Valuing

Shawn Wilson in Research is Ceremony (2008), a key reference in this research, connects to the reader on a relational level by including personal narrative sections addressed to his sons. He prefaces this with the understanding that he does not know the reader’s ‘culture and context’ and therefore builds a relationship with the reader and the ideas presented in his book, through the relationality he shares with his sons (Wilson 2008:8-9). Drawing on Wilson as inspiration, I am going to include reference to my own lived and shared
experience of knowledge sharing from a relational perspective in this section, and other sections within this document, as a means of connecting to the reader not only for context of the research and its ideas, but through the context of the research. I use this context to introduce and discuss my own ways of being (Ontology), knowing (epistemology), doing (methodology) and valuing (axiology). By doing this, I am also asserting, from the beginning, that this research recognises the agency of lived, shared, and experiential knowledge (Barrett 2018:11). It also asserts that knowledge sharing in an Aboriginal paradigm is relational, intra-active, reciprocal, and the entry point to developing an Indigenous standpoint (Martin 2008; Martin 2017; Nakata 2007).

As a child my earliest understanding of my being (Ontology), knowing (epistemology), doing (methodology) and valuing (axiology) came from the stories and songs shared within my family and within our culture. My family (Wiradjuri) have always been musical and as a young girl my grandmother would share the story of my great-great grandmother Lucy through song. Although I have never met my great-great grandmother, the sharing and singing of the song *Lucy* (1989) has allowed me to understand the journey, struggles and strength of both my family and the Wiradjuri people. This in turn has provided me with a way of connecting my own future family to Country, culture, and our ancestors. Below are the lyrics of *Lucy* (1989) written by my grandmother Bonita Byrne (nee Christian).

_In a little old humpy made from bark, tin, and leaves,
Where she spent a lot of time,
And told of by gone years._

_She moved to the city,
With her grandkids she loved so,
When I look back on those years the time was right to go._

_When she was a baby,
Upon her grandma’s knee,
She learnt about the dreamtime,_

_And spoke Wiradjuri,_

_When she was lonely, hurt and full of pain,_

...
She sang about the good times that gave her strength again.

Lucy was my grandma,

She lived in poverty,

Enslaved by the white man,

Who tried to take her dignity,

No fancy jewels for Lucy,

She was whipped and left in pain,

Bashed and treated terrible,

And always for no gain.

Sad was her family in the year of ’73,

She is in the arms of Jesus now,

Where she will always be.

She is buried at Narrandera,

Under an old ghost gum tree

Forever in our hearts, where she will always be.

Lucy was my grandma,

She lived in poverty,

Enslaved by the white man,

Who tried to take her dignity,

No fancy jewels for Lucy,

She was whipped and left in pain,

bashed and treated terrible,

And always for no gain.

(Lucy 1989, Bonita Byrne)

The importance of shared knowledge can be understood when I think of how music and song has played a vital role in cultural preservation within my own family. As a filmmaker I recognise the currency storytelling (including auditory and visual) has as a cultural artifact, its contribution to cultural preservation, and how it can be used as a tool for knowledge sharing in the same way. This is an example of how my ways of being (ontology) are connected to my ways of knowing (epistemology) and ways of doing (methodology). My
way of doing (methodology) is how I as a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman have learnt to receive, share, action, perform, and produce knowledge. These ways are relationally responsive processes (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020). The concept of Indigenous ways of being (Ontology), Knowing (epistemology), doing (methodology), and valuing (axiology) will weave throughout the entirety of this exegesis. They are the foundation that frames and informs this study, and with the methodology (ways of doing) as the content of this research, they are inseparable not only from each other, but from the research design (Martin 2008; Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020:2-3). These processes will further be unpacked in the *Chapter 3: Literature Review*.

**Participant researcher - *Autoethnography***

This research project employed autoethnography as a methodology in conjunction with yarning and practice led research. Ellis et al. define autoethnography as ‘an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systemically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)’ (2011:1). A vital part of this research project included engaging in yarning circles with research participants, gathering and recording stories, knowledge and information sharing in the yarning circles, and using the data (stories and knowledge shared) for the development and production of a short film. For this reason, the design of this research recognised the need for the chief researcher to be positioned as a participant researcher; as someone not only conducting the research, but actively participating alongside research participants in the process.

An important consideration with autoethnography is bias in relation to data and data analysis. The word ‘bias’ commonly holds negative connotations, however for this research, and in the same vein as standpoint theory, autoethnography supports the notion that including and valuing diverse perspectives and experiences alleviates the limitations of canonical forms of doing and writing research (Ellis et al. 2011:2).

Consequently, autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researchers influence on research, rather
than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist. Furthermore, scholars began recognizing that different kinds of people possess different assumptions of the world—a multitude of ways of speaking, writing, valuing and believing—and that conventional ways of doing, and thinking about research were narrow, limiting, and parochial (Ellis et al. 2011:2).

Building on this understanding, it is argued that autoethnography disrupts the colonial lens and the acquisition of knowledge by positioning the research from the viewpoint of the ‘other’ and the ‘colonized’ (Hart 2010:45-46). Much like practice led research and Indigenous methodologies, autoethnography draws much debate and criticism in the social sciences from scholars whose research employs more conventional methodologies (Ellis et al. 2011:12). Its proponents argue that although subjectivity is present in autoethnographical studies, it provides a methodology where readers and viewers can engage with text or other forms of material in a way that is more approachable, relatable, and engaging. This research project is designed to engage with screen practitioners and community members and it is for this reason that the design of this research supports, and values, lived and shared knowledge.

There is an alignment between autoethnography and Indigenous ways of doing and Knowing where experiential, cultural, and shared knowledge has depth and cognition that provides the reader and viewer, or insider and outsider, the opportunity to connect with people, culture, stories, and experiences in a way that is transformative. It is for this reason that it has been identified that biased data is not only something that is inevitable in this research project, but rather something to be valued and embraced. Storytelling, whether it be fiction or non-fiction is influenced by human experience. For this reason, the diverse perspectives, positioning, and lived and shared experience of research participants and the participant researcher was recognised as an aspect of the critical data captured in this research. This data is designed to be shared, gathered, deconstructed, reconstructed, and analysed to produce new knowledge.

To support an autoethnographical approach, I will discuss the implications of observational researcher. Observational research employs observation as a method of collecting data where the researcher becomes the observer. For example, in this research, observational research would require the chief investigator/researcher to be the observer of research participant’s behaviour, documenting activities for data collection and analysis.
The decision to not use an observational research methodology in this study was based on several important factors. Firstly, conducting observational research, where the participants are under observation, compromises the space of the yarning circle by changing the positioning and dynamic of the researcher-participant relationship in which all participants are acknowledged and valued as equal contributors. Secondly, the main question this research project is asking pertains to the impact of relational methodology in the filmmaking process. Relational methodology is centred on relationships, and therefore requires a dynamic position that supports human connection and relationship building.

Another important reason observational research has not been employed is data analysis and that the results being measured are not solely for the chief investigator/researcher to decide. In other words, it is important this research project is not only for the benefit of screen practitioners, but the peoples and communities involved in a film’s production. It is for this reason that when analysing the data, the outcome of the research project must also be based on feedback, responses, and reflection from the community and participants involved. In terms of autoethnography, observational research is present in this research however it occurs as the researcher enacts the role of the participant observer (Ellis et al. 2011:2).

When researchers do ethnography, they study a culture’s relational practices, common values and beliefs, and shared experiences for the purpose of helping insiders (cultural members) and outsiders (cultural strangers) better understand the culture (MASO, 2001). Ethnographers do this by becoming participant observers in the culture—that is, by taking field notes of cultural happenings as well as their part in and others’ engagement with these happenings. (Ellis et al. 2011:2-3)

By becoming a participant researcher, I am allowing myself to be positioned within the experience of the research process and therefore become a co-producer of knowledge alongside research participants. Building on this argument Hart (2010) puts forward the case that the research becomes transformative for the participatory researcher (Hart 2010:9). In this research design, participants were aware of who was participating and were each identified and acknowledged as producers of knowledge alongside the participant
researcher ‘where both are knowers and learners in the process’ (Bessarab and Ng’andu 2010:47).

Ultimately this autoethnographic research positions me, as the researcher, within my own Nation of Wiradjuri. Although this poses questions as to bias, the most important rationale was drawn from personal obligation. Firstly, in Aboriginal culture relationality and connectedness is vital to the survival and protection of community and culture. As a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman I viewed this research project as an opportunity to connect with my own people, including my Elders and family members, to share and produce new knowledge that will not only benefit my own people now, but be used as a cultural artifact to benefit future generations. This view of personal obligation within community and kinship would be questioned in traditional methodologies. However, I argue, firstly, that within this research project and my own ways of being, knowing, doing and valuing as a Wiradjuri woman, working with a methodology that is valued by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prove to be more beneficial and effective than employing traditional methodologies in the social sciences that have, at times, exploited, oppressed, marginalised and colonised Indigenous peoples (Chilisa 2012:39).

Secondly, when working on film projects that include Indigenous Australian peoples, communities, culture, and stories the process should always be collaborative particularly for those coming from an outsider’s position (Janke 2009). This is something that I, as an Aboriginal woman, also uphold when working in an Aboriginal Nation or with a place and culture outside of my own belonging. Although I am not removed from my research participants through Country, culture and kinship, I acknowledge that the stories, knowledge, and experiences shared though the yarning circle are not my own. I therefore position myself in this research as both an insider and an outsider using the term outsider not in a cultural sense but as an individual acknowledging and positioning myself in the research as someone who has not had the lived or shared experience of growing up or living on the Narrandera Sandhills. It is for this reason I argue that my positioning, connection and relation to participants, community, Country and culture will not negatively impact on my ability as a researcher to contextualise the experience of consultation, collaboration, and co-
production at the cultural interface for people engaging with this research from an outsider’s positioning.

Lastly, as a filmmaker and researcher, I feel a sense of responsibility to use my own storytelling practice as a method of knowledge sharing which in turn always comes to giving back to my mob. This circles back to the importance of reciprocity and responsibility by bringing new knowledge back into the community and, with that, the cycle of knowledge continues. As an Indigenous researcher and visual storyteller, the product of this research and both its written and practical body of work will ultimately give back new knowledge to my mob and give knowledge to others to benefit my mob.

**Yarning circle Methodology**

When yarning about yarning my mum once shared this analogy with me:

> I could cook an Indian curry, but that would not make me Indian. I could print out a recipe, tick all the boxes and include all the ingredients, and the curry might be good but, it still would not make me Indian. However, if I spent time in India or in the kitchen of an Indian cook and I listened, watched and learnt about the ingredients, the origins of the dish and its history with their people, and we cooked the dish together, I still wouldn’t be Indian, but I would have the knowledge, understanding and support to cook a dish that was much more authentic and flavoursome than if I hadn’t engaged in that experience and process. (DM Byrne, Family member, yarning 2016).

When I think about yarning, I think about this analogy. It has become a way for me to conceptualise yarning for people outside of my culture and give insight and understanding as to how yarning is not just a process but an experience that is both immersive and transformative. For as long as I can remember the practice of yarning has been a part of my knowing (epistemology) and doing (methodology) as a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman and a way in which I have learnt to receive, share, and pass on knowledge.
Yarning, a semi-structured conversation is the focal methodology for this study (Bessarab and Ng’andu 2010:12). Yarning is considered both a method and methodology and a way of privileging Aboriginal voices based on its role within storytelling, oral histories, and the sharing, gathering, and passing on of knowledge in Aboriginal culture (Rigney 1999:116; Hart 2010:3; Laycock et al. 2011:51; Barlo et al. 2020). It is relationally responsive to the agency of Indigenous knowing and it is through the process and dynamic of yarning that Indigenous knowledge production occurs (Martin 2017:10). This is an important part of the research design because it contributes significantly to the context of research and is vital to the research being conducted in a culturally appropriate way.

The core of this research project is storytelling for knowledge transmission and production, and storytelling as a means of connection through yarning. Karen Martin (2008) describes storytelling in her research as story work drawing on the work of Jo-Ann Archibald (2008).

I also learned to appreciate how stories engage us as listeners and learners to think deeply and to reflect on our actions and reaction... I called this pedagogy story work because the engagement of story, storyteller and listener created a synergy for making meaning through the story and making one work to obtain meaning and understanding (Martin Citing Archibald 2008:20).

As a methodology, yarning has been challenged in the academy (Bessarab and Ng’andu 2010:39). Despite this, there has been a shift in opinions regarding the application of Indigenous methodology in research with non-Indigenous researchers opting to employ methodology such as narrative enquiry that, like yarning, values the human experience shared through storytelling. Like autoethnography (Ellis et al. 2011:12) and yarning (Bessarab and Ng’andu 2010:38), Mertova and Webster (2014) recognise within their own research that narrative enquiry as a methodology enabled them to gather information that may otherwise have been missed or overlooked (Mertova and Webster 2014:19).

Narrative inquiry has depicted human experience and endeavours from ancient times. It records human experience through the construction and reconstruction of personal stories. It is well-suited to address issues of complexity and cultural and human centeredness.
because of its capacity to record and retell events that have been of most influence on us. (Mertova and Webster 2014:16).

Bessaraba and Ng’andu (2010) describe the practice of yarning in the context of research as being a semi-structured interview which requires trust and respect from all those participating in a yarning circle. Bessaraba and Ng’andu (2010) quote Hollingsworth (1994) highlighting the ability of yarning to be more than a conversation but also a process that is transformative:

Collaborative conversations have the potential to transform the way in which people approach a project and/or their work. According to Hollingsworth, collaborative conversations can become “a place for research that [goes] beyond ... pleasant and informative chats to become a transformative process” (1994) (Bessaraba and Ng’andu 2010:41).

This understanding of transformative collaborative conversation is further echoed by Shawn Wilson (2008) who recognises that in oral traditions participants recognise each other’s position in ‘shaping the context and process’ (Wilson 2008:8-9). Here, we understand that yarning is emergent, with data unfolding though the ebb and flow of intra-active conversations.

8 Ways: Aboriginal pedagogy from Western NSW (Regional Australian education team (RAET) 2012) highlights the importance of Aboriginal pedagogy and its role in creation and innovation by ‘learning through culture (not just about culture)’ (RAET 2012:4). It is for this reason when reflecting on ways of doing and knowing, yarning can be identified as a form of learning through culture as it is recognised as both a method and methodology. It is a way to not only access knowledge, but a process of sharing, acquiring, and producing it. This understanding of yarning as a way of learning through culture is considered integral in the design of this research project. As a result, I propose that the overall body of work will be used as a tool for consultation, collaboration, co-production, innovation, and cultural preservation within filmmaking practice.
To support this position, Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010) discuss the significance of rapport and relationship building and their role in the yarning process as they identify yarning as ‘a process that requires the researcher to develop and build a relationship that is accountable to Indigenous people participating in the research’ (Bessarab and Ng’andu 2010:38). This relational accountability is an integral part of conducting research with Aboriginal people and communities and is upheld through the way in which the research is conducted (Wilson 2008:7). In yarning circle methodology, accountability is central to cultural safety and integrity. Situated as a protected space (Barlo et al. 2020) yarning circles should be premised on cultural and ethical practice.

The process of yarning is explained by Barlo et al. (2020:5) through a metaphorical map of camps, where each stage of yarning creates a path for the next location (Barlo et al. 2020:5). Beginning with the yarning circle space, and travelling to the data, data and analysis, processing and reporting and wider community these camps circulate and comprise of key protocols and principles. These protocols include gift, control, freedom, space, inclusiveness and gender specificity, with the principles being reciprocity, responsibility, relationship, dignity, equality, integrity, and self-determination (Barlo et al. 2020:3-4). The first camp, the yarning circle space, provides a foundation of cultural safety and protection and starts with Ancestors, bringing forward lore/law and adaptability. This centres Indigenous ways of being (ontology) and valuing (axiology) as the entry point into the research and the framework in which the protocols and principles are centred and informed by. In this research, the yarning circles process is conducted within a similar framework that is localised to the Wiradjuri Nation and the Sandhill community.

The places of oral traditions and storytelling in Aboriginal culture are described as both multifaceted and non-linear (RAET 2012:53). This understanding of a non-linear process is important to the design of this research, impacting timeline and acknowledging the unpredictable nature of yarning which is an emergent process (Barrett 2018:10). It is for this reason that flexibility be considered in the research design so that the research can shift and adapt as it develops. Yarning can present challenges when it comes to navigating the yarning circle and keeping on track, especially when following cultural protocol simultaneously. This requires 'high skill’ of the researcher to navigate when collecting, transcribing, and analysing large amounts of data (Laycock et al. 2011:51).
To navigate the large quantities of data, complexities, and multilayers of yarning circle data, Indigenous researchers have employed analytical processes that deconstruct and reconstruct the yarning circle knowledge. This process includes analysis of individual yarns, group yarns, and continual yarns that lead to a process of identifying collective themes and connections (Barlo et al. 2020:3). The process of identifying themes in the yarning circle data is employed in this research and central to the way the *Sandhill Stories* film narrative is shaped. An understanding of how this process was conducted is unpacked in *Chapter: 5 Yarning in Motion.*

Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010) recognise within their own practice four different types of yarning. These types include social yarning, collaborative yarning, research topic yarning and therapeutic yarning. The understanding of these four types and how they shape the yarning process are essential to ensure a safe cultural and research space for both the researcher and the participants in this study. After engaging in yarning with several participants, Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010:41) were able to identify how the four different types of yarning they identified, shaped both the yarning space and the information being exchanged. Below in figure 1 is an illustration depicting the yarning research process with the flow and direction as unpacked by Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010:40).
Figure 1. The Yarning Research Process.

Source: (Bessarab and Ng’andu 2010:40)

Working with the research of Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010) the four types of Yarning theory have informed my own practice, providing guidance to navigate the direction of the Yarning circle. This guidance informed me as a researcher on how to provide a safe research and cultural space for participants by recognising how to respond to and exchange dialogue depending on the nature of the yarn. For example, if participants were to share their own experiences that brought up subjects of trauma such as the Stolen Generations, it was vital for me to have the understanding and knowledge as to how to respond and direct the Yarn in a manner that was intuitive, respectful, and appropriate.

**Practice led Research**

When considering the design for this research project I asked myself the following questions: if I were going to design a map for a bushwalking track, would it not be crucial to have walked it first? And what if the track had many routes, diverse routes, that led me to diverse locations, should they not be considered in the design? Answering these questions brought me to an important decision about how the research would be conducted. To
design a framework, much like the metaphoric map, it would require me to have experiential knowledge of the pathway.

In *Practice as Research* (2010) Barrett poses the following question: ‘What new knowledge/understandings did the studio enquiry and methodology generate that may not have been revealed through other research approaches?’ (Barrett and Bolt 2010:1). During the early stages of developing the research design, this question led me back to my own experiences of sharing, receiving, and acquiring knowledge. This occurred during a visit to the Sandhills where my Uncle, a Wiradjuri Elder, artist and craftsman shared a story with me through the didgeridoo. Amongst his work of hand-crafted boomerangs, didgeridoos, and artwork, I was asked to read a story. The story about a young Wiradjuri boy taught to hunt by his grandfather was printed on paper, and as I began to read the first few words, he stopped me ‘You got to read it louder than that!’ he said. I began to read the story louder and as I began, Uncle started playing the didgeridoo. What is important to note is that this was not atmospheric background music, and it did not accompany the story. Like me, it was *telling* the story, not separately, but together. When the young Wiradjuri boy saw the kangaroos jumping, I was not only visualising it, but I could also hear it and feel it through the reverberation. Here, my Uncle was presenting Country and its entities, not a display of ‘mimicry’ as examined through colonial accounts (Casey 2015:24). No description of this experience compares to the lived experience; however, this shared knowledge is valuable as it allows me to give context to ways of doing, Knowing and valuing from experiential knowledge. To rephrase Barrett’s (2010) question from a relational positioning I ask the following: what value was added by my Uncle sharing the story through the didgeridoo, that could not be acquired by solely reading the words on the paper?

Much like this example, films have the potential to connect through multiple senses (Martinez 2013:20). The composition of film can use sound, music, movement, and visual design to connect in its storytelling. For this reason, it can be argued that learning through culture, such as ways situated in relationally responsive processes, could provide screen practitioners with a deeper experience of knowledge exchange that could later be reflected within the composition of their work.
Despite being positioned separately in this chapter, practice led research relates not only to the filmmaking component of this research, but to the research project holistically. Yarning is both method and methodology and is therefore practice based. In fact, Indigenist research commonly employs methodologies as a process of decolonisation that are participatory, collaborative, reciprocal, and relationally responsive (Smith 1999:15; Barrett 2018:12). This once again centres back to decolonisation, by supporting self-determination and the privileging of Aboriginal voices (Getty 2010:7; Rigney 1999:116).

Like yarning, practice led research is emergent, therefore the research design was considerate of this phenomenon and the way it could impact and shape different stages of the research (Barrett 2018:10). This understanding of emergence in research was invited, and as Barrett and Bolt (2010) argue, there was an interrelationship between theory and practice suggesting ‘artistic practice be viewed as the production of knowledge and philosophy in action’ (Barrett and Bolt 2010:1). In connection to Indigenous knowledge Barrett (2018) states:

> Creative arts practice is an intensification of everyday experiences from which new knowledge or knowing emerges. As such, creative arts research has some similarities to Indigenous knowledge making which is always based in Country, material, cultural practices and experience. (Barrett 2018:10)

Martin (2013) supports this notion suggesting that knowledge in practice is performative, produced in the process of ‘making’ (Martin 2013:83). In conjunction with this reasoning, the rationale for using practice led research in this research comes back to my Indigenous ways of Being (ontology), Knowing (epistemology), Doing (methodology) and Valuing (axiology). For this reason, as a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi researcher working alongside my Elders, I have a responsibility to ensure that the purpose of this research and the way it is conducted adheres to the following principles:

- The research is conducted ethically, respectfully, responsibly and in a manner that is culturally appropriate,
- The methodology and methods used in the research design are valued by Aboriginal peoples therefore privilege the voice and self-determination of Aboriginal people.
• The research and creative practice are conducted in a safe cultural and creative space.
• The creative work is made in consultation, collaboration and in co-production with research participants.
• The research is of value and benefit to my participants and the Wiradjuri/Sandhill community.

These values and considerations to the design of this research are in line with pathways and protocols for working with Indigenous peoples, communities, and culture, from both an Indigenous research paradigm and best practice filmmaking standpoint (Martin et al. 2016; Janke 2009; Rigney 1999). Based on this examination and rationale for employing practice led research and acknowledging its validity in producing new knowledge through making, the filmmaking aspect of this study follows fundamental filmmaking stages informed by the emergence of the research data.

**Research Design – Yarning**

Films are to be made in consultation, collaboration, and in co-production with research participants (Janke 2009). This chapter reviews the consultation, collaboration, and co-production process of this practice-based research. The first stage of this research project involved engaging in yarning circles with research participants as a process and experience of storytelling, knowledge sharing, and consultation. Seven core research participants were invited to participate in the research project based on relationality and their connection to the Narrandera Sandhills and the Wiradjuri Nation. Participants were contacted over the phone and in person, and included Community Elders, great-aunties, great-Uncles, and grandparents with most connected to me through kinship. Participants vary in age and have shared experience of living on and visiting the Sandhills as children, young people, and adults from the 1950s onwards. In the initial stages of the research project, it was decided with core participants that the number of participants should stay open due to the social cohesion of Aboriginal communities and families and what can be identified as ‘referred
participants’; participants that core research participants referred to within the process of the research when sharing knowledge and stories. As part of this process, suggestions were made on whom to further speak to in the community or family regarding a certain subject matter. Decisions pertaining to whether this was pursued were made in consultation with participants and with consideration of the timeframe, availability, and whether it was critical and/or culturally significant to do so.

Prior to engaging in the first yarning circles, a phone conversation took place with potential yarning participants as a process of early consultation. This conversation was to firstly establish the idea of the research project with potential participants and to allow individuals the opportunity to consider their participation, ask questions, and provide feedback, suggestions, and guidance for the research project. I suggested that potential participants take time to consider their involvement as a participant before making an informed decision. Starting this conversation with potential participants provided a platform for ongoing dialogue and rapport building that positively impacted the early stages of consultation and the yarning circle process.

As I, the participant researcher, was not living on Country (Wiradjuri) during the research process, the research was conducted in two primary locations. The first in the town of Narrandera and the nearby Narrandera Sandhills, and the second in Broken Hill, both in New South Wales. Two participants who no longer live on Country (Wiradjuri) were also contacted in separate locations both in person, over the phone, and via video conference.

Conducting the research on Country was important to the research project for two main reasons. The most significant, is due to the interconnectedness and relationality shared within, amongst and between people, Country, and entities. In an Aboriginal worldview Country has a reciprocal agency, and in turn enacts knowing (Martin 2017:8). Here, we understand the significance of Country in the development and production of knowledge and how this impacts the research. The second reason was that most participants still reside in Narrandera, the Sandhills and in nearby townships. This made both individual and group yarning circles more accommodating. As a result, yarning occurred in several different
locations and included visits to significant locations relevant to the research. This later proved to be vital to both the creative work and visual aspects of the filmmaking process.

Traditionally, the yarning circle takes place where all those engaging are positioned in a circle. This is so all those participating are positioned as equal and have entered in a space of respect. From my personal experience the yarning space has not always been a literal circle, however, it remains a space that is reflective of equality and respect between those sharing. For example, yarning may take place over a cup of tea at home or in a public place such as a classroom. The yarning space for this research project was built upon the foundation of respect and creative and cultural safety. To achieve this, the location and space for the yarning circles was discussed in consultation with research participants and took place in a location and at time subject to the participant’s needs and availability both individually and as a group. Early stages were predominantly focused on individual yarning sessions so that yarning participants felt comfortable to consult, share, and ask questions with discretion before moving forward with the research project.

After the yarning circles took place, the stories and knowledge shared was documented through written form during a process of reflection and reflexivity. Although voice recording was introduced at a later stage, the purpose of not using a recording device for yarning documentation was to provide a culturally sensitive and safe yarning environment. As a result, participants were able to ease into the yarning space without being conscious of the presence of a recording device. This decision was further based on experiential knowledge from working in other Aboriginal communities and witnessing how the presence of recording devices and filmmaking equipment can affect the comfortability of the yarning circle space. What is important to note is that using a device free method to document yarning sessions, did present a potential risk of losing important information. For example, not being able to remember the yarning circle knowledge while later documenting. This was mitigated through active listening, extensive note taking, and the repetition of yarning circles which often circled back to previously shared knowledge. It is for this reason that during early consultation I decided that intensive listening would be the preferred method of documentation. This method is supported by Frazer and Yunkaporta (2019) who assert that active listening presents ‘more than hearing, learner agency and respect for the
instructor [or speaker]’ but provides ‘acute observation and mindful kinaesthetic activity’ (Frazer and Yunkaporta 2019:5). Evidently this method provided a level of comfort for participants, with all willing to participate in voice recording at later stages of the project.

It was established during early consultation with participants that a film, or a series of short films, would be developed and produced based on the participants’ own lived and shared experiences of growing up on the Sandhills of Narrandera. This premise was used as an outline because it was a connection all participants shared and was of cultural and historical significance to Wiradjuri people. For this reason, I suggested that the film depict stories connected through Country, culture, community, and kinship. Yarning was used as a collaborative process for participants to share oral and living history, and for the exchange of knowledge. What is important to note is that because the films were developed from engaging with yarning participants, the exact content of the stories would not be defined until the development stage. This was purposeful in design and acknowledged the emergent nature of yarning and practice led research, recognising this as something to be examined through the research process itself (Barrett 2018:9). Furthermore, the genre, form, and type of film to be made was left open as part of the research design. This decision was based on ethics, respect, and privileging of participants’ voices and self-determination. For this reason, it was critical that participants play a role in deciding and shaping how their stories and knowledge should be shared, presented, and passed on.

I predicted the information shared by participants had the potential to be significant, and the process of documenting the navigation of multiple collaborators and co-producers would add substantial content to the research. For this reason, the gathering, documenting, and shaping of the stories, memories, and knowledge into a script was planned to allow a significant amount of time. Additional tensions and considerations were the timeframe for this research project as defined by the confines of the academy, while at the same time being considerate of participants’ availabilities, their capacity for commitment, and the impact the yarning circle process may have on participants’ emotional and mental health, particularly if discussing sensitive topics. For these reasons, the timeframe for the both the yarning and filmmaking process was designed with flexibility.
As the methodology used in this research project has been selected to value lived and shared knowledge, research data was analysed through a process of reflection and feedback. This was conducted in consultation with research participants and was a process I engaged in as participant researcher to form part of the data analyses. The process of data analysis was ongoing throughout each stage of the research project. Below is a conceptual framework illustrating how this process worked.

Figure 2. Decolonising the Lens Conceptual framework.

This conceptual framework is further unpacked in Chapter 4: Marramarra and Chapter 5: Yarning in Motion unpacking all facets of the research project that formed the frameworks development.
Research design – Filmmaking

The practice of filmmaking, for the most part, is a collaborative process. On a large scale, the production of a film is made up various departments who work collectively and collaboratively to achieve a final product (film or content) (Ascher & Pincus 2012:2-4). As an outline, the filmmaking process followed standard stages of filmmaking that were inclusive of the following:

- Development
- Pre-Production
- Production
- Post-production
- Screening/distribution

This was used as a standard outline since the genre, form, and type of film intended to be made would be decided upon with research participants as part of the yarning circle process. Ultimately as yarning shaped the research and its content, the filmmaking process became specific to stop motion animation. This development and finding will be further discussed in the Chapter 4: Marramarra and Chapter 5: Yarning in Motion however it is important to note here that stop motion animation is a different type of filmmaking with its own distinctive methods and processes. Despite following the same stages from development to post-production as live action or documentary filmmaking, stop motion animation is a tactile process, shot incrementally frame by frame, where everything presented on screen is made, constructed, or composed by hand. For this reason, the making, shooting, editing, and reviewing process between myself and research participants evolved differently to live action filmmaking and required flexibility. Additionally, the stop motion animation process was positioned in Indigenous ways of being (Ontology), knowing (epistemology), doing (Methodology) and valuing (axiology) which shifted its fundamental process into an Indigenous paradigm of relationally responsive processes. Due to this, the shooting required an extensive timeframe.
As budget and funding had the potential to present hurdles to both progress and key creative decisions, conversations regarding funding took place with participants during early consultation. Despite this, it was acknowledged that a reasonable budget would be required and sought and if a budget or funding could not be obtained it would not be detrimental to the research project progression. This was due the fact that, as the participant researcher, I had access to equipment and resources and, although budget would shape aspects of the film’s production, a creative work would still be achieved in some capacity.

As challenges regarding budget and funding arose, this led to the decision to change direction and move to stop motion animation. As the research project progressed, the process of stop motion animation was adjusted into the five core stages of filmmaking. This included re-shaping the script with consideration to stop motion animation and new factors relating to materials, puppets, set design, equipment, lighting, and shooting. Because of the tactile nature of stop motion animation, the making process of the short film required several steps regarding set design, puppet design, props, lighting, and other visual aspects. This included sourcing materials relevant to the story and style of the film and conducting studies on Country including live action videos for visual reference. Once puppets and art direction were established in consultation with participants, the sets, constructed sequence by sequence, were assembled. Prior to shooting, each shot was set up on a multiplane, and test shots were taken prior to shooting each complete sequence. The duration of shooting was estimated based on the complexity of the sequence with some scenes taking multiple weeks at a time to shoot. This production stage occurred over a period of 12 months which was inclusive of some scenes being added and re-shot based on participant feedback.

To expand on this further, the focal story was developed, then the script was shot in small sequences which was brought back to the participants in Narrandera and the Sandhills for review and feedback. This was part of ongoing consultation which was repeated on four occasions with the fifth being the final viewing. During these reviews, participants were able to provide feedback and suggestions regarding the sequences. This process prompted dialogue for new ideas and changes as the animation developed. Because the process of stop motion animation is time consuming, I established with participants early that changes being made to the animation would have to be carefully considered.
Once shooting was completed, the post-production stage began which included editing the sequences together, adding sound and music, and recording narration and voice with participants. During post-production consultation took place over three visits to Narrandera and the Sandhills with one taking place via screen conference. Once each participant had reviewed the final draft of the film and each participant was in agreement with the result, the film was established as a final version. Below is a table outlining this process from the development stage to post-production.

Table 1. Yarning and practice process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>• Yarning circles (Individual/group)</td>
<td>Narrandera Sandhills NSW (Wiradjuri Country)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sharing and gathering stories and knowledge connected to the Narrandera Sandhills (Wiradjuri Country) with research participants.</td>
<td>Broken Hill NSW (Wilyakali Country) animation studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Document stories and knowledge via written notes/voice recording</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Analyse data (stories/knowledge) finding themes, connections etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consultation (Yarning) with participants regarding which story/stories to be included in the film.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consultation (Yarning) with research participants regarding genre, form of film.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Draft script with consultation from participants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Revised script with consultation from participants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Final script with consultation from participants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre- Production</td>
<td>• Animatic of short film.</td>
<td>Narrandera Sandhills NSW (Wiradjuri Country)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Revisions made based on feedback from reviewed animatic with participants.</td>
<td>Broken Hill NSW (Wilyakali Country) animation studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Study of Country for art direction and set design.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Materials sourced for puppets and set design/ props etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Production** | - Shooting of film sequences.  
- Revision and feedback of animated sequences with participants.  
- Changes made based on consultation with participants.  
- Note: These steps repeated based on feedback, process, and timeframe. |
| **Post-production** | - Editing of animated sequences.  
- Review of edited animated sequences.  
- Changes made based on review and feedback of edited film with participants.  
- Note: This process to be repeated if required.  
- Final version.  
- Final viewing with participants.  
- Film completed. |
| **Screening/distribution** | - Exhibition (PhD examination)  
Note: discussion regarding the films life after the research project will take place in consultation with participants. This may include a screening with participants and community on the Sandhills and a potential film festival strategy made in consultation with participants. |

Narrandera Sandhills NSW (Wiradjuri Country)  
Broken Hill NSW (Wilyakali Country)  
animation studio

Post-production

Narrandera Sandhills NSW (Wiradjuri Country)  
Broken Hill NSW (Wilyakali Country)  
animation studio

Screening/distribution

As per requirements
By positioning these stages in relationally responsive processes this research examined how the intersection and interconnection of yarning, autoethnography, and practice led research inform and impact the cultural interface of filmmaking. To further this, the methods and methodologies used in the research design present a filmmaking process premised on relationality that reframes the fundamental stages of filmmaking, from going beyond entertainment to becoming a vehicle of knowledge for cultural preservation and a platform for self-determination. This process is further unpacked in Chapter 4: Marramarra giving extensive detail and key examples that inform the research outcomes.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

Vital to this research is the examination of literature and film that reflects the key concepts and arguments presented within this study. To begin, discussion pertaining to colonisation and its implications in both the research and filmic space, provide critical discourse that extends to the gaze and the lens. Following this, is discussion on cultural interface theory, Indigenous standpoint theory, relatedness theory, and agency. Through this examination I demonstrate why the need for this research exists and how the development of a new filmic process situated in Indigenous ways of valuing (axiology), being (Ontology), Knowing (epistemology) and doing (methodology) can support the decolonisation of the filmic lens. This information is key to informing the discourse on filmmaking at the cultural interface and offers new insight into the development of an Indigenous standpoint through the filmic process.

This research examines filmmaking at the cultural interface, for this reason both Indigenous and non-Indigenous key thinkers and the creative work of screen practitioners will be examined from a critical standpoint regarding the colonial and post-colonising gaze. Included in this literature review is a discussion of First Nations scholars including Karen Martin (2008), Brian Martin (2017), Shawn Wilson (2008), Linda Tuhuiwai Smith (2012), Marcia Langton (1993), Martin Nakata (2007), Dennis Foley (2006), Tyson Yunkaporta and Doris Shillingsworth (2020). Their research has investigated the impact, importance, and challenges of Indigenous research paradigms in a diverse range of disciplines with an international scope. What will be highlighted in this chapter is crucial dialogue regarding relational and decolonising processes, which will further be extended to the filmic space. Building on this, I examine these processes as a potential pathway for screen practitioners, particularly First Nations filmmakers, working with Aboriginal peoples, communities, cultures, concepts, and stories from both an insider’s and outsider’s positioning.

The literature review is presented in six main sections. These include Decolonising the lens, Relationally responsive filmmaking, Gazing through the lens, Filmmaking at the cultural interface, Relationality, Agency and knowledge production, and Relationally responsive
processes. Following these sections, this chapter concludes with a summary of the literature review with relation to the research questions and research design.

Firstly, in *Decolonising the Lens*, I unpack the relationship between Indigenous peoples, research, and the filmic space. The purpose of this is to provide important context concerning Western research approaches and the decolonisation of its processes. Secondly, in *Gazing through the Lens* I further this discussion in correlation to colonial narratives, examining the gaze through the intersection of the non-Indigenous and Indigenous lens. This discourse will take place with reference to the Australian film industry and its shifting landscape. Lastly *Filmmaking at the cultural interface* presents cultural interface theory and the navigation of the filmmaking process within Indigenous ways of valuing (axiology), being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and doing (methodology). Following these sections is *Relationality* which examines relationality as the core of an Aboriginal world view, leading into *Relationally Responsive Processes* which examines ethical, intellectual, relational, and operational processes that frame the filmmaking practice. Lastly, is *Relationality, Agency and knowledge production* examining relationality and relationally responsive processes in the acquisition and production of knowledge. Holistically the core concepts and arguments presented in this chapter further support the research design and its conceptual framework. In addition to this, these theories, concepts and arguments provide a critical lens for examining the process, findings and outcomes unpacked in the exegesis. In turn, extending to the significance and contribution to new knowledge. This chapter will include discussion concerning First Nations peoples in Australia and internationally.

**Decolonising the Lens**

There has been a problematic relationship between Indigenous Australian communities and filmmaking throughout Australian screen history (Janke 2003:5; 2009:4). This can be compared to the relationship Indigenous peoples have had worldwide with Western research approaches and epistemologies, where First Nations peoples and their knowledges have been exploited, obscured, misrepresented, and excluded in Western research to the benefit of colonial hegemony (Rigney 2003:32-42; Smith 2012; Australian Institute of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and The Lowitja Institute 2013:4-15). For this reason, the research argues that decolonising the filmic lens requires the decolonisation of its processes. To preface this discussion, it is essential to firstly define colonisation and decolonisation in relation to this research to understand how the same concepts can be applied and understood in the filmic space. This preface will be important for two purposes, the first will be to further support the design of this research process including its methodology and research approaches, and the second to relate the same concepts and understanding to the filmic space. This discussion of the intersection and trajectories of colonisation and First Nations peoples will form the basis for critical dialogue regarding the gaze and the lens, cultural interface theory, and Indigenous standpoint theory in relation to filmmaking practice.

For Indigenous people colonisation is recognized as more than a process of establishing control of Indigenous peoples and land, but the disenfranchisement and ‘destruction of political, social, and economic systems’ (Chilisa 2012:9). With this definition it can be understood that decolonisation defines the process of withdrawing or reforming from such control and constructs (Laycock et al. 2011:44). Smith (2012:57) discusses the ‘Indigenous experience’ as one framed by imperialism. This experience is shared between Indigenous peoples on a global scale, who have a ‘shared language’ (Smith 2012:57) when talking about the impact, struggle, and survival as those colonized. That dialogue as Smith (2012) states is ‘embedded in in our political discourses, our humour, poetry, music, storytelling and other common-sense ways of passing on both a narrative of history and an attitude about history.’ (Smith 2012:57).

Although these definitions are a starting point to understand these terms, they are understood, lived, and shared by Indigenous peoples on an international level (Smith 2012:57) and at a depth that requires further dialogue. This dialogue extends to many areas, with discussion regarding the colonisation of First Nations peoples and the process of decolonisation evident in research regarding Indigenous peoples in Australia and internationally in a diverse range of disciplines. This includes education, health care, social work, creative arts, and law and provides insight into the impacts of colonisation on the lives of First Nations people in many aspects of life. The movements taking place by Indigenous
researchers to decolonise the processes, policies, institutions, and constructs that enable the oppression, inequality, and injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples are occurring on an international scope (Rigney 2003:32).

Bagele Chilisa (2012) discusses the power imbalance between Euro-Western research and Indigenous peoples as the colonised and marginalised other. Such is recognised through the act of ‘stripping the formerly colonised and historically marginalised groups of their ancestral culture and replacing it with Euro-Western culture’ (Chilisa 2012: 8). This process, as argued by Chilisa (2012) is present within the education system extending to research, its stages, and manifesting itself through the rejection of the colonised and marginalised group’s heritage. Furthermore, the colonised are taught to ‘embrace Euro-Western worldviews and lifestyles as the human norm’ (Chilisa 2012: 8). This creates debate around Euro-Western research paradigms and the role they play in what is known and who gets to know it.

One of the shortfalls of Euro-Western research paradigms is that they ignore the role of imperialism, colonization, and globalization in the construction of knowledge. An understanding of the values and assumptions about imperialism, colonization, and globalization that inform Euro-Western research paradigms will enable you to appreciate and understand how Euro-Western methodologies carry with them an imperial power and how they are colonizing. (Chilisa 2012:8)

In response I argue that we must recognise, understand, and examine the exclusion and oppression that Euro-Western research can create towards colonised and marginalised groups and extend the same lens to the filmic space and its processes. As Smith (2012) discusses, Indigenous people have had a relationship with research that has centred them as ‘objects and subjects’ of research, never the researcher, narrator, or knower, and Indigenous people have been viewed as having no interest or capability of conducting research about themselves and their circumstances (Smith 2012:21). This is further evident in the way that Indigenous peoples and their knowledges have been positioned as something of the past, unchanging, primitive, and artefactual (Foley 2006:27; Nakata 2007:318). Nakata (2007) discusses this regarding Torres Strait Islanders, explaining that this
way of viewing Islanders has become a way for researchers to position them as ‘subjects and objects of study’ justifiable for ‘social, economic and political reorganisation.’ (Nakata 2007:318). As Foley (2006) affirms, Indigenous knowledge, often referred to as traditional or cultural knowledge, is not something of the past but ‘continuous, evolving and adapting to change’ asserting that Indigenous knowledge has developed and been transmitted through generations leading to innovation and invention (Foley 2006:27). Building on the arguments of Foley (2006) and Nakata (2007) this research project has aimed for innovation and invention through filmmaking practice and the decolonisation of its processes. The idea of innovation and invention in this research is not centred on a desire to solely advance the filmmaking industry but is being recognised as essential to the survival of First Nations peoples and culture. This being through decolonisation, cultural preservation, social change, healing, and transformation through the filmic space (Smith 2012:121). To position this dialogue, I further outline how decolonising methodologies has been articulated in the literature.

*Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* describes the need for decolonising methodologies as ‘a way to disrupt relationships between researchers (mostly non-Indigenous) and researched (Indigenous)’ (Smith 2012:21). From an Indigenous perspective, the relationship between Indigenous people and research has been one centred on power and control by the coloniser (Rigney 2003:34). With this notion in mind, it can be argued that controlling knowledge and knowledge production means controlling the narrative. This narrative as Rigney (2003) states is one that is imagined through the minds of non-Indigenous researchers and excludes the voice of Aboriginal people (Rigney 2003:34). In regard to the filmic space, I argue that the importance of challenging and disrupting these notions is to allow Indigenous peoples to reclaim colonial narratives about their people, communities, and histories, by privileging Indigenous voices, supporting the self determination of Indigenous people, and developing an Indigenous standpoint through relational processes (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020). As a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman I recognise this shared experience between First Nations peoples internationally through the sharing of lived experience, oral histories, literature, and the depiction and representation of the *Other* in the film industry. There has been an invisibility of Indigenous worldviews within literature, film, text, education, politics, research, and other discourses,
where Indigenous perspectives and voices have been marginalised, misrepresented, or absent (Hart 2010:3-4). It is for this reason that many Indigenous scholars are fighting to be heard, to reclaim knowledge and to challenge Euro-Western research through the decolonisation of research epistemologies and methodologies (Getty 2010:7). It is also the reason that First Nations scholars such as Terri Janke (2003, 2009), Marcia Langton (1993), Darlene Johnson (2001) and Lester Bostock (1997) have developed and produced significant documents and discourses pertaining to the filmic lens and its practices with Indigenous people, communities, culture, and concepts.

To extend this dialogue further, it is at this stage I am going to shift from a fundamental outline of the relationship between and amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous research, colonisation, and decolonisation to the filmic space by unpacking the gaze and the lens.

**Gazing through the Lens**

To represent our worlds is ultimately something we can only do for ourselves using our own processes to articulate our experiences, realities, and understandings. Anything else is an imposed view that excludes the existence of our ontology and the interrelationship between our Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing (Martin and Mirraboopa 2009:211).

To further extend the discussion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships to the filmic space, this section examines the colonial gaze. This dialogue gives an overarching understanding of the impact of representationalism through the gaze and affirms why this is significant to film and the decolonisation of its processes.

The colonial gaze, also referred to as the Western or white gaze, is a term used to describe the objectification, perception, and representations of the colonised by the coloniser. It is shaped by the relationships, systems and power structures of colonial ideology and hegemony (Said 2003:7; Smith 2012:89; Burney 2012:26-34). The colonial gaze can be identified within colonial narratives of the Other depicted in literature, research, art,
images, film, and travellers’ tales (Creed and Hoorn 2001; Said 2003:2; Burney 2012:23). These representations of Otherness are often fixated on romanticised, sexualised, exotic, and dehumanising depictions of Indigenous people situated in a European fascination with exoticism (Creed and Hoorn 2001:36-38; Langton 1993:26; Rekhari 2007:2; Knopf 2008: xi; Smith 2012:41-42; Kuehn 2014). In the context of film, the colonial gaze is evident through cinematic depictions of Indigenous peoples and culture from early ethnographic films to contemporary film and television programs (Bryson 2002; Langton 1993; Knopf 2008).

Edward W Said (2003) discusses the notion of the gaze through the concept of orientalism. Defining it as system of power by the West, Said (2003) examines the ‘orient’ as a European construct and production of power, authority, and superiority by the orientalist (Said 2003:3-7). This power is materialised through a system of separating or Othering the East from the West, the non-European from the European and the orient from the orientalist, in what Said describes as ‘a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment’ (Said 2003:6). This Othering as examined through orientalism draws back to Rigney’s (2003) notion of an imagined reality. Here, the marginalised, colonised and orientalised are constructed through the Western, colonial and white gaze (Rigney 2003:34; Burney 2012:26).

It is at this stage I will discuss the concept of the lens in relation to the gaze. The lens in the context of this research, refers to the filmic lens. This is not to be mistaken with the lens as a tool for critical analysis of literature or text or the physical device attached to a camera. The lens, or filmic lens, is conceptualised in this research as an extension of the gaze. This means that the way we view and understand the world, and those in it, extends further to our lens as filmmakers (Knopf 2008). To push this concept further, I argue that, in turn, this relationship between the gaze and the lens further extends to the audience. Below I have included two conceptual frameworks to illustrate the relationship between the gaze, the lens and the audience beginning with our ontology/ways of being. The first conceptual framework Figure 3 serves as a starting point to illustrate this relationship showing how each concept corresponds with the other. The second conceptual framework builds on Figure 3, incorporating the extended relationship our lens as filmmakers has with our work and how this connects to our audiences and in turn their own gaze.
To elaborate further, Suneeti Rekhari (2007:1-2) reveals evidence through an assessment of Australian filmography that the ever-changing cinematic environment and its narratives have played an influential role in presenting and shaping racial hierarchy and systematic beliefs. Rekhari (2007) discusses cinematic and photographic pictures as a vehicle that constructs an audience’s reality.

Film assembles images together to disseminate compelling narratives to a vast audience at the same time. Hence audiences become involved in the process of representation. They become more than mere passive receptacles of the images that are presented to them. (Rekhari 2007:1)

Rekhari (2007) shares this statement to convey the relationship that filmmakers, films, and audiences have in the construction of representation in Australia. Building on this is the understanding that these depictions often sit within a characterisation of comfortability for non-Indigenous audiences that ‘extends a colonial “gaze” on Aboriginal issues and ultimately Aboriginal representation’ (Rekhari 2007:2). It is for this reason, that film and television are recognised to hold significant power in influencing the attitudes and perspectives of audiences (Bostock 1997:6). This understanding further supports the argument that with such influence and power situated in motion picture, there is a need for responsibility, care, and consideration in the work produced by filmmakers.
The colonial gaze and lens are evident in the work of screen practitioners both in Australia and internationally. The discourse on misrepresentation within film and television is active on an international level, with many references to First Nations people outside of Australia. John Cones’ (2012) *Patterns of Hollywood Bias* highlights racial stereotyping and patterns of misrepresentation predominantly towards multicultural minority groups including First Nations peoples in North America (Cones 2012:13). Cones emphasises that despite minority groups speaking up, little initiative had been taken in the United States to change patterns of on-screen bias, arguing that ‘movies mirror the values, interests, cultural perspectives and prejudices of their makers – not to an absolute degree, but as a general rule’ (Cones 2012:5).

In Australia, films and content depicting Indigenous peoples, communities, cultures, stories, and content have shown diverse representations that have raised important debate regarding the colonial lens and its impact and agenda (Australian Film Commission 2003; ABC News 2017). To examine this further I will give key examples pertaining to a variety of film content and genres including live action feature films, documentaries, short films and stop motion animation. These examples will be used to further support the concept of the colonial lens and gaze in filmmaking, and how this is being mitigated in the Australian screen Industry today. To begin this dialogue, I will start by discussing one of earliest examples of Indigenous representation in Australian film, Charles Chauvel’s *Jedda or Jedda the Uncivilised* (Chauvel 1955) as it was known internationally.

*Jedda* became not only renowned for being the first Australian made film in technicolour, but the first to have Indigenous Australian actors at the forefront of a film. Today, the film sparks much debate. Many film critics look back on it as paving a pathway for Australian Indigenous peoples in film with a strong message about the negative impact of assimilation. This is mostly attributed to the film’s ending in which main characters Jedda and Marbuck ultimately meet death. It is this plot that draws the conclusion that the assimilation of *Aborigines* can never truly work as the characters primitive ways are too strong.
Comparatively, Creed and Hoorn (2001) challenge this perspective by unpacking whether *Jedda* was a stance against assimilation or in fact a way of justifying it to non-Indigenous audiences. They argue that in the end Marbuck’s death is the result of his clan and that Jedda’s death could have been avoided if only she had listened to her white mother and integrated into white society. This critique is important as it highlights the notion that both characters’ deaths were not at the hands of the coloniser and therefore displayed a justification of the assimilation and child removal policy in place at the time (Creed and Hoorn 2001:15).

Acclaimed director and writer Beck Cole (2016) writes ‘*Jedda* is a lens into ‘50s white Australia’, and recalls what it was like watching the film for the first time as a child. Like many Aboriginal people who have seen the film, Cole does not dismiss the experience of what it was like seeing Aboriginal people for the first time on the silver screen. For her, this included seeing family members as she writes ‘these were people that were familiar to me but not in this way – not on the screen.’ (Cole 2016:para.2). Cole concludes that *Jedda* is reflective of its time, and in turn reflective of a white and privileged cinematic gaze that portrays Aboriginal peoples as ‘primitive’ and ‘docile’ (Cole 2016:para.6). This display of Aboriginal peoples as submissive and primal characters can be extended back to the exoticism and sexualisation of Indigenous people by the coloniser discussed earlier in this section, positioning the characters amongst the flora and fauna of the Australian landscape. This is also evident in the film’s advertising, with posters using slogans like ‘A story of eve in ebony!’ and ‘It was DEATH for him to look upon this girl’ (See Figure 5). It is as Cole affirms what must be reflected upon as we work towards better representations of Indigenous peoples in the film and television industry that are real, truthful and told with integrity (Cole 2016:para.8).
The primitive, exoticised and uncivilised representations at play in film are also evident in Australian stop motion animation. One of the most distinctive and earliest examples of Aboriginal representationalism in animation is Australian children’s program *Wambidgee* (Copland 1962). Despite being acknowledged as an early attempt to represent Aboriginal peoples and characters, the program is evidently reflective of a lack of knowledge of Aboriginal culture and perpetuates common racial stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples, communities, and culture. Liz McNiven (n.d.B:‘Wambidgee’) explains that the narratives use generalisation and fail to recognise the ‘unique cultural identities’ of Aboriginal peoples and culture. Despite this, it is suggested that when examining this program through a critical lens, consideration to the era in which it was made should not be overlooked. Regardless of this consideration, from my own standpoint, and as McNiven (n.d.B:‘Wambidgee’) acknowledges, there is discomfort in viewing this series as there are ill-informed storylines and puppets that are arguably reflective of Jim Crow caricatures.
In relation to the examination of the non-Indigenous lens, Marcia Langton (1993) argues:

Representation and aesthetic statements of Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people transform the Aboriginal reality. They are accounts. It is in these representations that Aboriginal as subject becomes, under the white gaze imagining the Aboriginal, the object. The audience, however, might be entirely unaware that they are observing an account, usually by the authorial we of the other. The creative efforts of filmmakers, video producers, broadcasters and artist to represent some particular Aboriginal ‘reality’, even if there is an attempt at involving the Aboriginal subject in the production, is always a fictionalisation, an act of creative authority (Langton 1993:40).

Langton’s (1993) contextualising of the account in the construction of (mis)representation puts forward a key point; non-Indigenous filmmakers bring with them a non-Indigenous lens and are removed from the stories they are working with. This is not to suggest that non-Indigenous filmmakers should not work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories
and concepts. Instead, non-Indigenous filmmakers carry a responsibility to recognise how their own lens can impact the work they produce including the way it is received by audiences. Reflecting on the discussions of *Jedda* (Chauvel 1955) and *Wambidgee* (Copland 1962), we come to understand how the lens of non-Indigenous filmmakers have created accounts of Aboriginal people, imagined by the coloniser. Through the critic of Indigenous audiences these accounts as explained by Langton (1993:40) are one of authority and have real life implications for Aboriginal people and communities. Here, we understand the need to disrupt this relationship of the colonial gaze to the lens by presenting our own realities.

It was during the 1970s and 1980s that Indigenous filmmakers became a growing presence in the Australian film and television industry, a movement which would give voice to Indigenous people and culture, challenging the colonial lens of filmmakers and the colonial gaze of audiences (Screen Australia: ‘The Black list’ 2014). Producers, directors, writers, and actors such as Essie Coffey, Bruce McGuiness, Gary Foley, David Gulpilil, Richard Frankland, Brian Syron, Tracey Moffatt, Rachael Perkins, Leah Purcell, Beck Cole, Warrick Thornton, and Wayne Blair are among several Indigenous screen practitioners who have contributed to shaping what has become a developing platform for Indigenous peoples in key roles within the Australian film and television industry. Films made by leading Indigenous filmmakers including *Blackfire* (McGuinness 1972) *My Survival as an Aboriginal* (Coffey 1978), *The Cake Man* (Merritt 1978), *Night Cries* (Moffatt 1990) *Jindalee Lady* (Syron 1992) *No Way to Forget* (Frankland 1996), *Radiance* (Perkins 1998), *Samson and Delilah* (Thornton 2009), *Bran Nue Dae* (Perkins 2010), *Beneath Clouds* (Sen 2002) and *The Sapphires* (Blair 2012) are among a long list of critically acclaimed works that have paved the way and given voice to Indigenous Australian stories on screen, challenging the lens of non-Indigenous filmmakers (Screen Australia: ‘The Black List’ 2014).

McNiven (n.d.A.:‘The rise of Indigenous screen culture’) examines the changes of Australian cinema stating, ‘Australian films have jumped from depicting Indigenous peoples through racist clichés to Indigenous creatives using film and television to document their cultures, promote social change and to entertain, thus entering the mainstream’ (McNiven n.d.A:‘The rise of Indigenous screen culture’). McNiven recognises a positive change in the way the filmic gaze is being decolonised through Indigenous Australian screen practitioners,
predicting a continued change and further transformation to be shaped by new Indigenous screen practitioners and a new generation of audiences (McNiven n.d.A.: ‘The rise of Indigenous screen culture’). This change can be further attributed to the practices, and a shift in the filmic lens of filmmakers, of those in key creative roles and Indigenous screen initiatives (Huijser and Collins 2007:1; Janke 2009).

Contributing to this shift is the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and screen practitioners including Janke (2003, 2009), Langton (1993), Johnson (2001), Bostock (1997) Mackinolty and Duffy (1987). Within their work has been the development and production of cultural protocol documents and discourse pertaining to the filmic lens and its practises with Indigenous people, communities, cultures, and concepts. This has been significant because it has offered screen practitioners, particularly non-Indigenous practitioners’ comprehensive guidelines and advice regarding ethical and legal issues concerning Indigenous peoples, culture and concepts in film and television. One of the most current documents Pathways and Protocols: A filmmaker’s guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts (Janke 2009) is readily available through the Screen Australia (2021) website and is a document I have found in my own practice to be the most known by screen practitioners today. Outlining cultural protocols in relational to core filmmaking stages, this document includes snippet examples and commentary from a range of practitioners and productions. What this provides, is an array of understanding of the diversity of First Nations peoples, stories, cultures, and protocols, and how that has been experienced and navigated in Australian filmmaking practice (Janke 2009).

Not dismissing the importance of these documents and the way they have shaped the Australian filmic landscape, this research aims to continue critical discourse pertaining to First Nations peoples, communities, cultures, and content from a position of relationality. This includes the development, production and analysis of a practice-based film unpacked as an entire body of work. Additionally, because current filmmaking protocol documents are primarily centred on live action and documentary filmmaking, presenting an examination of stop motion animation extends this knowledge into a different form and process.
Based on the above discourse, it is evident that there is a shifting and changing landscape in the Australian screen industry. I recognize that this change is something still taking place and that there is still value to be added in the resources, discourses, and practices of filmmaking, including the way films are being developed, produced, and utilised in the current filmic space. This insight is significant as it offers an understanding of the impact that Indigenous screen practitioners have had regarding social change, privileging First Nations voices, self-determination, and cultural preservation.

**Filmmaking at the Cultural Interface**

The filmic gaze and lens discourse can be informed by cultural interface theory; a theory that brings understanding and examination to the complexities of navigating and mitigating a space amongst, between, and within the gaze and lens. This will provide an opportunity for further enquiry regarding mitigation and navigation of this contested space from a filmic lens. In turn it will also create a foundation of knowledge into Indigenous standpoint theory which will follow cultural interface theory.

Martin Nakata (2007:322) describes the cultural interface as more than an intersection or clash of two separate cultures. From his own positioning as a Torres Strait Islander, Nakata (2007) defines this space as an interface of complex intersecting trajectories.

> It [the cultural interface] is a multi-layered and multi-dimensional space of dynamic relations constituted by the intersections of time, place, distance, different systems of thought, competing and contesting discourses within and between different knowledge traditions, and different systems of social, economic and political organisation. It is a space of many shifting and complex intersections between different people, with different histories, experiences, languages, agendas, aspirations, and responses. (Nakata 2007:323)

As Nakata (2007) outlines above, the complexity of the cultural interface is more than the meeting of black and white. It is a space that comprises ever moving relations that shape, shift and evolve in every aspect of our lived realities. This includes the way we understand
and explain our world including lived and shared experiences; the way we understand our identities and the identities of others; and the way we come to understand, access, and engage with knowledge and its acquisition and production. It is also a space of conflict, contention, and contradiction that has shaped what is known, how it is known and who can know it (Nakata 2007:323-324).

What is evident in Nakata’s examination of the cultural interface is the understanding that it is not simply a space that one walks into and steps out of but is lived and navigated by Indigenous people as a constant. This understanding can be recognised in dialogue used by other Indigenous scholars who talk of this concept as walking in two worlds or two eyed seeing (Frazer and Yunkaporta 2019:3; Marsh et al. 2015:4). This idea of moving through and working at the cultural interface extends further in this research, as my participants and I navigate our own ways of being (ontology), knowing (epistemology), doing (methodology) and valuing (axiology) in the filmmaking process. With this notion of walking in two worlds this research approaches the question of how one navigates the cultural interface within the filmic space.

Based on Nakata’s examination of the complexities of the cultural interface, it is evident that there is no one single answer to this question, and nor should there be. The complexities of such intersections and trajectories between, amongst, and within Indigenous and Western worlds means there is no one-size-fits all answer. For example, Indigenous peoples in Australia belong to diverse Nations, with diverse lores, protocols, knowledge systems, languages, and living histories. For this reason, the lived and shared experience of Indigenous peoples and communities in Australia should not be generalised. This is the reason I have stated from the outset that this research is situated in my own positioning as a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman and my Elders’ positioning as Wiradjuri people, connected to the Sandhills of Narrandera on Wiradjuri Country. This positioning is important because it generates an understanding that this framework of filmmaking practice situated in Wiradjuri ways of valuing (axiology), being (Ontology), knowing (epistemology) and doing (methodology) and that data, findings, and outcomes in this research will not be reflective of the lived and shared experiences of all Indigenous peoples in Australia. I reiterate that this research does not present a copy and paste process, but a starting point for screen
practitioners to understand how such complexities and trajectories between, amongst, and within Indigenous and Western worlds may be successfully navigated to achieve common ground, innovation, problem solving, and transformation.

Nakata pinpoints that navigating the cultural interface involves more than the inclusion of Indigenous narratives, content, and perspectives, but that it also requires an understanding of ontological positioning (Nakata cited in Maakrun & Maher 2016:para.4). Tyson Yunkaporta (2009) builds on the cultural interface theory with the *Boomerang Matrix of Cultural Interface Knowledge* (see Figure 7, Yunkaporta 2009:4). Yunkaporta (2009) overlaps and intersects Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge with the highest point of knowledge exchange taking place at the top of the boomerang. It is at this highest point, Yunkaporta explains, that common ground and innovation occur (Yunkaporta 2009:4). In summary this diagram illustrates a way to conceptualise how different levels of knowledge can impact knowledge transmission and production at the cultural interface and how this exchange can be productive, innovative, transformative, and respectful.

Figure 7. Boomerang matrix of cultural interface knowledge.

Source: (Yunkaporta 2009:4).
In the context of this research, this means a space where filmmaking can have these same outcomes. It also presents a potential for a higher-level of connection and knowledge transmission for screen practitioners working with Aboriginal people, communities, culture, knowledge, stories, and content within their own filmic lens, and a way, in turn, for the same connection to be made with audiences.

An example of knowledge exchange at the cultural interface in the filmic space is the filmmaking bootcamp that took place in 2019 with Griffith Film School and Falmouth University students. As an exercise to build resilience and teamwork, the students worked over four days to bring stories from the Koa mob to life through 3-minute stop motion animation. The project is an example of filmmaking at the Interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaborators where Elders recognised through the process, the possibility of sharing and passing on knowledge, and film students were about to build on their own skill set and knowledge through the collaboration and exchange (Crossen 2019).

Emerging in the 1970s and 1980s, feminist standpoint theory became a way for marginalised groups to critique and analyse their own experiences of the world outside social constructs that have excluded and suppressed them within and from the production of knowledge. Indigenous standpoint theory derived from feminist standpoint theory is, as Nakata (2007) explains, a method of enquiry that allows us to engage with the complexities of our lived realities as colonised peoples (Nakata 2007:346-347). As Nakata (2007), Foley (2006), Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020) point out, an Indigenous standpoint is more than a perspective or point of view waiting to be uncovered or a ‘hidden wisdom’ that Indigenous people hold (Foley 2006:29; Nakata 2007:348). When I first came to understand Indigenous standpoint theory myself, I was caught in the notion that my own perspective was what achieved strong objectivity in my work. However, Nakata warns us of this, stating that our lived experiences and perspectives do not give us an automatic authority over being a ‘knower’ but rather that we should see our lived experiences as a point of entry into developing an Indigenous standpoint (Nakata 2007:347-349). It is for this reason that Indigenous standpoint theory requires reflexivity and constant examination of the way our own positioning impacts our research process and its outcomes. Nakata (2007) explains:
In these ways we can deploy an Indigenous standpoint to help unravel and untangle ourselves from the conditions and delimit who, what or how we can or can’t be, to help ourselves with some charge of the everyday, and to help understand our varied responses to the colonial world. (Nakata 2007:353)

In summary, Indigenous standpoint theory allows us to reconsider the relationship between our research and positioning as we navigate the complexities of the cultural interface. I argue that relational processes such as the methodology included in this research design will provide a foundation to examine this space. As a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman, researcher, and filmmaker I do however acknowledge that my positioning as an insider amongst my participants from a cultural and relational positioning may frame my examination of the cultural interface differently as opposed to a researcher or screen practitioner positioned as an outsider.

I argue that cultural interface theory is essential to the framing of this study and the development of an Indigenous standpoint through the practice of filmmaking. Working with Indigenous Australian peoples, communities, culture, and concepts in the space of filmmaking means working at and navigating the cultural interface. For this reason, there needs to be consideration of how the research process is conducted and experienced by all those involved. Considering this will provide a space that will allow individuals to come together to examine their own perspectives, lived experiences, and understandings, creating a higher level of knowledge production between and amongst those navigating the cultural interface.

**Relationality**

The previous sections of this literature review identified the complexities of the cultural interface by examining the past and current relationships Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have had in both the research and filmic space. To follow this discourse is the concept of *relationality*. The purpose of shifting the literature review to this concept is now to extend the dialogue from the problem to the solution. With the cultural interface such a
contested and complex domain, I ask here, what devices can be employed to move through and engage with this space safely, respectfully, appropriately, and productively as a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi screen practitioner and researcher? It is at this stage I introduce relatedness theory, relational accountability and positioning, and agency.

The concept of relationality is situated in the research of several First Nations scholars including Karen Martin (2008), Brian Martin (2017), Shawn Wilson (1999) Tyson Yunkaporta and Doris Shillingsworth (2020). Across their work is the connection of relationality to knowledge that also examines the intersections and pitfalls of Western approaches to research in an Indigenous research space. These discussions of relationality, relatedness, and interconnectedness are not only important in positioning the researcher within the research, but present Indigenous ways of valuing (axiology), being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and doing (methodology) as a valid, ethical, and decolonising approach to conducting respectful, rigorous research that supports the development of an Indigenous standpoint and the production of new knowledge (Martin 2008; Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020).

Furthermore, I will define and examine relationality and relatedness theory through the discussion of Indigenous ways of valuing (axiology) being, (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and doing (methodology), positioning and agency (Martin 2008; Martin 2017; Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020). This examination provides a foundation for the theoretical framework and key concepts to be presented with relevance to the research design and its application to the filmmaking process. To begin with, this section presents the discourse on how relationality sits at the centre of an Aboriginal worldview, how it has a reciprocal agency and requires accountability, and how it can only be considered through an autoethnographic lens.

**Relationally responsive processes**

Relatedness can be defined as ‘the state or fact of being related or connected’ (Lexico 2020). In an Aboriginal world view the concept of relatedness or having relationality is integral to Aboriginal ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. From her own positioning as
a Noonuccal woman with Ancestral ties to Bidjara Land, Karen Martin explains that ‘[r]elatedness exists amongst entities and between entities’ such as people amongst people, people and plants, and people to Country (2008:70). As an ontological premise situated in cultural respect and safety, relationality is framed as ‘relatedness theory’ encompassing three conditions called ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing (Martin 2008:9). It is these Ways that orientate axiology, epistemology, ontology, and methodology in an Aboriginal worldview of relationality and therefore as a relational process. Building on ways of being, knowing and doing, Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020) discuss Ways of valuing, explaining:

‘Relational Process’ is at the heart of ‘Being’ – in Aboriginal worldviews an entity cannot exist unless is in relation to something else, and so our ontology (way of Being) is a process of relating to the world (Sheehan and Walker, 2001). This is shaped by our epistemology – our process of Knowing and thinking, which in turn shaped by our operating process or methodology (Steinhauer, 2002). Whatever metaphor you use as an Indigenous person to describe these layers of relatedness – doing, Knowing, being; hands, brain, heart; methodology, epistemology, ontology – there is something missing. The missing part is spirit, informing your ways of valuing or axiology (Kahakalau, 2004). (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020:2)

Figure 8. Different metaphors describing layers of standpoint.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Metaphors for Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Process</td>
<td>Axiology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Process</td>
<td>Ontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Process</td>
<td>Epistemology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Process</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020:3)
These metaphors of relatedness (see Figure 8, Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020:3) identify four processes that provide a culturally respectful and safe paradigm for developing a relationally responsive standpoint, upholding relational accountability, and a system of knowledge transmission and production (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020:2-3).

Each metaphor signifies a different process that connects to the other with axiology and ontology positioned before epistemology and methodology. The reason for this, as Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020) explain, is that our ways of valuing and being, our ethical and relational processes, are centred in ‘rigorous law and relations’ (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020:3) and therefore should be the starting point and foundation for our projects. When conducted with integrity and respect, these stages will inform ways of Knowing and doing, our intellectual and operational processes in a way that is suitable, accountable and of benefit to the community (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020:3). For example, the core aim of this research project is not centred on a sole desire to make successful content but seeks to bring knowledge back into the community by developing a successful process that utilises filmmaking as a vehicle for passing on knowledge. This is not to say that there is no consideration of how the film is developed, produced, and presented visually and as a story, but rather that developing and producing a film situated in these relationally responsive processes will provide the pathway to be able to successfully achieve that.

Shawn Wilson (2008) supports this by presenting Indigenous ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology in an Indigenous research paradigm in relation to a circle (Wilson 2008:70). This circular way of conceptualising these elements (see Figure 9, Wilson 2008:70) presents the reciprocal relationship each has with one another and how this works as a cycle. Wilson (2008) furthers this concept by identifying how relationships or relationality is at the core of each component.

Relationality seems to sum up the Indigenous research paradigm to me. Just as the components of the paradigm are related, the components themselves all have to do with relationships. The ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that
form a mutual reality. The axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships. (Wilson 2008:71)

Figure. 9 Indigenous research paradigm.


This relational accountability must be localised and relational (community) upholding ‘respect, reciprocity, and responsibility’ (Wilson 2008:99). Wilson (2008) furthers this notion with the idea that objectivity denies relational accountability. This concept is significant to the research design as it supports the need for subjectivity to be recognised as unavoidable, evidently present, and justifiably significant to the way in which the world is understood and experienced by human beings, with objectivity not reflective of how the real world operates (Wilson 2008:101; Wright 2012:39). As Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020) explain this does not mean that unexamined subjective views are justified as research or an Aboriginal standpoint, but that our lived realities, relationships, and experiential knowledge are positioned in ‘a framework of law, relations, knowledge and practice’ (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020:1) and are a way of coming into a standpoint and new knowledge (Nakata 2007). Therefore, to uphold relational accountability, which in turn supports ethical practice, cultural safety, and privileges Aboriginal voices, it can be understood that the process for working with Aboriginal people, communities, and culture, in both research and filmmaking should be centred on relationship building that is egalitarian, localised and
relationally responsive. To extend this examination of relational accountability and our ethical, relational, intellectual, and operational processes, I will now introduce the notion of *positioning*.

In an Indigenous worldview, positioning oneself, positioning Country and positioning knowing clarifies a way of reconfiguring the general knowledge economy without the reliance on the question of ‘objectivity’. (Martin 2017:10)

Positioning oneself, participants, and Country in research is significant for Indigenous peoples as it provides information ‘about one’s cultural location, so that connection can be made on political, cultural and social grounds and relations established’ (Martin and Mirraboopa 2009:204). The *Guidelines and principles for pre-ethical approaches to indigenous Australian research* (2016) establishes positioning as an important factor that impacts the ‘relationality between you and the participants’ (Martin et al. 2016:5). This guide outlines what should be considered in the research design for conducting ethical and culturally safe practice when working with Indigenous people and communities. This includes a clear understanding of the researcher and participants positioning, locality and connection to other entities. By doing this, the research recognises the impact that these factors have from the outset of a study, providing opportunity for relationship building based on mutual respect, transparency, accountability, and reciprocity. Furthermore, the guide outlines the need for research to recognise Indigenous participants as producers of knowledge in the process, not objects to be studied. To facilitate this process, it is outlined that principles and timeframes need to be agreed upon in consultation with participants and that lived experience and relationality is not stagnant but is ever shifting and changing (Barrett et al. 2016:6).

Martin explains that applying these directions ‘create[s] a relational narrative within research epistemology, where the researcher, participants, and entities co-exist and claim their agency’ (Martin 2017:8). Gerlach (2018) discusses the notion that our ‘social identities’ such as our beliefs, culture, and location have significant connection to knowledge construction (Gerlach 2018:4). This once again reiterates the understanding that we are not separate and detached from our research and how critically thinking about our positioning,
its impact on our relationships, and the way we conduct, gather, analyse, and produce knowledge brings a process of reflexivity that acknowledges the connection of our ways of knowing to our ways of doing. Furthermore Gerlach (2018) recognises this concept and its process to correlate with decolonising methodology and provide an opportunity for collaborative knowledge production that is rigorous, multifaceted and ‘centred on Indigenous participants’ perspectives and lived experiences (Gerlach 2018: 5).

A prominent example of this was research conducted ‘in, through and with’ (Wright et al. 2012:39) Bawaka. Bawaka, a community in Northeast Arnhem land in the Northern Territory of Australia became a part of a research collaboration between non-Indigenous academics and Indigenous researchers. Learning from Indigenous researcher Laklak Burarrwanga, non-Indigenous researchers Sarah Wright and Sandie Suchet-Pearson recorded their time spent learning to weave on Country. What their recording and transcript revealed was how their relationship with family including their young children, and other non-human entities such as sandflies on the beach, impacted the weaving process. This extended further to other instances of non-verbal and implicit moments such as silence during concentration, and the watching and doing of the weaving techniques. Despite these findings Wright et al. (2012) identify that these natural occurrences are rarely ‘acknowledged or shared’ in research but often form ‘the essence of our research relationships’ (Wright et al. 2012:49). In addition to this was the understanding of how positioning and relational factors contributed to the co-construction of knowledge. For example, their shared woman- and mother-hood enabled them to not only have the research encounter (as weaving is recognised as women’s business), but directly impacted their access to knowledge and how it was acquired, shaped, experienced, and produced (Wright et al. 2012:49).

**Relationality, Agency, and Knowledge production**

that there is an occurrence of intra-activity within and amongst entities. This is significant to 
an Aboriginal world view as it supports the idea that relationality has a reciprocal agency.

Agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or 
something has. Agency cannot be designated as an attribute of ‘subjects’ or ‘objects’ (as 
they do not pre-exist as such). Agency is not an attribute whatsoever—it is ‘doing’/’being’ in 
its intra-activity. (Barad 2003:26-27)

Agency, as Barad (2003) explains, is enacted and not a separate attribute held by entities 
that merely ‘interact’ (Barad 2003: 26-27). It is for this reason Martin explains that there is 
no separation between method (epistemology) and content (knowledge/ontology) in 
Indigenous Australian ideology (Martin 2017:3). This discussion of the relationality of 
method to content forms an understanding as to why Indigenous research approaches, such 
as those that frame this research, value experiential, lived and shared knowledge. Martin 
invites us to consider the idea of ‘onto-epistemology’ and how this way of thinking impacts 
the way knowledge is understood, acquired, and produced through relational approaches to 
research including how knowledge itself has agency (Martin 2017:11).

At the cultural interface, Martin (2017) discusses the validity of an Indigenous Australian 
Ideology and cultural framework premised on relationality arguing that Western approaches 
to research can have negative implications for Indigenous Australian people. Interrogating 
an Althusserian framework (Althusser 1971:163) that claims ideology is formed through an 
imagined consciousness and constructed through representationalism (Martin 2017:4), 
Martin (2017) argues that this way of thinking not only devalues Indigenous ways of 
knowing but presents limitations as ‘it has little relationship to the existence of everyday 
living’ (Martin, 2017:4). Taking this further Martin explains:

Within the context of Australian society, the only legitimate research practice in relation to 
Aboriginal culture and identity is one where there is no separation between method 
(epistemology) and content (knowledge/ontology). It is also one that values the premise of 
lived experience as ontologically significant within research. Lived experience refuses the 
notion of an imaginary relationship to existence. How knowledge is acquired from
Indigenous communities is paramount to the research process. We have to create an ontological space of cultural ideology in order to reaffirm the cohesion between life, culture, Country, practice and memory, which is opposed to an ideology constructed within an Althusserian framework. (Martin 2017:6)

Building on the understanding of agency, and the notion that Country has agency, is another example from the Bawaka research (Wright et al. 2012). This study focused on the significance and impact of relationships in research through human to human, and human and non-human relationships such as Country and all its entities. Through employing and examining collaborative storytelling, the study found that there was an undeniable role and relationship between and amongst the researchers with Country and the way knowledge was produced and enacted in, through, and with it. For this reason, it is further argued by the researchers that storytelling in a research paradigm created opportunity for the researcher to engage, experience, and understand knowledge production in a way that was dynamic, transformative, and beyond the confines of objectivity and disembodiment. Furthermore, it was recognised that the process of collaborative storytelling was multidimensional, and dynamically shifted and shaped the dialogue and the production of knowledge between both humans and nonhumans (Wright et al. 2012:39-42).

To move beyond the human/nonhuman binary in our storytelling, we look to Aboriginal Australian concepts of Country in which place is relationally defined and continually co-created by both human and nonhuman agents. Acknowledging and engaging with the embodied, more-than-human nature of research contributes to an enlarged understanding of how knowledge is co-produced, experienced, and storied. (Wright et al. 2012:39)

This acknowledges potential possibilities regarding knowledge transmission and production when considering the same concepts in the filmmaking process. Furthermore, it is important to examine the way relationality, its agency and intra-activity influences and shapes the filmmaking process, particularly in stop motion animation.

Frazer and Yunkaporta (2019) examine the transmission and production of knowledge through high and low context cognition (Frazer and Yunkaporta 2019:2). High and low
context refers to the way in which different cultures communicate, share, produce and receive knowledge. These are differentiated through a cognitive orientation that is dependent or interdependent with many Indigenous cultures identified as high context. This is further recognised through implicit, non-verbal, and non-written cognitive practices that are centred on long term relationships, and polychronic and non-linear processes. What is important to note is that these are not solely recognised as separate to Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, with Frazer and Yunkaporta (2019) explaining that high context cognition has been identified in non-Indigenous communities such as Scotland, Russia, and other parts of the world (Frazer and Yunkaporta 2019:2). This is significant because it further asserts that relationally responsive cultures and processes present an opportunity for knowledge production that supports high context cognition.

Summary

To conclude the literature review, it was identified that the historic relationship between Indigenous peoples, communities and the Australian film industry has been problematic. This was evident in both past and current depictions of First Nations peoples in filmic content through what is described as the colonial or western filmic gaze and lens. This evidence further supports the notion that the way in which Indigenous peoples, communities and culture has been depicted, has contributed to the exoticism, sexualisation, discrimination, degradation, and racial stereotyping of First Nations peoples. In addition to this, it was identified that these depictions had a great impact on audiences, playing a significant role in influencing perceptions of Indigenous peoples, communities, and cultures in Australia.

Also identified, was evidence indicating a shift in the Australian filmic landscape, including the way Indigenous stories and content is being made and a change in who is making it. This was further apparent by past and current Indigenous screen initiatives and cultural protocol documents. Additionally, this highlighted evidence suggesting that the colonial gaze can and is being disrupted in contemporary filmmaking through the lens of Indigenous screen practitioners. Despite this shift, it was recognized that there is still value to be added to the
filmic space regarding the filmmaking process when working with Indigenous people, communities, culture, and content in Australia. It was identified that although there are critical film protocol documents available regarding Indigenous peoples, cultures, and content, there is not yet available an examination of the filmic process from a position of relationality. Furthermore, this research addresses a gap in knowledge by holistically situating filmmaking practice in Indigenous ways of valuing (axiology), being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and doing (methodology) through practice led research and stop motion animation. A discussion of Nakata’s (2007) cultural interface theory has highlighted the complexities of navigating two worlds as colonised peoples. In film, navigating a space predominantly framed by a non-Indigenous lens evidently presents challenges. Here we understand how relationally responsive processes help us navigate this space to achieve productivity, innovation and transformation. These processes bring us into a framework of relationality, where our ways of valuing (axiology), being (ontology), knowing (epistemology), and doing (methodology) position, inform, and shape our work. As examined in Brian Martins (2017) work the intra-active agency of knowing to doing reconfigures the way knowledge is shared, developed and produced. Here, practice is essential.
Chapter 4: Marramarra

The relatedness that we have to the world around us also can be seen as the inseparable relationality that we have to making cultural things (Martin 2017:8).

It is essential to unpack the creative work in this research to illuminate the significance of practice and its role in knowledge production, innovation and cultural preservation. Here, we come to understand a correlation between the stop motion animation process and cultural practices that are centred on knowledge transmission through *marramarra*, making, doing and creating (Wiradjuri Dictionary 2010). Together, autoethnography, practice-based research, and yarning facilitate this process, presenting a new pathway that supports cultural preservation, self-determination, and the privileging of Aboriginal voices. Through consultation, collaboration and co-production with Elders (participants), the making of the short film *Sandhill Stories* encompassed an on-going process of creative practice that was framed and informed by relationships, respect, responsibility, reflexivity and reciprocity. From this, emerged an intra-active cycle of yarning, listening, gathering, making, doing, performing, watching and repeating. In Aboriginal cultures practice is central to the way knowledge is acquired, shared, produced and passed on. Furthermore, situating stop motion animation into an Indigenous paradigm premised on relationality, re-configured the way film practice was used. Here, filmmaking shifted from a means of entertainment to a process of connection, between, within, and amongst myself (participant researcher), my Elders (participants), Country, its entities and knowledge itself. This connection is critical as it extends to the wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples and the continuation of culture (Gee et al. 2014:26).

Like other Wiradjuri ways of knowing and doing such as traditional weaving, the stop motion animation process provided a tactile and kinaesthetic process that was emergent and intra-active in its production. From studying Country for production design, to giving puppets and entities life through performative action, the marramarra process transformed the way cultural knowledge was shared, acquired and produced in a way that live action filmmaking would not have offered. This is a testament to practice led research itself because the decision to make a stop motion animation emerged within the process and was not pre-determined prior to the research commencing.
With the notion that stop motion animation became framed and experienced differently when situated in relationally responsive processes, I argue that this form and genre of filmmaking stands within its own right as a valid, holistic and localized approach to decolonising the lens. To unpack these findings, this chapter provides an examination and illustration of the practice-based enquiry with an in-depth interrogation of the creative process. What is also important to note is that due to the interconnectedness of all processes, including the yarning and practice-based work, some of the examples of marramarra presented in this chapter are further examined in Chapter 5: Yarning in Motion.

Previously outlined in Chapter 2: Methodology, this research project involved the development and production the stop motion animation Sandhill Stories, made in consultation, collaboration and co-production with research participants (Elders). This process encompassed fundamental filmmaking stages including development, pre-production, production and post-production. Within all four of these key stages was an ongoing process of creative work that was informed and shaped within yarning circles held with research participants. Although these stages encompass different filmmaking facets, when situated in relationally responsive processes they became interconnected. Within each stage participants and I sometimes would journey back and forth to different stages working on a non-linear path. For example, like the metaphoric camps (Barlo et al. 2020:5) participants and I would visit and re-visit different locations to gather the tools we needed for different purposes as each stage unfolded. For this reason, this chapter interconnects, with key aspects of the film’s development and production re-visited at different stages of the discussion. Furthermore, the marramarra process is presented through one main section. This is reflective the Decolonising the lens conceptual framework (see figure 2) that illustrates the process as a holistic cycle informed by relationality.

To begin the core discussion in this chapter, Intra-active filmmaking unpacks the creative practice. This unfolds through examination of the first phase of marramarra, the development stage, where yarning, drawing, and engaging with Country informed creative development and problem solving. Through the discussion of storyboarding, conceptual drawings and animatics, the early shaping of the film is presented. This process set the practice in motion and provided a foundation for pre-production, where gathering, making, playing and yarning supported key creative decisions prior to shooting. Following this, is
discussions pertaining to material play. Here, the significance of found, recycled and repurposed materials are examined. These materials are not only important to the films design and their connection to the yarning circle knowledge, but involved a process situated in cultural practices. This practice, relating to resourcefulness and survival, involved a reciprocal process of gathering, sharing, deconstructing and reconstructing materials for new purposes. This presents an example of the significance of knowing and doing in an Indigenous research paradigm that does not separate method and content (Martin 2017:6). Furthering this discourse, is an examination of semiotics through an Indigenous lens, where visual communication becomes cultural communication using composition and symbolism. From here, positionality is highlighted, and an understanding is formed regarding the role participants, including I, the participant researcher has in making, shaping, and directing the process. To conclude this section is an outline of the production and post-production stages, which connects to all facets of marramarra. It is here we form an understanding of the intra-active agency of practice and the way this has materialised through stop motion animation situated in cultural processes. This centres back to positionality and relationality which leads into Knowing in action. As the final section, knowing in action summarises the findings and outcomes of the marramarra process, illuminating the impact this has regarding innovation, and the preservation and continuation of culture.

Intra-active filmmaking

It is important to reiterate that in this exegesis the term filmmaking process refers to the creating, making, and practice component of the research project. With both the yarning and filmmaking practised simultaneously, making the work brought forward new considerations of how the stories, knowledge and memories were shared on screen. This included re-framing the stories from a live-action narrative to one that was possible in a stop motion format.

Stop motion animation is a unique form of filmmaking that brings characters and worlds to life through the incremental manipulation of objects on camera. Working frame by frame,
the animator uses puppetry to give inanimate objects life, presenting an illusion of ‘movement, performance and independent life’ (Purves 2015:11). What makes stop motion animation distinct from other forms of filmmaking is the tangible process that forms its creation, where the hand of its maker is at times evident and celebrated (Purves 2015:12). In *Sandhill Stories* the *making* and *maker* are evident through the materials and hand cut aesthetics. This is also evident through the animation itself, with the animating and puppetry presenting as, at times imperfect and unpolished. Here, there is transformation and knowledge acquisition within practice itself. Evident when comparing different scenes is the development of my animation skills emerging within marramarra over the 12-month production stage.

Like most film projects the filmmaking process begins with the development stage. With the idea or concept in place, the writing process begins, and the narrative or story is shaped into a script. This may occur through several drafts, and in some cases, may be influenced by logistics, technicalities, budget and the emergent nature of filmmaking. The process of shaping the stories, memories and knowledge that were shared in the yarning circles and subsequently into a script is further unpacked in *Chapter 5: Yarning in Motion*. Here, I examine the development of *Sandhill Stories* in relation to *marramarra* – making, doing, creating.

To begin, the development stage required research which included a study of Country and stop motion animation. This worked concurrently with other key aspects of the making process. To start the development stage, a visual diary was used to record and facilitate creative development. In film, drawing and sketching are seen as vital to the filmmaking process.

Wallace & Gromit creator Nick Park says that he is constantly doodling. Sketching like this enables him to have free flow thinking, encouraging ideas to emerge naturally without the need to probe and dissect every passing notion (The Art of Aardman 2016:13).

During early development of *Sandhill Stories*, key stories, memories and knowledge identified in the yarning circles were transformed from oral to the visual through initial sketches and drawings. As presented in *The Art of Aardman* (2016) the importance of conceptual drawing in creative practice supports the emergent nature of creative
development. This includes the development of characters through character studies and building a visual identity that further informs the writing process (The Art of Aardman 2016:31). As this practice was in conjunction with yarning, drawing became integral to the film’s development. Due to working in a non-linear process, drawing supported creative development alongside the shifts and changes that occurred within the yarning circle process. These changes happened as new layers to stories and knowledge emerged within each yarning circle. Regarding knowledge production this further proved significant during the review of animated sequences, when some participants re-drew aspects of the scene on paper, building on what was already visualized within the animated sequence.

Once a script of the overarching story was established, a storyboard and animatic was made. The animatic served two important purposes. The first, to support the participants in their review of the films development and assist in key creative decisions before the production began. The second, to have a reference and blueprint of the overarching film during the animation process. To make the animatic, story board frames were implemented into a rough video that provided a basic overview of the entire film. This process started by scanning stills from the storyboard and ordering them sequentially in a video file with consideration to timing and major beats. To finish the animatic, temporary music and sound effects were included to support tone and storytelling. Following the screening of the animatic, changes were made regarding participant feedback. An example of what this looked like for participants can be seen in figure 10. Featuring a rough drawing of possum sheltering in a tree, the clip includes background sound of rain and thunder that accompanied the story while being reviewed by participants. This is further unpacked in Chapter 5: Yarning in Motion where I discuss visual yarning and creative problem solving. Here, we see the how the scene transformed from the possum in the tree to ‘Butcher the dog’ (see Figure 24).
One of the key developments that emerged from the yarning circle process was the theme of resourcefulness and survival that featured in many stories and memories. As a result, with an aim to visually represent resourcefulness, *Sandhill Stories* used found, recycled and re-purposed materials for puppet and production design. This led to a process of *play* with materials taking place during early development facilitating creative development in the same way drawing and sketching enables creative practice. Examples of this activity included studying the behaviour of the Murrumbidgee River using the found materials of plastic wrap and paper (see Figure 11), an idea that developed into the film’s introduction and its title sequence. These ideas were then developed and introduced to participants through drawings and material play in the yarning circles, further supporting the progression of new ideas and key creative decisions. What is important to note is that the process of play in making was significant in the film’s development and production beyond the conceptual ideas of the narrative. For example, the sequence of the water’s edge was ultimately not used in the animation due to technical difficulty that presented itself within the practice of play. Despite not being used in the final cut, this study of the Murrumbidgee River provided an opportunity to examine and engage with Country within the practice of stop motion animation opening the opportunity for other creative ideas to develop. This
performative process of presenting Country through the action and performance of stop
motion animation can be defined as what Martin brings forward as ‘methexical’ (Martin
2013:8-9) knowing in action.

Figure 11. Study of Murrumbidgee River/ playing with glad wrap and plastic sheets.


To record the creative process, a visual diary was kept throughout each stage for conceptual
drawings, reference photographs and material swatches. The purpose of the visual diary
was to document the development of the animation and workshop the visual aspects of the
film including production and puppet design. This process began with a study of Country
which included visits to significant locations including the Sandhills and town beach. These
trips also formed part of the yarning circles, where yarning on Country with participants
allowed verbal, visual, auditory, tactile and tacit knowledge to emerge. For example,
knowledge about Country emerged from taking walks on Country, such as along the
Murrumbidgee River and listening to the soundscape of birds in the trees or families
swimming in the distance. In developing and producing a film, this time on Country not only
prompted further dialogue regarding stories, memories and knowledge, but informed key visual and design components in its happening including the use of texture.

Extending on this notion is the development of the art direction. Spending time on Country and gathering reference photos supported key creative decisions such as the films colour palette. As evident in Figure 12 and Figure 13 a colour palette of muted tones reflective of the Sandhills, Murrumbidgee River, sky scape and Wiradjuri Country was ultimately used, and translated to both the production and puppet design. The concept of using a colour palette informed by Country was important for two key reasons. The first centred in colour theory and the understanding that colour in film presents its own form of communication including mood and tone (Purves 2015:93). The tone for Sandhill Stories was informed by the yarning circles, which was centred on presenting a positive and warm tone reflective of the safety and connectedness that participants had in Country, community and culture. The second reason was informed by yarning circles and the idea of using found, repurposed and recycled materials. This included the reference photographs taken on Country which became a key material itself in the production design.

Figure 12. Reference photographs of Sandhills (Wiradjuri Country).

When making *Sandhill stories*, considering semiotics through an Indigenous lens provided an opportunity to communicate significant information to audiences within in the confines of a 13-minute film. A primary example in *Sandhill Stories* sits within the opening of the film. In the title sequence, a small lizard can be seen perched on the tree positioned central to the screen. Although a small moment in the film, the lizard is used for two purposes. The first and most significant was to communicate that the film is on Wiradjuri Country. The Goanna is the Wiradjuri Totem and although the small lizard is not a Goanna in the film, the lizard silhouette was used to present that connection to audiences. The second, was to convey that the film was beginning by having the lizard move once the title sequence was completed. This scattering of the lizard into the tree was the first movement presented in the animation signifying that the story was beginning.

The making of this scene gives an important example of the intra-activity occurring within, between and amongst myself, participants (Elders) Country, yarning and marramarra. For example, this scene was an initiative made and filmed during the production stage and was not planned prior to shooting. After the original opening sequence of the rivers edge did not work due to complexity, I (the participant researcher) made the sequence through material
play as an alternative to present to participants at the next yarning circle review. Although different from the original concept, the composition was still in consideration of an original suggestion made by a participant. The suggestion was to have a hymn playing in the distance as the title sequence played, a memory based on hearing music from the church echo through the trees. As a result, the idea of the hymn echo through the trees materialized in a different way. From this, came an opportunity to build on the composition with the lizard, and when presented to participants it became a welcomed initiative. Here, we understand positionality. For example, although there was a continuous process of consultation, my participants (Elders) acknowledged and understood the skills and experience I was bringing to the space as a filmmaker. This was reciprocity and accountability in action. In fact, ideas that I would present to participants would further be developed with their own concepts. For instance, instead of using a hymn in the opening due to copyright, the Sandhill song was used with an echo effect based on consultation with participants. This circles back to what Wilson (2008) explains when talking about oral traditions, and how each person sharing understands the other’s role in shaping the process (Wilson 2008:8-9).
Using found, recycled and repurposed materials was a decision central to knowledge shared within the yarning circles and reflective of correlating themes such as resourcefulness and survival. This discussion of resourceful also extended to the making process itself with photographs and materials used multiple times in different scenes and then reused for new purposes. For example, the lizard in the opening scene was cut from an off cut of the tree used in the same shot (see Figure 14). Materials such as used fabric donated by participants were also employed, and featured in multiple shots, crafted into elements of Country such as leaves and used for puppets clothing. Another key material used was a collection of second-hand magazines. During the construction of scenes, puppets and props, magazine pages were examined for colours and textures that correlated to reference photos and concept art. Once found these cuttings were collected and a continued process of play and making occurred. A key example of this can be seen in Figure 15. The scene was included to reflect on the yarning process and uses a variety of recycled, repurposed and found materials. From a teacup crafted from strips of white and blue magazine paper, steam made
from old netting to the improvised use of a sweater worn during the animating of the scene, this process denied the separation of method to content in all its materialization. In fact, the process of gathering and sharing materials this way was situated in cultural practices.

Figure 15. ‘Yarning on Country’.

Source: Still from Sandhill Stories (2021).

Something that was vital to consider within this process was navigating the balance between authenticity and creative licence. For example, some of the stories to be presented within the animation had to be considered within the boundaries of what was possible through the medium and timeline. Although the research design was considerate of the flexibility required when working with community, yarning and practice-based methodologies, there was still time limits within the research project and time spent with participants. For this reason, supporting the progression of the film required mitigating any hurdles regarding timeframe and medium whilst still maintaining cultural integrity and authenticity. As a result, discussing film techniques and visual communication with participants further provided creative problem solving when addressing these issues. For example, dialogue in animation can be difficult to achieve within the medium. Therefore,
offering full transparency with participants about technical limitations, helped facilitate creative thinking and cultural integrity. This included discussing the diverse ways of presenting stories and knowledge on screen.

An example of this is the opening scene featuring the cup of tea in hand (See Figure 15 above). With narration in the background, the scene communicates that yarning is taking place on Country without the visual depiction of talking from a puppet. Created as an alternative due to techniques and timeframe, the focus on the cup of tea and hand was used to communicate a moment of comfort and connection with the listener. This was an example of navigating creative license in the balance of authenticity. As a young person to my Elders (participants) this is scene reflective of our yarning circles which began with social yarning. Social yarning as coined by Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010) often started with the simple act of making my Elders (participants) a cup of tea or coffee and serving some cakes or biscuits. This action is something many Aboriginal people will identify with when spending time with their Elders. As young people, we respect and listen to our Elders and creating a space in the yarning circles that was reflective of that respect, positionality and protocol, such as providing a comfortable space contributed to the integral way the research was conducted. This is reflective of what Barlo et al (2010:3-4) presents when outlining protocols and principles of the yarning circle space. As a result, the idea of presenting yarning on Country was still achieved without losing its authenticity and without the complexities of animating dialogue on puppets. Furthermore, the scene highlights active listening by not having the focus on physical dialogue, but through other visual ques such as the moving of the hand and the social aspect of the cup of tea. In fact, as I reflect upon this scene, having the steam from the tea dissipate as the film proceeded could have been used to communicate the progression of the yarn. Again, this is knowing in action.

Another key step of making *Sandhill Stories* was the development and crafting of puppets who in this project were reflective of the research participants and family members. The construction of puppets began through conceptual drawings, paintings and material play. This included creating the puppets out of water colour paper first and using materials such as blue tack, paper pins, masking tape and radio wire to examine how they moved. Once a base was drawn, the puppets were cut out using a paper scalpel with cuts made at key joints that were re-joined for movement. These joints were made dependent upon on how the
character were required to move in the scene. As the puppets were paper cut out, they did not require sophisticated armature or skeletons however each puppet posed limitations within their movements and delicacy. What is important to note is that puppets were based on participants childhood photos and were made to reflect different ages, with some made as neutral characters based on the extent of detail participants had regarding each story. This decision was discussed with participants due to differences in memories. Doing this created a way to mitigate any discrepancies in memories and provide inclusivity. As example of this is found in the ‘boys in the bath’ sequence (see Figure 16). Different participants had varied memories of who was in the bath. For this reason, I suggested to participants we have four boys, as a way of presenting everyone’s memories, and from these neutral characters conversations can continue.

Figure 16. ‘Boys in the bath’.

Source: Still from Sandhill Stories (2021).
During the making of each character, a key decision pertaining to the puppets design centred on the facial features. Different designs were tested including small features glued onto the puppets faces. Through a process of play, I determined the only way to create detailed features and expressions was in post-production. This was a decision further discussed with participants who had trust in my vision to complete the faces at a later stage. As a result, puppets were animated without facial features. Once each scene was...
completed, image sequences were uploaded into editing software and faces where constructed frame by frame. Although the faces were added digitally, each facial feature including eyes, cheeks, eyebrows, nose and mouth were hand made at a larger scale and reconstructed in photoshop. Figure 18 shows the construction of the eye which used recycled fabric for the iris, water colour paper for the eye lid, magazine cut out pupils and blue tack for the eye reflection. Once a full face was constructed it was replicated, reversed and manipulated using the same individual parts to develop specific expressions. This again became a process of reusing and replicating materials for new purposes as reflected in the yarning circle stories.

Figure 18. Construction of eye in Adobe photoshop.

![Construction of eye in Adobe photoshop.](Source: Yarning in Motion Visual Diary (2019)).

The production process, which required filming and animating, took place with the use of a multiplane camera stand (see figure 19). The multiplane allowed sheets of glass to sit at different levels creating depth of field and provided a base for the puppets and props to be secured to. With the camera in place at a bird’s eye view on a c-stand, lighting was used to assist the narrative and help to bring each element together. Once the scene was in place the puppets were moved incrementally with each frame shot using stop motion software.
This process took 12 months to complete with some sequences taking several weeks for completion based on complexity and duration.

Figure 19. Studio setup with multiplane.

Source: Yarning in Motion Visual Diary (2019).

Shooting the animation incrementally required breaking down actions and motion into smaller parts (see figure 20). This was both time consuming and repetitious, however, to assist this practice, live action videos were taken to replicate the action in the scene. For example, running, walking or even the movement of a spoon in hand were recorded for reference while shooting. This became a process of deconstructing and re-constructing the yarning circle knowledge from oral to visual. Here, the process of gathering and watching live action videos such as the behaviour of the river became reflective of cultural practices where watching, making, moving, repeating, performing was the ‘realization and performance of Country’ (Martin 2013:71).
The post-production stage brought forward a process of constructing the filmed sequences into one singular story. This included cutting filmed scenes based on timing and story, correcting lighting and colour, and adding graphics such as the title sequence and end credits; written in consultation with participants and in consideration to cultural protocols. The opening and closing credits were handwritten, photographed and transported into editing software. Using handwritten typography was a suggestion I (participant researcher) made to participants to reflect on the significance of the physical hand in the films marramarra and maintain the visual consistency of the production. In addition to this was the recording and sourcing of music and sound effects some of which was made with participants and recorded on Country.

One significant output that emerged from research was the making and recording of the Sandhill Song. This is further examined in relation to the yarning circle process in Chapter 5: Yarning in Motion however it is important to note here that other incidents of participant-initiated music and sound also occurred during the making process. A key example of this was during a visit to my Elders (participants) home for review of the animation during the post-production stage. After yarning about the sound and music for the film I discussed the
idea of recording soundscape on Country. In that moment, my Uncle told me to come back the next day early in the morning for the best background soundscape of birds. Adding to this he invited me to go for a drive the same day to call the kookaburras. My Uncle a Wiradjuri Elder who has extensive knowledge of Wiradjuri Country, grabbed a Didgeridoo and off we went on our way to where he would call the kookaburras. With my sound equipment in my backpack my Uncle and I parked his ute where he rested his Didge to play music into the surrounding Country (See Figure 21). Not to long after my Uncle called them from the Didgeridoo, two Kookaburras appeared in the distance (See Figure 22). Although I was not able to record their laughter due to their proximity and lack of verbal response, this exchange with my Uncle demonstrated the relationality of ways of knowing to doing, and method and content (Martin 2017:3). With yarning in motion, intra-activity occurred through my relationship with my Uncle, his relationship to Country and its entities, and our relationality to knowing and doing within the project. Here, comes forward an example of how positionality and relationality impact the acquisition and construction of knowledge (Wright et al 2012).
Figure 21. Uncle Michael Lyons calling the Kookaburras with the Didgeridoo.

Source: Photograph taken by participant researcher (2020).

Figure 22. Kookaburras respond to call.

Source: Photograph taken by participant researcher (2020).
Knowing in action

To conclude this chapter, I ask again ‘What new knowledge/understandings did the studio enquiry and methodology generate that may not have been revealed through other research approaches?’ (Barrett and Bolt 2010:1). I argue that re-configuring the stop motion animation process in an Indigenous paradigm that does not separate method from content presented a new way of facilitating cultural practices and cultural preservation. Firstly, the practice of marramarra within stop motion animation and yarning circle methodology facilitated a process that upheld cultural integrity, safety and protocols (ways of valuing). This assessment is based on the creative outcome itself, *Sandhill Stories*, and the response of participants (Elders) who actively contributed to the development and production of the research project. In terms of marramarra (ways of Knowing and doing) recognizing participant-initiated outcomes such as the *Sandhill song* and the collection of sounds, images and materials, demonstrates a process that privileged the voices and supported the self-determination (ways of being and valuing) of all participants involved. Not only were participants active in shaping what stories were told, they actively engaged in a process of shaping how these stories were presented. Furthermore, the practice of making a stop motion animation shared a significant correlation to the relationship of making and doing that Indigenous ideology and cultural practices are centred on (Martin 2013:8-9).

Through practice, the research revealed new knowledge that was emergent, informed and directed by the making itself. This presents knowledge that is lived, shared and experiential, producing outcomes that could have only been achieved through practice-based methodologies. It asserts the relational agency of knowing by positioning Country, people and entities in the research within a ‘practice of relatedness’ (Martin 2017:8). This agency is intra-active and facilitated through relationships, positionality and lived experience. Within the work presented, we can understand that positioning filmmaking in an Indigenous framework of relationality demonstrates that method is content (Martin 2017), and for Aboriginal communities and families, is an example of learning through culture not just about culture (RAET 2012:4). Directed through relationships, respect, responsibility, reflexivity and reciprocity, these ways of valuing have informed the marramarra process, resulting in a higher level of connection within Country, culture, community and kinship.
Here relationally responsive processes shift storytelling in the filmic space, from being one centred on entertainment to one of further cultural significance. This is important because it reveals innovation at the cultural interface of filmmaking, in turn offering potential opportunities for further knowledge sharing and production in other First Nations communities. The importance here is the relations to cultural preservation and the passing on of knowledge in Aboriginal communities. This circles back to survival and the continuation of culture for future generations. As Foley (2006:27) brings forward traditional or cultural knowledge is not static, it has changed, evolved and adapted. In response, this research reveals the same notion by reshaping the filmmaking process, specifically stop motion animation, and in turn shifted its lens. To further this discussion, I extend the practice-based research further into the yarning circle process.
Chapter 5: Yarning in Motion

The application and engagement of yarning circles, autoethnography, and practice led research in the filmmaking process, more specifically stop-motion animation, gave insight into how filmmaking practice situated in relationally responsive processes informs and impacts the filmic lens. The yarning circle process became not only informative to the short film’s narrative but shaped and informed critical aspects of the film’s development and production. This finding established an understanding as to how the yarning circle process was not only a way of sharing and gathering knowledge but presented itself as an emergent research method that facilitated problem solving and new opportunities for knowledge transmission and production through the filmic lens. In addition to this, these processes provided a safe cultural and creative space for knowledge sharing and production that was considerate of the complexities and intersections of the cultural interface.

This chapter examines these findings through an account of the yarning circle process, unpacking key moments and knowledge that led to significant turning points in the film’s development and production. Analysing this information will provide further insight into how to potentially navigate the cultural interface within filmmaking practice situated in Indigenous ways of being (ontology), Knowing (epistemology), doing (methodology) and Valuing (axiology) from both an insider’s and outsider’s positioning. From a relational perspective, as a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi woman, this discussion provides an opportunity for further consideration and dialogue regarding filmmaking, specifically stop-motion animation, as a means of cultural preservation and knowledge sharing within Aboriginal families and communities.

This chapter is presented in three main sections, *Relationality – Respect, Relationships, Reciprocity, Reflexivity and Relational accountability*, *Navigating the Yarn – Filmmaking at the Cultural Interface* and *Beyond the Narrative – Agency, Knowledge production and Cultural preservation*. It is important to note that there is a distinct overlap in the concepts, ideas and theories presented in this discussion. The intersection is due to the relationship and interconnectedness many of these concepts share that cannot be discussed in separation from one another. This is reflective of how Indigenous ways of being (ontology),
knowing (epistemology) doing (methodology) and valuing (axiology) are relational. It is for this reason that the yarning process will be weaved throughout each section. The symbol below will be used to indicate when the discussion is entering the yarning circle space. I created this symbol to present eight participants, including myself as the participant researcher, sharing knowledge and creating new knowledge that circulates around the filmic lens. I call this, Yarning in Motion.

Relationality – Respect, Relationships, Reciprocity, Reflexivity and Relational accountability

Relationality was evident in both the yarning circle and filmmaking process, revealing itself significant to both the ‘method and content’ of the research (Martin 2017:3). To interrogate this further, I present key examples from within the yarning and filmmaking process that revealed the significance of relationality to both the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ (Martin 2017:3). For this reason, this section consists of five core concepts that circulate around relationality. These are respect, relationships, reciprocity, reflexivity, and relational accountability. To begin this discussion, I am going to start by unpacking ways of valuing and being, our ethical and relational processes (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020), through the discussion of relational accountability (Wilson 2008:101). This concept was essential to the design of this research from the outset and throughout. As outlined in the literature review, our ways of valuing and being should be the first two stages of a relationally responsive process (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020:3). For this reason, when working with Aboriginal peoples, communities, and culture, relationships, and the way they are facilitated in the research design/filmmaking process, should be considered integral to the conduct and quality of the work you are producing. By upholding relational accountability through what
Wilson (2008) pinpoints as ‘respect, reciprocity, and responsibility’ (Wilson 2008:101), I was able to facilitate a safe cultural and creative space, for myself and my Elders, as we navigated the filmic space together. To preface the discussion of relational accountability, encompassed by respect, reciprocity, and responsibility I am going to share knowledge from the yarning circles. This discussion will further extend the significance of these concepts to the filmmaking process.

As discussed in the literature review, relationality or relatedness theory does not solely pertain to the relationship between myself and my participants through kinship, but refers also to the relatedness between myself, my participants, Country, and all its entities (Martin 2008:70). An example of this is the relationality shared between my participants and the Murrumbidgee River. The river’s own entity was discussed in the yarning circle process by all participants and is recognised as the bloodline of our family and the Wiradjuri people. The memories, stories, and knowledge shared spoke of the relationship between the participants and the Murrumbidgee River that extended to leisure, community, culture, and survival.

The first example shared was collective knowledge between participants of the respect and relationship the Sandhill community had with the Murrumbidgee River. This was demonstrated through the story of the Bunyip. The story talks about the fear of the Bunyip and the warning to children to never swim in the river on their own. It speaks of children going missing at the hands of the Bunyip with participants recalling times when they have almost drowned as children or heard of those missing. It also talks about greed and to never take more fish than required. This story has carried over into many generations. Regardless of how one might interpret this warning, the principal to respect the river and understand its agency was and is very much understood today.
When reflecting on this regarding the research and filmmaking process, I recognise that the stories of the river were not only significant to the content of the research but revealed a parallel to the importance of relational accountability (Wilson 2008:101). This includes the importance of respecting the entities, recognising their agency, and how our relationships, and the way we facilitated our relationships, have consequences. When bringing this understanding to the filmmaking process, working with my Elders on Country, with our stories and knowledge shared, required the same respect and responsibility if I were to provide a safe cultural and creative space for myself and the participants.

Throughout each stage of the research project, the yarning circle process presented itself to be multifaceted, non-linear, unpredictable, and emergent. Reflecting on this process, I found that each yarning circle offered different layers of different stories which occurred with participants both individually and as a group. For this reason, one of the most important considerations when working with my Elders, especially from a relational positioning, was learning how to navigate the yarning and filmmaking process while maintaining accountability to relationships. This included being mindful of how relationships may be impacted during the research process, particularly when navigating memories and knowledge shared between participants including any sensitivities that may arise from them.

An example of this came when stories that were shared featured discrepancies. For instance, some participants remembered things differently and places, times, and details varied between recollections. A key example of this was identified when several of the participants shared a story about collecting almonds as children while walking home from school. This story was ultimately included in the introduction of the short film which depicted a young girl and two boys collecting almonds before being chased by a dog. When discussing this memory with participants it become evident that some were able to recall details such as who was there and specific things that had happened whereas others recalled the memory either differently or in fragments.
As a participant researcher/filmmaker these differences were identified as a potential obstacle for two significant reasons. The first related to the development of the short film and the piecing together of memories for the story and script. This was not only important to the authenticity of the story from a filmmaking perspective, but important from a relational and cultural standpoint when viewing the film as knowledge itself to be passed on to future generations. This relational and cultural significance ties back into the importance of relational accountability and the impact these discrepancies may have on the relationships not only between participants, but between myself and my participants as a researcher, filmmaker and most importantly a family member.

To mitigate this, I found that it was important to let yarning participants share their truth, their memories, and their stories from their own perspective. The differences within memories and stories became something that was openly discussed with participants from an early stage in the yarning circle process. It was this discussion that formed a mutual understanding that age, gender, and time may be contributing factors to how memories had been formed and shared by each participant from different perspectives. For example, one of the youngest participants recalled being chased by a dog with the almonds accidently left behind and then being saved by her big brother. It was recognised by other participants who remember the story in a different way that perhaps the young age of their sister was the reason that the chasing of the dog was such a significant memory in her recount. Reminding participants of these factors continuously throughout the yarning process provided a foundation of understanding when it came to acknowledging and respecting different points of view and perspectives. It was this type of navigation within the yarning circle process that upheld relational accountability between myself and my participants (Wilson 2008:7). Upon writing the script these differences in memories and stories were further navigated by emphasising the essence and themes of the story rather than exact details. This was a decision that was discussed with participants throughout each stage of the film’s development and varied depending upon what the stories were and whether it was culturally appropriate to do so.

Identified in the methodology was the understanding that my own relational positioning would impact the research process and its outcomes as I entered the space not only as a participant researcher and filmmaker but also as a Wiradjuri woman related to my
participants. This extends further as conducting research on Country and in a place of deep relatedness to my participants privileged the voices of both myself and my participants in the film and research space. From the outset, this positioning has proven to be distinct in allowing access that many researchers or filmmakers do not always have. This is not to suggest that working from this positioning does not present its own set of challenges, but that being situated in this research as a Wiradjuri woman, on Country with my Elders, undoubtably offered a unique opportunity to access, share, acquire, and produce knowledge as an insider. Contextualising this experience is significant for several reasons including the passing on of knowledge in Aboriginal families, communities, and to future generations, and the preservation of culture through the filmic lens.

Throughout the yarning circle process one of the most constant concepts within almost each story and memory shared was relationality and the strength that was drawn from it. This reflection of kinship and relationality was repeated on multiple occasions and weaved within the retelling of what family meant by different participants. Building on this discussion was the shared opinion that there has been a change in both families and communities when it came to the relationship between young people and Elders. This became an important point of reflection as I was situated in this project not only as a participant researcher, but as a niece, granddaughter and young person to my participants who sit as my Elders. Regarding relational accountability, this shared opinion caused me to consider the impact that this project and its process could potentially have for other young Aboriginal people with connection to their own Elders. For example, the childhood memories shared from participants to frame the yarning circles took place within the 1950s and 60s. This time was quite different for our people with segregation, inequality, racism, and oppression towards Aboriginal people very much alive and integrated in many aspects of Australian society. From the yarning circle process, I came to a new level of understanding of the fight, struggle, and strength of my Ancestors, Elders and of our people during that time. Although this struggle of inequality, oppression, racism, and segregation for Aboriginal people has not diminished, I came to realise that as a young person not
having lived through that time, I have at times taken for granted the path my Ancestors and Elders have paved for me and our people since.

Overall, the process of listening and gathering the stories, memories and knowledge shared gave me an understanding as to how much I still had to learn about my own family, people, and culture, and questioned how entering the space as a participant researcher and filmmaker would change and shape this. From a relational perspective, this shared knowledge highlighted how contemporary filmmaking practices can connect younger generations with their Elders by exchanging knowledge and skills with one another. This once again draws back to relational accountability – respect, reciprocity, and responsibility.

Throughout the yarning circle process, moments of engagement with my Elders were undoubtably shaped by our relationality to each other, Country and all its entities (Wright et al. 2012). This will further be discussed regarding agency and intra-activity, but here I will give an example concerning my specific positioning as a niece, granddaughter, and Wiradjuri woman. This relational positioning presented an opportunity for a visit to the theatre. The visit to the theatre was not planned as part of the yarning circle process but occurred during a trip to retrieve my cousin from dance class after an organised Yarn took place. As my grandmother (Elder/participant) and I waited for the dance lesson to conclude, we sat out on the theatre chairs where she proceeded to share her recollections of watching films as a young girl and the segregation she experienced. It was inside this old grand building that she shared her memories of having to sit up the front of the theatre to watch a film – the black people up the front and only the white people to be seated in the dress circle. This was a significant moment of insight regarding the relationship my own Elders have experienced with film and how the Western gaze extended not only through the screen but into the very place it was viewed. It is this occurrence that the Bawaka research defines as significant to the way in which relationships connect to knowledge acquisition (Wright et al. 2012:48-49).

Positionality was not only significant to the way knowledge was experienced and acquired but was also meaningful to how the research process was navigated, accountable and culturally safe. This became evident throughout the process when sensitive and complex stories and knowledge came into the space. From both a relational and filmmaking
perspective, I was able to apply my filmmaking knowledge while navigating sensitivities and complexities, by understanding my own boundaries and positioning to my participants. For this reason, it can be argued that the ability to navigate sensitives from a relational positioning and the access to connect with my participants on such a personal level shaped the film in a manner that would not have been achieved in the same way from an outsider’s positioning.

Navigating the Yarn – the interface of filmmaking

Following early-stage yarning circles that primarily focused on the gathering of stories, memories, and knowledge, came the development stage of the filmmaking process. Navigating this process consisted of two methods. The first came from pre-determined decisions established before the research took place to enact a starting point in the research, and the second came from within the process that was facilitated and directed through a constant process of reflection, consultation, and collaboration. In consultation, collaboration and in co-production with participants the information gathered was translated from oral histories into a screenplay. What is important to note is that the structure and form of the film was decided within the yarning circle process and was not pre-determined. For this reason, there was an understanding established in early consultation that there would be confines in what was possible, with consideration to budget and timeline. As part of the research design, this was established in the early stages of consultation so that there was transparency between myself and my Elders regarding possible outcomes. This decision draws back to respect and relational accountability.

As the project was inclusive of seven participants the idea that the short film would feature snippet stories from each person to introduce the main story became a way of ensuring inclusion. The inclusion of these snippet stories also provided the potential for the overall narrative to be shaped from several perspectives as each Elder was sharing memories situated from different standpoints. What had to be acknowledged from the outset of the project was that within this research project not all that was shared from each participant
was going to be used in the film. Despite this, it was established that each research participant played a vital role as co-producer in the film’s development and that their feedback and input throughout each stage would shape the overall finished work.

During this stage, it was predicted that the process of gathering, documenting, and shaping the stories, memories, and knowledge into a script, would be both time consuming and challenging. This was due to the large amount of information shared by participants, and the navigation of multiple collaborators and co-producers in the project. What was also challenging was organising and structuring the interconnectedness and non-linear nature of the data back within a colonising system (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020:9). This is reflective of why Laycock et al. (2011) describe yarning circles as ‘high skill’ where one must keep on track and analyse large amounts of data gathered in the process of yarning. For this reason, the yarning circle process was both challenging and unpredictable. Despite entering the yarning circle space with a plan for how to facilitate the process, conducting yarning circles in the framework of filmmaking presented a non-linear and multifaceted process that for some screen practitioners may prove to be difficult and time-consuming.

With such large amounts of data acquired through the yarning circle process, there was a potential for the development stage to become overwhelming when shaping the oral histories into a film. This was further complicated as the design of the research was open to all types of filmmaking, and it was already determined that participants played a key role in deciding how their stories would be presented. This decision was important because it supported the self-determination of my Elders and privileged their voices within the process. Therefore, to begin this stage, it was vital to ask participants how they wanted see their stories told, and what stories could potentially be used for the film. This became a starting point to navigate the Yarn. Once there were certain ideas, themes or even tones suggested, I decided to look for correlation and connections shared amongst the stories to help organise the data. Following a thread in stories became an important way to find common links and themes in each participants memory. After this was conducted, I extended this dialogue back to my Elders in our yarning circles. This again situates the significance of positionality, reflexivity and reciprocity within the process.
As mentioned in *Chapter 2: Methodology*, the yarning Circle process is practised through an autoethnographic lens. For this reason, a significant part of navigating this method required constant exercising of reflexivity. This meant reflecting and understanding my own influence on shaping the development and production of the film. Ultimately this proved to be difficult at times as it meant that I had to find the appropriate balance of navigating the process myself as a participant researcher while maintaining respect and consideration to how my Elders were also doing the same. With attention to my own influence, I was aware however that my experience as a filmmaker could potentially offer opportunities to exchange skills and knowledge with my Elders as we collaborated at the interface of filmmaking. To examine this process further I will bring forward key examples relating to data analysis. Ultimately this was a process of deconstructing and reconstructing the stories and knowledge into the development stage of filmmaking.

As mentioned earlier in this section, identifying correlation between themes within the stories became an important step in analysing and organising the data. This included looking for key narratives, connecting themes and identifying tones. Overall, this process led to six core themes that included Kinship, community, humour, resourcefulness, resilience, and survival. To investigate how I came into this knowledge, I will provide key examples from the yarning circles. What I have come to understand as I contextualise these stories is that much like the yarning circle process there is at times a non-linear and multifaceted nature to coming into and sharing knowledge this way. For this reason, it should be noted that the following examples will unfold, move and shift with an interconnection to one another.

The town beach located nearby the Sandhills was very much a place for the Sandhill community and was rarely visited by non-Aboriginal people who often referred to it with racist and derogatory names. Despite this segregation, it was evident that the recounts of both the Sandhills and the town beach painted a picture of a place that was in many ways a sanctuary for Aboriginal people within the Narrandera area.

All participants spoke of the relationship between our people and the nearby Murrumbidgee River. The river, easily accessed from the town beach, was used for hunting
and collecting food, and as a place for community and leisure. In relation to the river, the discussion began between Elders about how the children of the Sandhills would stick together and that they always looked out for another. This was the same for walking to the schoolhouse which was in town. It was shared that children from the Sandhills often picked-up others along the way walking together to and from town and if a child were on their own it would be of concern. I recognise within this description that this type of social cohesion my Elders described is very much imbedded within our ways as Aboriginal people. The participants explained that although they did not have much, they had everything they needed, which was most importantly each other. This discussion of kinship and community extended to most stories, with the importance of relationships, family, and community structure evidently significant. For example, the discussion of my great-grandparents has been pivotal during yarning circles as it shaped the kinship structure of our family and our people. Young people knew to always listen to their Elders and respected the matriarchal relationship that my great-great grandmother had with the community. This theme of relationships that circulated around kinship, community, and connection was highlighted in the final film. This is depicted in several scenes including ‘collecting the almonds’, ‘a suitcase for a port’ and ‘the boys in the bath’.
The second key theme that was identified within the stories was humour. This was something I found to be present within the nature of my participants and in their descriptions of my ancestors and people particularly when going between emotional and sensitive stories. It became evident that humour has been a way for our people to at times process, share, and understand trauma. For example, comedic stories of family would soon lead onto the harsh realities of inequality, discrimination, and the incarceration of Aboriginal people. It was put forward by several Elders during the later stages of yarning and during the development stage that joy and humour should be included in the short film and that sorrow, struggle, and segregation should not be the focal theme of the story that was to be told. This became vital in the development and shaping of the short film as it highlighted how the participants wanted to see their stories and memories communicated and what kind of tone would shape the overarching story. This turning point led to the third key theme resilience, which established the focal story of the boys in the bath.

Sandhill Stories tells the story of a group of young boys who discover a floating bathtub following a storm in Narrandera that flooded the Sandhills. The story drawn from the memories of several participants encompassed core themes the participants identified as
being of importance and presented multiple threads that connected to other stories. For example, the flood connected to several stories that reflected all key themes. This was important as it gave an opportunity to include reference to other memories in the film within what ultimately fit into a short format. From a directional perspective this shared experience and shared positioning gave opportunity for the same stories, memories, and knowledge to be transmitted amongst participants from their own individual standpoint and from a collective standpoint. This in turn opened an opportunity for me to gather different layers of stories and fill in memory gaps participants had during the yarning circles.

In addition to this, working with different layers of different stories presented a discussion around creative license. This meaning that translating the stories into a script presented a need to fill in the gap of missing memories and dialogue. For example, even though a participant was able to share in length different memories, stories, and knowledge, not all details such as what was said, who was there, and other details were remembered. For this reason, dialogue and narrative storytelling were added to help join missing pieces of the script and create cohesion on screen. This established a further discussion of authenticity and how to properly navigate creative license when working with participants’ memories and lived experiences. This circled back to transparency and responsibility, which was largely based on whether creative license would impact cultural knowledge.

An example of navigating creative licence in the film can be found in the scene depicting ‘Butcher the dog’ (see Figure 24). In the yarning circles Butcher the dog was spoken about in several stories and featured in recollections that told of a protective dog and a family companion. Following this, discussion of Butcher also led to more sensitive stories including police brutality and discrimination. The idea that Butcher was featured in the film was based on two rationales. The first was centred on the idea to include as many references from the yarning circles as possible and where suitable. And the second, to include visual references that may open opportunity for further knowledge sharing amongst family and community. For example, although there was no specific storyline for Butcher featured in the film, including him (in the lead into the focal story) may prompt knowledge sharing amongst viewers while not compromising the authenticity of the boys in the bath story. This became evident during the review process when an Elder reviewed the film with her granddaughter and continued to share memories and knowledge of Butcher once the film was finished.
Another important suggestion by several participants was that the film include some reference to the church, Sunday school or hymns. For the participants of this research, church has played a significant role in shaping their lifestyle and values. The memories of Sunday school as children were brought up many times during our yarning circles and church was described as an important part of Sandhill life that was never to be missed. This connection to church included significant aspects of childhood such as where some learnt to read and write. What is important to note is that for many Aboriginal people the relationship between culture and religion such as Christianity is a contested space. This can be connected to the impact of colonisation and the assimilation of Aboriginal people into white society. For this reason, several filmic works by Aboriginal screen practitioners are found to reference church and Christianity. Two examples of this include the opening of Tracey Moffatts Night Cries – A Rural tragedy (Moffatt 1990) featuring Jimmy Little’s Royal Telephone (Little 1963) and the title sequence of Lousy Little Sixpence (Morgan and Bostock 1983). Church and Sunday school within these yarning circles were spoken of as a place of gathering and fellowship, and remembered as a place of community. This connection to church can be traced back to the relationship of Warangesda to the Sandhill community.
Based on this understanding, a proposal was made by a participant that a hymn be included in the introduction of the film with reference made to the opening of *Lousy Little Sixpence* (1983) that featured *The old Rugged Cross* (Bennard 1912). This discussion introduced important dialogue about the legalities of music and copyright, and how we could redirect ideas that may be unattainable. To approach this, it was put forward that hymns significant to the participants’ memories be recorded during the post-production stage despite potentially not being used. The purpose of this was to still give back to the participants through the output of the recording and without removing the idea from the project completely. This method of negotiation became a useful tool throughout the yarning circles as it provided an opportunity for participants to engage in creative thinking about how different ideas, themes and story components could be presented within the film.

Navigating the yarning circle process was situated throughout each filmmaking stage. This extended to the post-production stage which highlighted an importance regarding the narration of the film. When the film was translated from live action to stop motion the notion of narration became a focal point with dialogue being minimised. This was due to both creative and technical considerations that harnessed the participants’ important consideration of narration. It was in the early phases of the development stage that the idea of narration arose with participants wanting to know early on who would be narrating and what the narrator would say. This concern was shared by most participants, and it was for this reason that careful consideration regarding the approach to narration was made.

Throughout the yarning circle process, I discussed the idea of the narration with each participant to gain their feedback on who they thought should narrate the film. Unfortunately, not all participants could be present at once for this discussion which led to some differences in opinion regarding the matter. Based on this outcome, as the participant researcher, I proposed the idea that all research participants could have the opportunity to narrate a section of the short film which was welcomed by everyone. This difference in opinion was another example of the care that needs to be taken when working from a relational positioning and maintaining relational accountability. The narrator identified as the voice and representative of the stories was evidently important to the participants and it stood out as a key component within the film. An interesting shift from this emphasis on
the narration, was that during the time in which participants were invited to record sections of the narration, some participants felt uncomfortable with most happy to pass it onto another participant. Ultimately the narration was recorded by my grandmother included recordings from a script written in collaboration with her based on the yarning circle stories from each participant. In addition, the narration also used recordings with my grandmother that was unscripted yarning.

To further facilitate inclusivity and privilege the voices of all Elders involved in the project, participants were given the opportunity to voice record a statement based on what the Sandhills meant to them personally. This was discussed at an early stage of post-production so that participants had time to consider what they would like to say with some participants requesting more time than others. It became apparent during this process that despite only having to record a few sentences, there was a collective understanding of the importance of participating in recording these statements. These statements were used at the end of the short film with each participant’s portrait and name. They condensed and summarised all that had been shared including personal thoughts and feelings so they were addressed by participants with great care.

By having research participants review the animated sequences, feedback could result in the need for changes to be made. The challenge with this, however, was that due to the time-consuming nature of shooting a stop motion animation, changes to sequences could result in a prolonged production time. For this reason, consultation took place regarding how to navigate the need for potential changes to the animation with input from each research participant. From this discussion it was decided that any changes made to the animation would be based on a system of whether they were significant to the passing on of knowledge. An instance of this occurred during the review of the fishing sequence my Uncle reviewed. It was decided that the wrong depiction of the fishing rod was important because it had a significant connection to cultural practice and therefore needed to be changed. This system continued throughout the review process and acted as an effective way to navigate feedback within a reasonable framework.
Overall, it is has become evident that despite the potential challenges presented when working with yarning methodology, this relationally responsive process offered a unique opportunity to gather a rich quantity data and acquire, experience, and produce knowledge through the process that was respectful, responsible, and reciprocal. What became clear throughout the process of this project is what Yunkaporta (2009) illustrates through *Boomerang Matrix of Cultural Interface Knowledge* (2009:4) as an overlap of knowledge at the cultural interface. This was evident in the relationship between myself and my participants as we became situated in a reciprocal process of knowledge exchange; the stories, memories, and knowledge shared by participants would enable me to offer my own exchange of skills and resources as a researcher and filmmaker. This exchange, situated in relationality and framed by our ways of being, knowing, doing and valuing (Martin 2008; Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020) formed what can be described as a new process of decolonising the filmic lens.

### Beyond the Narrative – Agency, Knowledge production and cultural preservation

It was found that yarning circles applied as an ongoing process of consultation, collaboration, and co-production was informative to several significant filmmaking facets, informing key creative decisions that developed and that resulted in the production of the short film *Sandhill Stories* in the stop motion space. This new direction established an understanding of how the yarning circle process was not only a method of knowledge sharing but presented itself as an emergent research method that informed key aspects of the film’s production beyond the narrative. These included key creative decisions pertaining to the film’s form, genre, and structure. This is important as it further supports evidence that yarning circle methodology provides an opportunity for knowledge sharing that is not only oral, but non-verbal, visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tacit, and holistic. In terms of new knowledge, this is significant because it presents potential benefits to filmmaking practice, community engagement, and cultural preservation that have not been examined or
contextualised in the filmic space before. For this reason, the yarning circle process extended itself to what is arguably one of the most notable findings in this research.

The visual process of reviewing animated sequences with participants as part of the yarning circle process prompted an occurrence of memory work and knowledge production that presented new opportunities to gather, transmit and acquire information, and shape how that knowledge should and would be presented. This important development in the research project came from the process of making short stop motion sequences based on participants stories and then taking them back to the participants for review. The purpose of doing this was to receive feedback from each participant concerning the progress of the film, which would in turn help with the construction and shaping of the final product (a short-animated film). What was initially conducted as a process of consultation, collaboration, and co-production soon developed into a form of memory work where the viewing of the animated sequences visually prompted new information and knowledge to emerge. These key findings will be unpacked through core examples from inside the yarning circle process.

As stated in Chapter 2: Methodology, the type of film that was going to be made as part of this research project was left open for discussion with research participants. The reason for this was to privilege participants’ voices, support self-determination, and enable participants the opportunity to co-produce how they wanted their stories to be presented. As both production and post-production would need to be conducted within an estimated time frame of 12 months, I recommended to participants that the film be of short form. Although no specific type of film was recommended, the discussion of a live action narrative film was explored during early yarning circles when referencing different stories. This discussion continued throughout the development stage and, inevitably, the need for funding highlighted new challenges in the project’s progression. In the early stages of this research project, it was proposed that funding would be sought from film funding bodies, this was identified early on as a potential hurdle to the project as funding was not a guarantee. Despite the non-guarantee of a budget and funding for the project, numerous
film funding bodies were contacted and grant applications for both film and community art projects were applied for. Ultimately this process proved to be time consuming and unsuccessful. There were two main reasons identified for this, the first being that the story was still in development and that some of the information required for the application did not line up with the emergent nature of the yarning process. The second reason was that the project was being developed and produced within an Institution, automatically making the project ineligible for consideration. It was this lack of success in gaining funding that raised new questions about how the stories would be produced into the proposed short film.

What is important to note about this set back in funding was that the prospect of making a short film with little-to-no budget was never going to be an impossibility. It was in fact discussed in transparency with participants that certain factors regarding what type of film would be made and details regarding how the film would be made would pertain to the level of funding that was potentially received. Ultimately, the position of having little-to-no budget in the initial stages of the film’s development, led to considering new ideas about how the film could be made. This challenge ultimately led to the consideration of stop-motion animation. This came to fruition from several occurrences. The first was in yarning with my grandmother (participant) from discussion regarding ingenuity and the importance of using what we had available and doing what we could ourselves. The second development was through examining the yarning circle data itself. With resourcefulness a key thematic, and the gathering, salvaging, and repurposing of materials a constant thread, the tactile nature of stop-motion animation presented a unique opportunity for storytelling that took themes from content to method. This was further solidified by several Elders sharing their desires to see their stories illustrated as children’s books. Furthermore, this led to conversations regarding more specific forms of stop-motion such as ‘paper cut out’. This was further established by the suggestion that the film have an overarching positive tone. For this reason, the development stage centred attention on visual storytelling that would appeal to young people. This was not to dismiss some of the more sensitive and confronting stories shared, particularly those that are significantly related to the living history of Aboriginal people. The idea however, like the inclusion of Butcher the dog, was that the film itself could prompt opportunity for further dialogue with its viewers.
What is important to note, and the final influence towards stop motion animation, was my own positioning in the project. As a filmmaker, making stop motion films was my introduction to filmic space as a teenager due to the limited resources I had available. Although practised at a basic level, I recognize that bringing this lived experience and knowledge to the yarning circle space certainly played a role in this development. Overall, this process extends back to what Martin (2017) examines as intra-activity (Martin 2017:1). This meaning that the relationality shared between myself, my Elders, Country, yarning and knowledge itself enacted a reciprocal agency leading to problem solving that was facilitated through our relationally responsive process. With this new development, came a new thought process on how certain threads in participants stories could fit perfectly when re imagined as a stop motion animation.

As stop motion animation is a tactile form of animation that primarily uses puppets, props, and sets completely built by hand, the possibilities that opened in terms of how the stories could be presented engaged a whole new process in translating the yarning process to screen. For example, making Country by hand for the set and props would mean that there would need to be a different approach to the production design and art direction. This would lead to a study of Country through yarning and from time spent walking on the Sandhills and along the Murrumbidgee with different participants. New and old photographs were collected from the Sandhills, soundscape recorded, and live action videos such as the river’s edge were taken for reference to design, colour, and behaviour of the Sandhills, town beach and Wiradjuri Country. This process of studying Country presented a new level of understanding into how stop motion animation and the process of making Country by hand presents its own relational, intellectual, and operational process. To further examine this notion and the way it materialised beyond the narrative of the film I am going to provide examples from the yarning circle process.
As previously stated, the Murrumbidgee River is of great significance to our people and for my aunties, Uncles and grandmother it is the bloodline of the Sandhill community. Many of the stories and memories shared were of connection to the river and the way it provided for our people in terms of survival and as a place of community, culture, and leisure. The river was a resource for our people as was the land. This resourcefulness was a constant thread within each story and memory with everything from clothes, food, toys, and homes sourced from The Sandhills and or salvaged from the local tip or other places. It is this discussion of materials and resources that ultimately informed the art direction and production design of the short film. One example materialised from a thread found in the many memories shared about the Narrandera tip. It was my Uncle who described the tip as the clothing store, toy shop, corner store, and a place for finding and repurposing found objects. It was a place my aunty recalled collecting Christmas decorations after Christmas day which she describes in her memory as a ‘January Christmas’. The memory of making brown bottled babies for dolls was also shared as was the description of stacked bottles of high jump and rolling tins on string. It was this correlation of memories about the tip that gave possibility to the way in which found, recycled, and repurposed materials was used in the making process of the stop motion animation concerning art direction, set design and puppets.

The *making* process itself, of stop-motion animation situated in relationally responsive processes, established new consideration of how filmmaking can become a vehicle for cultural preservation not just through its content, but through its production. When I reflect on this process, I recognise a distinct correlation between stop motion filmmaking and the way knowledge is acquired, transmitted, and produced through the process of ‘making’ and ‘doing’ in Aboriginal culture. This is reflective of the notion that in Aboriginal research paradigm there is no separation between method and content (Martin 2017:4). When examining this process in terms of walking in two worlds or navigating the cultural interface, the stop-motion animation situated in relationally responsive process presented a culturally safe way to navigate the complexities filmmaking can include such as contested and colonising facets.
During the production stage, short sequences where animated by the participant researcher (myself) then collectively viewed during a participatory process of visual yarning with Elders (participants). Within this practice came a unique opportunity for changes to occur as the film was being produced. This provided critical feedback and direction during the progress of the film that supported a culturally safe filmic space that facilitated relational accountability. For this reason, the making of a stop-motion animation enabled an opportunity for knowledge production that live-action filmmaking may not have provided, due to logistical and practical reasons. Significantly, it was during this stage that critical memory work emerged within, between, and amongst my Elders, myself, the animation, and the yarning circle space.

An example was the review of the short sequence that presented the story of my Uncle (participant) fishing with his father. Again, despite having shared during several yarning circles about this story it was this process that led to further discussion regarding the depiction of a fishing rod in the animated sequence. In viewing the sequence, my Uncle
informed me the way I had presented the story was incorrect. He, my great grandfather, and many of our people used hand reels made from salvaged materials. He continued to share with me that this device was used through a specific method passed down to my Uncle by my great grandfather. This difference was important not only to the authenticity of the story, but because it was a memory that was situated in cultural knowledge and therefore held cultural significance. The process of memory work through visual yarning also occurred prior to filming through the viewing of an animatic during pre-production. The idea of the animatic was to present a draft of the film to participants prior to the actual commencement of shooting. The purpose of this was to establish any changes or key creative decisions which in turn would minimise obstacles regarding changes and timeline in later stages. For example, originally the transition into The Boys in the Bath Story was introduced by a possum sheltering from the rain. This was a technical decision I put to participants to introduce the rain through sound and lighting rather than physically animating it on screen. This came back to problem solving and negotiating what was possible regarding timeline and skill set. As a result of the animatic review process, the overarching story was re-shaped by suggestions such as using Butcher the dog in the scene rather than the possum. This process became situated in an ebb and flow of creative thinking and problem solving that circulated around visual yarning.

As the research project progressed it became evident that research participants felt a higher level of comfortability with their involvement and ownership over the project. This was apparent during the later stages of the project during post-production, with some participants taking an active role in developing and creating their own self-initiated contributions towards the film beyond the sharing of stories, memories, and knowledge. An important example of this was the Sandhill Song written in collaboration by both my grandmother and Uncle (participants). This derived from the discussion of music for the short film, both participants initiated the development of a song that encompassed all that had been shared through the yarning circles. Aside from being present during the beginning phase of the song writing, my grandmother passed key points on to my Uncle who then reshaped the notes into a song structure with written music at a separate time outside of yarning circle visits. While off Country, my Uncle would communicate through telephone about the progress of the song, singing sections, asking for feedback, and continuing the
Yarn while I commenced the editing process. It was at the first visit of post-production that the completed song was shared and recorded along with the inclusion of three significant hymns. An unexpected but positive initiative in the writing of the song, was a yarning style dialogue that my Uncle had written. This dialogue between him and I in yarning style, reflected our many Yarns about music and stories previously shared during earlier visits. A snippet of this scripted dialogue was included in the introduction of the film as a way of connecting the yarning process of the project to the final short film. *The Sandhill Song* has been used throughout the short and stands alone itself as the soundtrack of the film.

**Figure 26. ‘Wiradjuri Country’ opening sequence featuring The Sandhill song.**

Source: Still image from *Sandhill Stories* (2021).

Overall, engaging with my Elders through relationally responsive processes presented the opportunity for a new form of collaboration, consultation, and co-production in the filmic space. Within this practice-based enquiry was evidence of innovation and knowledge production at the cultural interface of filmmaking. This was circulated intra-actively through relationality, respect, reciprocity, relationships, and reflexivity. The reciprocal agency of
knowledge transmission in this process provided a foundation for the development of standpoint, the privileging of Aboriginal voices, and supported the self-determination of all participants. For this reason, it can be argued that the concept of relationality and its intra-activity through relationally responsive processes is fundamental to the production of knowledge when developing and presenting an Aboriginal position and lens in filmmaking.
Conclusion

This research project has examined the impact and significance of situating the filmmaking process in Indigenous ways of valuing (axiology), being (ontology), Knowing (epistemology) and doing (methodology). Starting with the introduction the research began with the statement of problem, significance of the research and overarching research questions. This illuminated the need for further examination of filmmaking practice involving Aboriginal peoples, communities and cultures. The methodology anchored the key concepts and theories back to ways of doing. Here, we understand knowledge as knowing in action (Martin 2017) and how autoethnography, yarning, and practice led research support an Indigenous research paradigm premised on relationality. This informed the Decolonising the lens conceptual framework (see figure 2) demonstrating the cycle of knowledge production through yarning and practice, encompassed by ways of valuing. This framework explains how the research process moved and had a reciprocal agency. Chapter:2 Literature review informed the theoretical framework, comprised of key concepts, theories and arguments. These included an examination of colonisation, decolonisation, the gaze and the lens, cultural interface theory, Indigenous standpoint theory, relationality, agency and intra-activity. Together these concepts further support the research design, positioning the findings within the current body of knowledge. Chapter 4: Marramarra and Chapter 5: Yarning in motion presented the research discussion, unpacking key findings within the yarning and practice-based process. Here, we came to understand the correlation between stop motion animation and cultural practices centred on knowledge transmission through making, doing and performing. What each of these chapters demonstrated was the interconnectedness of each concept to the process and practice.

The research revealed that relationally responsive processes not only support, inform and impact filmmaking but re-configures it into a process centred on cultural practice. Marramarra filmmaking, comprised of yarning, listening, sharing, gathering, making, doing, performing, watching and repeating, demonstrated a process that was significant beyond the narrative of storytelling. Centred on and informed by relationships, respect, responsibility, reflexivity and reciprocity, the process offered new opportunities to share, acquire, and produce knowledge that was rich, multifaceted and emergent. In addition,
these protocols and principles provided a culturally safe yarning and marramarra space (Barlo et al. 2020). This protected space further enriched the process and practice-based work where an exchange of knowledge and skills occurred.

Through the practice itself we established the intrinsic relationship of ways of knowing to doing that supported Martin’s (2017) notion of method as content. From this came an understanding of how stop motion animation can be of benefit to Aboriginal filmmakers and communities as a vehicle for passing on knowledge. Furthermore, the development and production of *Sandhill Stories* demonstrated that the *Decolonising the lens conceptual framework* (see Figure 2) was successful in achieving innovation, supporting self-determination, privileging of Aboriginal voices, and enacting a higher-level connection to Country, culture, community and kinship. In turn providing a vehicle for cultural preservation and the continuation of culture. Here, I must acknowledge the passing of two of my Elders who were both participants in this research. From a relational positioning the project has already proven critical in passing on knowledge in our family. This is something that has been echoed throughout our family since both my Aunties passed. It is this reason the research has proven to be of utmost importance. Within *Sandhill stories* we have living histories that can be shared and continued with future generations. Furthermore, I recognize how this process may provide a vehicle for connection and knowledge gathering in other communities.

Yarning, conducted through practice led research and an autoethnographic lens served not only as a method of consultation, storytelling, and knowledge sharing, but a process of engagement that presented a tool for problem solving and knowledge production beyond the narrative of filmmaking. This became evident during the visual process of reviewing animated sequences with participants as part of the yarning circle process which prompted memory work and knowledge transmission during the production of the film. This presented new opportunities to gather, share and shape how the film should and would be presented.

Living and working at the cultural interface for Aboriginal people means walking in two worlds. This meaning that my participants and I were required to navigate Indigenous ways of being, knowing, doing, and valuing in a process of research and filmmaking largely framed by the coloniser. Employing relationally responsive processes such as yarning and practice-based work, enabled us to navigate the intersections and complexities of the cultural
interface by supported on-going reflexivity. This further provided a culturally safe way to come into the development of an Indigenous standpoint within filmmaking practise.

Importantly the research process demonstrated that relationally responsive processes were essential to the cultural safety of the project providing a foundation for respect, transparency and connection. Upholding integrity and accountability through respect, reflexivity and reciprocity enacted productivity. For this reason, situating the filmmaking process in a relationally responsive paradigm ensured that Indigenous ways of valuing (axiology) became not only the entry point into the research, but the core of the research throughout.

Autoethnography, yarning and practice led research, offered insight into how filmmaking premised on relationality presents a unique opportunity to access, acquire, transmit and produce knowledge when working with Aboriginal people, communities and culture. Through marramarrar- making, doing, creating, the development and production of Sandhill Stories revealed a new way of knowing through filmmaking that was oral, non-verbal, visual, auditory, tactile, kinaesthetic, and tacit. This is evident in the multifaceted and multisensory experience that unfolded in both the yarning and practice-based work. Working this way provided an opportunity to gather rich data (yarning circle knowledge) and navigate the complexity of such data with consideration to the non-linear, emergent, and unpredictable nature of working within community, Country, and yarning and practice-based methodologies.

Importantly, the project has reaffirmed the importance of relationality and its reciprocal agency when working with Aboriginal peoples, communities, culture and concepts. In terms of new knowledge, how this intra-activity works at the cultural interface of filmmaking has emerged within this project as beneficial in several facets. This includes creative development, problem solving, memory work and the exchange of knowledge and skills. The progressive process of yarning situated in continual periodical viewings elicited additional memories and visual details from participants that may otherwise have been missed outside of practice-based research. From this, we were able to develop multiple layers to stories, memories and knowledge and extend the depth of the data as the research project progressed. This progression extended itself to the creative practice, where both cultural and technical issues were navigated within a going process of consultation, collaboration
and co-production alongside research participants (Elders). This creative development, problem solving, and memory work demonstrates the relationality of knowing to doing, where yarning, making, performing, presenting, watching, and listening was knowing in action, an enactment of the intra-active agency of relationality (Martin 2017:8-11).

It was identified that my positioning as a Wiradjuri woman and relative to my Elders (participants) allowed me unique access within this project. From the outset the kinship between my participants and I provided a level of trust and cultural safety to share knowledge and stories that they may not have shared with someone coming from an outsider’s position. With this understanding, the research affirms that positionality and relationality do impact and inform knowledge acquisition. For First Nations filmmakers, communities and families this presents a distinct opportunity to connect with Country, community and culture from a position of relatedness that is different for outsiders. Again, this is not to suggest that non-Indigenous filmmakers should not implement relationally responsive processes in their work, but that positionality and relationality will shape and inform knowledge acquisition in different ways.

What is also significant is that this research project has offered an opportunity to examine the filmmaking process where film production becomes a way to gather, produce and present knowledge rather than just a means to make content. It is learning about culture through culture (RAET 2009:4) and extending how storytelling in the filmmaking practice can be transformative and of benefit to cultural preservation. This process could be significant for other Aboriginal people and communities when considering film as a vehicle to share, gather, record and present oral histories from within their own communities. Building on this, the process of stop motion animation in this project has presented a unique opportunity itself standing alone as its own distinctive form of filmmaking. In this project, making and presenting Country, its entities and the oral histories of Elders through stop motion animation became what can be described as a process of cultural practice that sits in its own genre of filmmaking- marramarra.

Lastly, it was identified that the linear process of filmmaking interwoven with the non-linear process of yarning, challenged how filmmaking is conducted by applying methodology that was considerate of the complexities, sensitivities, unpredictability, and protocols of working from a relational positioning. Because filmmaking is conducted primarily on a timeframe,
with consideration to deadlines and budget, the restructuring of the filmmaking process in the design of this research gave insight into how time spent with participants on and off Country, and ongoing consultation, collaboration and co-production in all facets of the process, produced outputs that would not have otherwise been achieved in the confines of a standard filmmaking timeline. Furthermore, this resulted in a higher level of connection within, amongst and between myself, my Elders (participants), Country and all its entities, and a higher level of connection with knowledge itself.

The research determined that framing filmmaking practice in relationally responsive processes may present potential challenges for some screen practitioners who are working within the confines of standard filmmaking deadlines. The non-linear nature yarning in conjunction with filmmaking presented a longer timeframe that some may find difficult to work in. For filmmakers working with community from an outsider positioning this may prove further challenging, as relationship building is essential, and trust and rapport take time. This extended itself to funding bodies, where deadlines needed to be pre-established and key creative decisions finalized as part of funding requirements. This proved difficult as working in relationally responsive processes was emergent which meant not all key factors in the film’s development were pre-determined. This challenge further extended to the navigation of large quantities of data through the yarning circle process. With yarning a multifaceted process, the data (yarning circle knowledge) produced layers of knowledge that unfolded throughout each yarning circle. Navigating this knowledge from multiple collaborators involved timely processes of gathering, deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge based on themes and connections. In filmmaking practice this proved a difficult task and required on-going analysis, reflection and consultation with participants.

Despite the challenges, the research revealed that relationally responsive processes do inform and impact that filmmaking process in significantly positive ways as outlined above. Based on this research project and its findings I suggest that there is potential for further investigation regarding stop motion animation and knowledge production within Aboriginal communities. For this reason, I advise that further examination involving community engagement in the animating process itself could prove to be beneficial. I conclude that this body of work has provided a foundation to further that discourse and offer innovation and action towards the preservation and continuation of culture. In closing, I assert that
decolonising the lens should extend beyond the inclusion of First Nations peoples on and off screen and include the re-configuration of filmic processes premised on relationality.
Appendix A - The Sandhill Song

Written and composed by Clem Christian and Bonita Byrne

The Sand hills of Narrandera was our home,
Hill 60 as it was known,
Back then we lived in harmony,
We were black but we were free,
But we were from the wrong side of the tracks
And we were always known as the blacks,
The people of town just turned their backs,
Cause we were always known as the blacks,
Us kids played together every day,
Until the welfare came lots would run away,
But we stayed with Mum safe and sound,
While the welfare man just looked us up and down,
Mum stood with a frown on her face,
She was worried that the man would take us away,
But we came from the wrong side of the tracks,
And we were always known as the blacks,
The people up town just turned their backs,
Cause we were always known as the blacks,
Respect for our Elders was a must,
Back then we just all learned to trust,
The river was the bloodline of our lives,
We love to fish and swim, stay out of strife,
Cause we came from the wrong side of the tracks,
We were always known as the blacks,
The people from turned their backs,
Cause we were always known as the blacks,
Games were always played on the hill,
Football was one of the skills,
Yeah but playing rounders was the thrill,
When we all played on the hill.

Appendix B – Human Research Ethics Approval

This research was conducted with Human Research Ethics approval.

Project ID: 2018-052

Project Title: Applying Indigenous ways of Being, Knowing, Doing and Valuing to screen arts

Date of original approval: 6/4/18
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