

# Critical Discourse Analysis of Indigenous Text for Social Work



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Honours in Social Work

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2010

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## Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other persons work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. None of the research procedures reported in the thesis required ethics approval because the methodology required only text analysis and not human participation.

## Acknowledgements

Bāāla is a creek within Yorta Yorta country where my mother and grandmother were born and spent many years of their life. From this landscape I would like to acknowledge my Aboriginal heritage, how it has uniquely informed and developed this research. From here I acknowledge Dja Dja Wrung country and community in which I live. It was my experiences at Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative, watching staff working within the human services field at the Cultural Interface that ignited my passion that intellectual space be allocated to Indigenous knowledges.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the School of Social Work and Social Policy at La Trobe University, Bendigo for their continued support and encouragement towards this study. Especially my supervisor Dianne Cox, her insight into methodology and research added depth and direction to this study for which I am very grateful.

My children and family were an integral part of this research, a journey that developed our identity and united us under a common endeavour. I hope that I have represented my family through this academic pursuit, I acknowledge the opportunity they have accounted me through their support, time, patience and wisdom, which developed this study.

Lastly, I acknowledge the participants; their Indigenous communities, knowledges, Ancestors and country. The Indigenous authors for this study were located in different geographic areas of Australia. I was always very aware and honoured to be crossing these landscapes, and I am grateful for the opportunity, through text analysis to learn from these Indigenous authors.

## Abstract

Social work practice in Australia is currently informed by Western world views. This study challenges dominant western knowledges and explores from a Foucauldian perspective through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the Indigenous paradigm. From a Foucauldian perspective the working relationship between theories within academic institutions and discourse is explored. Acknowledging the relationship between theories and discourse, constructs the hypothesis that learning Indigenous discourses enables the social work curriculum to include Indigenous standpoints. An examination of colonisation, racism and 'othering' throughout this study demonstrates historically how social work came to be constructed Eurocentric. The central theme from these findings is that contemporary Indigenous discourse demands acknowledgement by academia of Indigenous epistemology. We may be witnessing an epistemic shift; allowing the opportunity for intellectual space to be allocated to the Indigenous paradigm within academia, and the possibility for social work to be informed by Australian Indigenous knowledges. This thesis is hopeful that contemporary social work, which now includes the principle of critical-reflexivity, is well positioned to examine 'Whiteness', and provide intellectual space for the Indigenous paradigm.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

My track is a pathway that contains my life experiences, my way of knowing and my family. It positions my research. My track has carefully held my identity as a Yorta Yorta Aboriginal woman, in spite of the waves of colonisation that have tried to reconstruct my families identity, connecting my way of being and spirituality with the position I now take within the Indigenous paradigm. This research is my family's narrative of survival; a celebration.

## 1.2 Research Problem

A vacuum of Indigenous knowledges, discourses, standpoints and perspectives currently exists in the discipline of social work. Working with or researching Australian Indigenous people is currently undertaken through the Western paradigm, undermining and suppressing the Indigenous paradigm. Indigenous approaches are relegated to the periphery as deficit theoretical perspectives (Gair, Miles & Thomson, 2005). The Australian Indigenous community has suffered greatly since colonialism as non-Indigenous Australians interact and implement policies within Indigenous communities using inappropriate methodologies and practice frameworks. As the Australian social work profession develops critical, anti-oppressive practice it could be an opportunistic time to explore Indigenous methodologies, in line with the AASW 1997 Statement of Apology towards the Australian Indigenous community (Calma, 2008).

### 1.3 Research Question/s

“How could Indigenous discourses inform social work?”

Sub Questions:

- How is social work Eurocentric?
- Are discursive formations emerging from the Indigenous paradigm, and if so does this signify a shift in epistemic power?
- If social work was informed by the Indigenous paradigm would this correlate with critical-reflexive stance, central to the social work profession?

### 1.4 Significance of Research

To date no known research within Australia has investigated the Indigenous paradigm, Indigenous methodologies or Indigenous standpoints through discourse analysis with the purpose of informing social work as a theoretical perspective and practice. This is a vital next step, connecting and creating space for Indigenous knowledges within social work and academia. This study is also significant because of the paradigm from which it is written. As an Aboriginal woman, the epistemology will be centred from my own way of knowing. I have allowed myself to make deep connections to the theoretical perspective that directs this research and the texts I have analysed. This means that personal reflection, intuition, and being embodied in the study (Moreton-Robinson, A. & Walter, M, 2010) have been my central way of knowing throughout the research process. This position will have impacted my interpretation and analysis of the text, allowing complex and in-depth understandings to evolve.

Methodologically this study is significant because it seeks to highlight emerging Indigenous discourse through the written word, following Foucault's understanding of the relationship between language and human activity (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). This will be done through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a type of discourse analysis that includes critical exploration of the social context and modes of discourse production. Through this methodology, this research seeks to understand the relationship between the emergence of subjugated methodologies and the construction of theoretical perspectives that inform mainstreams disciplines within academia. Intellectual space in academia for Indigenous methodologies and discourse would provide an alternative to the historical domination of the

western paradigm, where social workers construct practice or research with Indigenous people from only mainstream ideologies. Valuing and liberating the Indigenous way of knowing, being and doing is in line with the social work principles of social justice and respect to human dignity and worth (AASW, 2002).

## 1.5 Identify Limitations

A limitation throughout this study has been the amount of Aboriginal community involvement. Rigney (1997) emphasises all Indigenous research should be done with community collaboration. Honours research limits the possibility of the kind of consultative group necessary to meet this criteria both ethically and politically. This limitation has been addressed through wider reading of Indigenous literature, informal discussions with local Aboriginal members and attendance to the Indigenous Studies – Indigenous Knowledges (ISIK) Conference, Perth 2009 and completion of Indigenous Methodologies Masterclass, University of South Australia, 2010. My participation in these Indigenous events has added depth and guidance to constructing this research within the Indigenous paradigm. CDA is a research method learnt through doing. As a first time CDA analyst I recognise that my interpretation of this analysis is not the only or the best interpretation. However the analysis template I constructed of Fairclough's (1989) CDA was through considerable reflection and extended reading.

## 1.6 Outline of Thesis

The following literature review will analyse contemporary research and theoretical perspectives in line with the methodology pertaining to Critical Indigenous Studies, the area relevant to this study. Next the methodology will explain how this research fits within the Indigenous paradigm, the Foucauldian perspective that informs the research design and the CDA method taken to complete this research. This is followed by the findings, which clearly presents the themes and data that emerged during CDA in relation to the research questions. The discussion chapter will summarise major findings and provide a critical analysis of the findings in relation to the literature and existing theoretical understandings. The thesis concludes with a discussion of implications for theory development and future research.

## 1.7 Understanding of Key Terms

The following is an overview of my understandings, derived from reflection on the literature and data pertaining to this research. As this research studies the position of discourse to construct meanings and power relations; detailed definitions of my constructed understandings have been provided to maximise communication throughout this paper. These definitions have terms and concepts paraphrased from the six research participants; (Rigney, 1997) (West, 2000) (Moreton-Robinson, 2006) (Foley, 2003) (Nakata, 2006) and (Martin, 2003).

*Aboriginal / Indigenous:* Both words are used interchangeably to refer to a person or concept that identifies as being Indigenous by its origin.

*Colonisation:* The physical, epistemological, political, and scientific European expansions to dominate, destroy, dispossess or assimilate non-western Nations.

*Complexity:* The theoretical perspective that events, people, institutions and discourses are all connected and overlapping within any particular period of time; that change is random not unfolding; change can only be understood in hindsight.

*Connectedness / Relational:* A way of knowing or relating that is embodied; the personal self is not removed from country or community.

*Critical:* This is an approach or perspective; it signifies that the position taken will be in the present social world and an understanding of the power struggles that have constructed it, including a reflection of historical events.

*Discursive formations / Discourse:* Socially constructed framework of meanings which serve to guide people. It reflects the socio-cultural content they are produced from. It is connected to and the result of power. A collection of discourses make up a larger discursive formation such as science.

*Epistemic violence:* The intentional subjugation of Indigenous epistemologies.

*Indigenous Paradigm:* Epistemologies, axiologies, ontologies, methodologies, standpoints, research designs and theoretical perspectives that have been informed by Indigenous Australians to serve and inform the Indigenous struggle for self determination.

*Knowledge Production:* Epistemological construction through; objectivity, rigour and measurement of the world, or through embodiment, observation and connectedness to social relations and country.

*Metaphysical:* Refers to the Indigenous spiritual world, which includes omens, dreams, significant geographic locations, Entities, Mother Earth, Ancestral Spirits and the cyclical-equal relationship between the physical world and the spiritual world.

*Othering:* This is a Western axiology of sorting, labelling and marginalising people or concepts outside what is considered normal or mainstream. It is also connected to power and dominance because *othering* allows Western peoples' concepts to remain in control and central.

*Power / Dominance:* The physical, epistemological, political, and spiritual assertion of control and suppression, either real or imagined, of parallel ways of knowing, being and doing.

*Subjugation:* The discursive and institutional gate keeping of non-western statements, so as to ensure only statements from the Western paradigm are accepted by academia.

*Whiteness:* The universal construction of 'white' - skin, discourses, paradigms and institutions to represent what is normal, the mainstream, which simultaneously constructs other skin colours, paradigms, discourses and institutions as marginalised, different or as the other.

## 2 Literature Review

In this chapter I use literature to construct the research problem. I examine the Eurocentric nature of social work within universities and the dominant position the Western world maintains through controlling knowledge production and silencing Indigenous knowledge. I then explore the ability of discourse analysis to emancipate subjugated knowledges. I argue it is imperative that social work as a profession listens to and is informed by Indigenous ways of knowing, so it does not continue as a destructive tool of colonisation. As noted in research limitations current empirical studies are limited within this review. The possibilities of Indigenous theoretical perspectives being allocated intellectual space within academia, has mostly only been theorised.

### 2.1 How Indigenous Knowledge is positioned by Australian Social Work and Universities.

#### 2.1.1 Australian Social Work

Since colonisation in 1788, Australian history has been characterised by atrocities, disease, dispossession from land and marginalisation of Indigenous people. Indigenous standpoints within the social work curricula could be a form of reconciliation (Gair, Miles & Thomson, 2005). Social workers have acknowledged with regret the part they played in the Stolen Generations, which is still in the living memory of many Indigenous people. However social work education has failed to incorporate Indigenous knowledges, all theories originate from dominant western paradigms, from this social work has acted as an agent of colonisation. Indigenous approaches have been silenced and relegated to the periphery as a deficit theoretical perspective (Gair, Miles & Thomson, 2005).

From a Foucauldian perspective through the claims of ‘truth’ asserted by modernity, social work has played a role in the practice of surveillance and discipline as human service organisations normalise deviant populations. Currently even critical social work struggles working from a localised context, because it asserts that there is a unified set of critical practices for marginalised, disempowered people (Coates, Gray & Hetherington, 2006). Non-Indigenous people have blindness towards white privilege; a paradigm shift is needed in order that the profession does not remain perpetrators of teaching only a Eurocentric pedagogy and compounding Indigenous disadvantage. Presently the social work curriculum asserts knowledge

constructing Aboriginal people only as victims of colonisation, positioning Indigenous people only as the 'other'. This single perspective of Indigenous people inserts a victim rescuer mindset into non-Indigenous students (Gair, 2007). When practice is from theories of one size fits all, such as humanist theories, practitioners do a disservice to service users (Bowers, 2008).

Culturally relevant social work occurs when practice and pedagogy mirror Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Green & Baldry, 2008). For non-Indigenous people to really understand an Indigenous perspective it needs to be a core component of their training before they work in human services, not just a workshop or class (Fredericks, 2008). Cultural sensitivity, cross cultural work, anti-racist practice and anti oppressive practice have reached a theoretical impasse from the paradox social work experiences when its foundational universal values are unable to accommodate Australian Indigenous knowledges (Coates, Gray & Hetherington, 2006). There are some glimmerings of change within the profession. For example, the primary aim of an action research project undertaken at James Cook University, Queensland was to confront the Eurocentrism of the social work curriculum, to move towards an alternative curriculum where Indigenous Australians are visible. From this study non-Indigenous facilitators of this research explored their own whiteness, their gender and the power relations that existed between themselves and Indigenous people (Gair, Miles & Thomson, 2005), attempting to address Eurocentric social work.

### 2.1.2 Universities

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs report (2000) stated that "Within two years, all undergraduate and postgraduate health sciences courses should include effective cross-cultural awareness components to deal with the current health status of Indigenous Australians and the factors which have contributed to their ongoing social and cultural disadvantage" (Fredericks, 2008). Now ten years later the question of Indigenous curriculum is still not addressed. Contemporary models of education are still largely colonialist constructs that continue to alienate Indigenous people (Bowers, 2008). If professionals and students are serious about including Indigenous perspectives they must listen to what Aboriginal people have to say. Listening is the first step and from listening comes dialogue (Fredericks, 2008).

In New Zealand Universities, Maori methodologies have been introduced for research across the disciplines to function as an alternative to western designs. Kaupapa Maori research emphasizes interdependence and spirituality as a fundamental component of knowledge construction. Within universities it calls for an ongoing creation and maintenance of space for Indigenous intellectual traditions, recognising that the academy has an important role, as the location for decolonisation (Henry & Pene, 2001). The limited participation of Indigenous Australians in tertiary study for the first 175 years of colonisation demonstrates the slow integration of Indigenous intellectualism into tertiary institutions (Rigney, 2001).

In this section I have argued that social work and Universities are Eurocentric and as such Indigenous knowledges continue to be subjugated and silenced. The next section will explore how Indigenous knowledge became positioned this way, by investigating Western knowledge systems and reviewing what Western discourses have been used to facilitate this dominance.

## 2.2 How the Western World Dominates Knowledge Systems.

### 2.2.1 Western Knowledge

The Western knowledge position changes through each epistemic period. Currently globalisation constantly re-affirms the West's view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, as the gate keeper of knowledge and as the source of civilised knowledge (Coates, Gray & Hetherington, 2006). The process through which traditional Eurocentric epistemology claims universal applicability across all disciplines, cultures and historical periods is called: epistemic violence (Henry & Pene, 2001). From epistemic violence professionals, academics and policy makers seek answers from within their own worldview and their own knowledge base. There is always some new approach from western paradigms to fix the Indigenous problem (Fredericks, 2008).

At the Indigenous - non Indigenous interface Michel Foucault made the observation in 1976 that, "Sovereignty's old right, to take life or let live, came to be complemented by, the power to make live or let die". This could be interpreted as meaning that modern society is constantly and internally at war with subjects that are constructed to belong to inferior species, this observation connects Foucault's understanding of racism with colonisation's fields of visibility. Foucault's further study into governmentality connects this observation with power, arguing that the highest

function of power was no longer to kill but to invest in life, which is the power to make live and let die. This understanding of racism argues that violence has been enacted towards Indigenous people in the name of the state and for public interest. Indigenous people are discursively inferiorised through this western knowledge position, and this distinction between population and inferior subjects is the investment in life and the allowance to let die (Fletcher, 2009).

### 2.2.2 How Western Discourse Constructs Indigenous People

Modern western science today can trace its traditions back to philosophical ancestors of the early Greeks; Aristotle is claimed to be the founder of science and positivist epistemologies emerged from Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes, these western traditions purport true facts applicable to the whole world. The positivist tradition is based on validity and reliability; it is authoritative and universal, giving science the privilege that all realities can be measured against it. Within the rational construct of science there is no Aboriginal Dreaming because it is judged irrational. Science as a social institution produces, consumes and markets a knowledge economy. It is accepted as the authority in developing truth in society. Science and its knowledge production methods are overseen by scholars that are well rehearsed in western epistemologies and ontologies. Scientific enquiry engineered, through the constructs of 'race' and 'other', a hegemonic colonial identity. From this humans have been ranked into hierarchies of superior and inferior. Two racial theories of significance in Australia were Social Darwinism and Polygenesis (Rigney, 2001).

Race informed the decision of terra nullius, however it also informed the long standing tradition in Australia of intellectual terra nullius, meaning that there were no pre-existing knowledge systems before European invasion because Race theories determined whose knowledge was valid (Rigney, 2001). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) as cited in Perkins (2007: 64) explains that the 'other' is always disadvantaged through the discourse of history because it is written by the victor and as such deforms the history of 'others'. Indigenous Australian systems of knowledge, governance, economy and education were replaced by non-Indigenous Australians systems on the belief that the 'race' of Indigenous peoples was sub-human (Rigney, 2001). Edward Said (1978) as cited in Briskman (2007: 122), states that western societies have rarely offered its subjects anything but imperialism, racism and ethnocentrism for dealing with 'other'

cultures during the ongoing process of colonisation. Colonisation has a process of overwriting where the colonisers forget, for their own gain, historical events that are connected to landscape (Perkins, 2007). Indigenism recognises the power of science to colonise but also the power of research to contribute to de-colonisation, through Indigenous methodological research. This is called the 'journey of academic contradiction' (Rigney, 2001).

In this section I have discussed the dominant position of Western knowledge and the Western discourses about Indigenous people that are used to maintain the status quo. The Foucauldian perspective of this study recognises the utility of discourse to construct social power for a particular group. The next section will investigate studies where analysis of discourse has been used to emancipate subjugated knowledges, recognising that discourse analysis is a process that offers an opportunity to challenge dominant knowledge systems.

### 2.3 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis from a Foucauldian perspective, which is later introduced in the methodology, understands dominate and subjugated discourses to be reflective of the power struggles that exist in society at any given time. From this understanding, it is through discourse analysis of Indigenous knowledges, that subjugated Indigenous discourses could be re-positioned to inform social work. Discourse has the power to create reality by naming and giving meaning to aspects of experience from a particular perspective. This power to create is distributive politics; what is deemed to be real and true determines what is included and what is excluded, so whatever can not be named is not noticed Lee (1994) as cited in Kiprono Lang'at (2005:12). Farrell (1996) as cited in Kiprono Lang'at (2005:5) explains that to become competent in a discourse we must learn to assume the socially accepted ways of thinking and acting that become natural to the participants of that discourse. The relationship between language and culture are not simple and linear but discursive and complex. Culture influences discursive practice and discourse in turn influences all the culture it comes in contact with. A number of empirical studies have attempted to demonstrate discursive practices at work in particular settings.

Kiprono Lang'at (2005) aimed to explore, through semi structured open ended interviews, the emerging reading positions and discursive practices of teachers and curriculum officers. This research identified the perceptions that embody the participant's selections of particular text and their reading position concerning Indigenous text as alternative to English

curriculum. It showed how in the NSW Higher School Certificate, texts have helped empower the English language, thus subjugating and marginalising Indigenous literature. Through CDA of the competing ideologies, this study created awareness among education stakeholders of alternative positions for high school English texts. In further CDA research conducted by Germond-Duret (2007), it was investigated how Indigenous Cameroonian Pygmies are discursively represented and constructed. This study utilised Van Dijk's (1993) view that CDA is useful for the study of Indigenous knowledges. At its core CDA is a framework that enables detailed description, explanation and critique of the ways dominant discourses influence socially shared knowledge, attitudes and ideologies. This framework identifies the role that dominant discourse has in the manufacture of concrete practice models. In research analysis and discussion of data on post-feminism, Lazar (2005) stated that Feminist CDA advances rich and nuanced understanding of the complex workings of power, ideology and gendered social arrangements. This research is overtly political and seeks to gain collective group visibility. Feminist CDA entailed mobilising theory in order to create strategies for resistance and change. This is academic activism, a type of scholarship where its bias is its argument. It does not lack objectivity from this bias but instead gains 'strong objectivity' (Nakata, 2007) because it recognises group identity, power relations and ideology. These research studies are in line with Indigenous methodology, using CDA to learn emerging Indigenous discourses. In summary there have been CDA studies investigating the position of Indigenous knowledges but none so far have been for the purpose of informing Australian social work practice.

## 2.4 Current Indigenous Knowledge Position

The designation of Indigenous traditions as oral, non-literate and non-alphabetical has facilitated both ethnocentrism and epistemic violence. Racism provided non-Indigenous Australians with boundaries of normality and abnormality against which colonial subjects would regulate behaviour. Aboriginal people emerged as the negative referent in the development of Australian bio-political order (Brigg, 2007). Through scientists and humanitarians picking at bits and pieces of Indigenous knowledge it has also become fragmented, and there is capitalist interest that sees Indigenous knowledge as just another resource available for western society profit (Nakata, 2002).

This process separates knowledge from the people who possess it; when the knowledge is removed from the people it loses its power. The knowledge becomes a commodity and can be used by the power structures to support existing discourses and maintain the status quo (Simpson, 2001). Eyzaguirre (2001) as cited in Nakata (2002: 283) states that; “taking validated nuggets of Indigenous knowledge out of its cultural context satisfies outside researchers but it may undermine the knowledge system itself”. For Indigenous knowledge to be included it must demonstrate its importance, not only as a counter to dominant theory but as part of a broader social process. These new social arrangements must challenge long standing cultural formations and herald in a new epistemic era (Warrior, 2009), an era which includes both Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge positions. It is in this space that this study aims to make a contribution, acknowledging that Australian social work occupies a space that contains both Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems.

## 2.5 Conclusion

This literature review establishes the need for research that examines Indigenous discourse and propositions an intellectual space where Indigenous and non-Indigenous standpoints, methodologies, discourses and theoretical perspectives can simultaneously reside. From a Foucauldian perspective this chapter has explained how Indigenous knowledge is excluded from the social work profession and Universities; through the constructed dominance of Western knowledges and its discourses. From here discourse analysis is presented as the process by which Indigenous discourse is emancipated. The literature review concludes with a summary of where Indigenous knowledge is currently positioned. From here this study is able to move forward through its Foucauldian approach, confidently using discourse analysis of Indigenous text, to address social work’s Eurocentric underpinnings in the methodology.

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

After careful examination it has emerged that the methodological paradigm informing this study is Indigenous methodology. At first glance it seemed this study fell within the qualitative paradigm, similar to feminist research. The qualitative paradigm asserts that reality is subjective, created through an individual's mind and expressed through language, embedded in traditions and rules. This idea suggests that humans are the creators of their world, occupying a central position constructing their own set of meanings as they engage in their environment. Knowing is common sense, inductive, interpretive and not value free (Sarantakos, 2005). It is this constructionist underpinning of qualitative study that is in direct opposition to the Indigenous paradigm.

“Trees, rivers, forests and mountains may exist outside people's consciousness but have no meaning before they are addressed by people...meanings emerge out of people's interaction with the world, they do not exist before a mind engages them” (Cooper, 1998: 9).

The Indigenous paradigm does not place the human mind central to the construction of meanings. Meanings are constructed relationally. The ‘Ancestral Core’ is central to Indigenous epistemologies and knowledge construction. Relational epistemology means that people become and know, through relationship with the Ancestral Core. Through this relational knowing, not everyone can know everything, everything cannot be known and there are knowledges beyond the human mind (Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2010). The constructionist value of the qualitative paradigm which states humans occupy a central position does not allow an Indigenous interrelationship between ancestral beings, humans and country. As Indigenous researcher Karen Martin states (2008) Ancestral Spirits are situated at the centre of Indigenous methodology, creating Story, so people through relatedness know themselves.

As an Indigenous researcher investigating Indigenous epistemology, standpoints and discourse, this study has been constructed and situated from an Indigenous methodology, which

differs as argued from qualitative research. Identifying this differentiation to qualitative study is not positioning this research outside academia, because both Western and Indigenous research occupy the same intellectual Australian space (Nakata, 2007); from this both methodologies should be allowed representation within Australian research. Indigenous Methodology is embedded within Indigenous epistemologies, axiologies and ontologies. These state that connectivity is integral to knowledge production, to be connected is to know and knowing is being embodied to country. Knowledges come from dreams, ancestors, stories and experience; it is embedded in the land, existing beyond human perception (Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2010). The research methodology of this study is also critical because it sees knowledge as divided and in tension, between dominant knowledge systems and subjugated knowledges (Sarantakos, 2005). Critical Indigenous methodology seeks to explain and transform the social order, identifying power struggles and using research findings to liberate subjugated knowledges.

### 3.2 Theoretical Perspective

Indigenous research which argues that emerging Indigenous discursive formations construct a theoretical perspective that could inform social work needs to address key concepts. These are: how discourse develops, the struggle between power and knowledge production, existing parallel knowledge systems within any given historical time and the regulation of the Indigenous statement as the 'other'. The theoretical perspective chosen to explore these areas draws from elements of the Foucauldian approach. Michel Foucault's (1970) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, explains that at any particular historical time there are epistemes. These permit people to say some things and make other things unthinkable to say (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). Epistemes instruct how people will think, talk and act. They speak themselves into a society's consciousness by excluding alternative knowledges. Within this 'order of things' Foucault states there has been no linear progressive development of knowledge, re-creating truth, no connection between historical times constantly moving western societies towards improvement (Foucault, 1972). From this perspective it could be imagined that different parallel knowledges exist within any historical time, but are made invisible through the dominant discourses. Foucault wanted to learn the principles of ordering and excluding, making established epistemes possible (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). From a Foucauldian position

research can explore excluded knowledges within a particular historical time. Australian Indigenous knowledges have been excluded and made invisible from the Australian episteme since European invasion and settlement, and necessitate emancipatory research designs.

The production of an episteme happens through discursive formations which are, as Foucault explains, an order of discourse. Discursive formations order speech, organise ideas and produce objects of knowledge (Foucault, 1970). Foucault further explains that institutions such as universities and governments accredit an individual's ability to become familiar with particular discursive formations, meaning that the institutions of society propagate their own episteme. This system edits out and condemns anything that does not fit within the discursive formation, at either the local discipline level or the general cultural level. Discourses allow people to understand themselves, to distinguish the valuable and the valueless, true from false, and right from wrong, as thoughts and actions are regulated by discourses. The basic unit of a discourse is the statement. From this a discursive formation is defined by statements it does not allow in. Those particular statements that are distinguished as outside are labelled as *the other* (Foucault, 1972; Foucault, 2003). This study argues that the systems which regulate Australian discursive formations have marginalised through 'othering' any Indigenous discourse.

Knowledge legitimates the exercise of power (Foucault, 1972). Experts of a particular discipline are asked to judge from their familiarity of a discursive formation, new ideas, concepts, individuals and groups of people, thus connecting knowledge and power in an ongoing relationship. A tactic of this relationship between knowledge and power is to claim the ownership of universal truth. This concept connects itself with a predecessor, giving it a position of strength to marginalise alternative knowledges. Knowledge then becomes the result of a power struggle, as one discursive formation that purports a particular knowledge base triumphs over another discursive formation (Lloyd & Thacker, 1997). Nietzsche suggests that where there is a particular discourse, it is possible to trace the struggles, battles or violence that produced it. This knowledge power struggle identified by Foucault creates subjugated knowledge, which is ways of knowing that become buried under the dominant discursive formations (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000).

A Foucauldian approach understands that, there are, in the speaking positions of history, many narratives; it depends who is telling the story. This view contends that there are multiple overlapping and contesting histories. Foucault connects speaking positions of history, dominant

discourses and colonisation, explaining that discourse can be a colonising force as it establishes relations between different groups of people (Foucault, 2003). The discursive formations of colonisation created a unified subject: non-Indigenous Europeans. From European invasion all Australians were divided into either subject or object, active or passive. Either the colonising people who make history and develop knowledges, or the colonised people who are made the object of such history and knowledge (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). Foucault established that colonisation is not just the action of invasion, cultural genocide or the biological confrontation of social Darwinism, it is the absolute nullification of Indigenous people's humanness as they were categorised as 'objects' within their own nation.

It is recognised that epistemes and discursive formations construct the knowledge base of any historical period, which in turn limits through 'othering' how people understand the world and themselves. It is further understood that this process creates an ongoing knowledge power struggle, as the institutions of a society act as gate keepers condemning and authorising new ideas and concepts (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). Subjugated Indigenous knowledge present in Australia's historical and contemporary episteme requires a dissecting of the discursive formations that created colonisation. This uncovers the non Indigenous unified subject, which classified Australian Indigenous people as 'object' through the discourse of colonisation. These Foucauldian concepts explain the relationships between knowledge, discourse, institutions and power, describing why Indigenous knowledge has been buried beneath the discursive formations of a dominant society. From a Foucauldian perspective it is also important to analysis the broader social/historical context of the study, as outlined in the following section.

### 3.3 Context of Research

This research has been directed from these Foucauldian perspectives but the broader context of this research is the Indigenous Rights movement, and the development of the Indigenous Intellectual community within academia and the international Indigenous community. The current discussion around Indigenous methodology, standpoints, discourse and research has developed within this context. This broader context is significant to this study because it positions it within a specific time period and, as Foucault explains, discourses exist and emerge within a historical setting. Key events have shaped our current historical period: the

Black Rights movement which began during the 1960's in America, the emergence of Indigenous units and Indigenous Studies in Australian universities, the First Nations movement that developed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the international Indigenous intellectual movement that includes standpoints, theories, practice models and methodologies from places such as North America, Hawaii, Aotearoa, Africa. In the Australian context, some of these defining events include: the Government's investigations into 'Deaths in Custody', and the 'Stolen Generation', the High Court Native Title Mabo decision, the 1967 Referendum that included Indigenous Australians in the census, and the recent Labour Government's 'Apology' to the Australian Indigenous community. All of these events have created a social/historical context from which Indigenous subjugated knowledges and discourse can emerge as a counter narrative to the dominant episteme (Foucault, 2003). This context is relevant to the research question because, following the Foucauldian approach directing this research, discourse is deeply connected to history, so for new discursive formations to penetrate the systems of a society, the timing would have to be just right.

### 3.4 Researcher's Standpoint

Standpoint is more than describing my role in the study or the position I occupy; its understanding my position or role from a critical stance through reflexivity (Pohlhaus, 2002). It is my engagement with my experiences, the questions I ask or don't ask that constructs my standpoint (Nakata, 2007). From this definition my standpoint has been produced through my engagement in the research. During the research process I attended 'Indigenous Methodologies' at University of South Australia, in which students were challenged to critically depict their research standpoint. My standpoint has been informed by my position as a student, both within the Western discipline of social work and since commencing this research within the Indigenous intellectual community. Though these two social worlds originate from different paradigms, from my standpoint I do not see them as binary. Instead they occupy the same space, entwining and overlapping in my life experiences and in principles such as human rights and social justice.

I am also informed, through reflection of my Aboriginal heritage and socialisation within a colonised country, by 'My Track'. This expression explains how I engage with my lived experience. As a child I grew up on large properties surrounded by reserves and Bush. My

ability to move forward was directly linked to how well I knew where I had come from. Knowing competently my way along Bush tracks, which ones were slippery in the wet, where the fences were, the prickly patches and the tracks that crossed creeks, enabled me to move forward in what I needed to do next. I take this way of being into my research standpoint. 'My Track' is staying deeply connected to my lived experience, and my ability to know the landscape I have crossed gives me the knowledge and determines how well I keep running. My standpoint has meant that during this study memories from 'My Track' have emerged, giving me deeper understanding and the knowledge to intuitively move the research forward within Indigenous methodology.

## 3.5 Method

### 3.5.1 Data collection and Sampling Method

This study was undertaken through text analysis. The selection of texts analysed has been carried out through a snowball sampling technique. This is done by choosing an initial text and then choosing the following texts by seeing who that particular author cites, thus snowballing the participants (Bouma & Ling, 2004). The benefits of this method for this kind of research are that one can select text that builds on the emerging understanding. The initial text chosen for this analysis of Indigenous knowledge's/discourse was the seminal article written by Lester-Irabinna Rigney in 1997. The following texts snowballed from this one. The criteria for each chosen text included: written by an Australian Aboriginal author, content discussing Indigenous knowledge, discourses or Indigenous social work, approximately an article in length and published in either a journal or presented at a conference. This method of data collection and sampling was appropriate for this study because it allowed Indigenous authors to choose other authors within the Australian Indigenous intellectual community, in a small way giving a voice to subjugated Indigenous knowledge within academia. See Appendix A for list of text analysed in this study.

### 3.5.2 Data Analysis

The six articles chosen have been analyzed drawing from Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is a type of discourse analysis used to study text. Discourse analysis deals with language but especially studies its constructive, action orientated nature. Analysis is done by learning the traits, regularities and recurring patterns within a particular discourse (Sarantakos, 2005).

CDA differs slightly from discourse analysis, in that it does not simply aim to describe a particular discourse but to critically evaluate its way of thinking, of interpreting the world, of expressing language within society. The aims of CDA are to investigate how ideologies have become frozen in language and so increase awareness of injustice, prejudice and power struggles. Fairclough's CDA sees language as a form of social practice connected to a historical context and the means by which existing social relations are reproduced and the interests of particular people groups are served. People textually express their differences in beliefs, knowledges and representations, so text negotiate social relations between people in circumstances of contestation and from this people use a particular language, defining their identity (Fairclough, 1992). Questions for CDA may ask how is this text positioned within the social context, whose interests are being served by this positioning, whose interests are being negated and what are the consequences of this positioning? All of these questions particularly understand discourse in relation to power; this is what makes CDA critical.

Fairclough's (1989) model for CDA consists of three inter-related processes of analysis that are connected to three inter-related dimensions of discourse. The three dimensions of discourse are: analysis of the object as text, analysis of the processes by which the object is produced and received, and thirdly the socio-historical conditions that govern these processes. These three dimensions of discourse require three different kinds of analysis which are: text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation) and, lastly, social analysis (explanation). Taking this multifunctional view of text addresses the theoretical claims that text is socially constitutive, linking Foucault's understanding of language to Fairclough's analysis model (Fairclough, 2006).

Text analysis at the descriptive, interpretative and explanatory level requires investigation of particular values within the text as described by the Fairclough CDA model. These values are the experiential, relational, expressive, interpretive and social/historical. Each text (participant)

was analysed for these values; as the researcher I methodically studied the ‘value’ from literature describing Fairclough’s model, then read through each article in turn looking for that value within the text, these values were then extracted from the article as data until all representations of a value were collected. These value extractions were then thematically analysed into mini themes for each value. This process was then repeated continuously until all six articles were analysed for each value. A description of each value within Fairclough’s model follows.

### **Experiential Value**

At the experiential level of this investigation the six articles were studied to understand how the authors experienced their past and current realities. Particular attention was paid to ideological differences and struggles; understanding from what ideological standpoint were these experiences re-told and whether there were ideological power struggles within actual statements. As the authors explained their experiences I tried to ascertain if there were re-occurring classification schemas constructed from a particular discourse (Fairclough, 1989).

### **Relational Value**

Studying the six articles at the relational level is an analysis of the relationships that occur within the text. These relationships may be between people, organisations, events or concepts. Sometimes these relationships were productive, amicable, historical, destructive or full of angst. They also occurred at different levels such as over time, at the spiritual level, at the macro organisational/state level and at the micro level between individuals. Understanding the texts at the relational level the investigation uncovered the connections and mechanics within each text, creating a deeper understanding of the content.

### **Expressive Value**

The six articles were analysed for their expressive values; understanding the ideological and discursive statements declared within the article. At different times participants placed themselves within the discussion, expressing evaluations from a particular discursive formation. These expressive values can be constructed solely from a particular discourse or from contrasting

discourses, suggesting the ideologies that constructed the statement. In this analysis the expressive values were a mix from the Western and Indigenous paradigm.

### **Interpretive Value**

Interpretation of text is achieved through understanding the relationship between the text itself and how it is produced, and how I as the reader cognitively interpreted the text. Analysing modes of production is seeing the text as a product derived from particular perspectives or ideologies. The process of interpretation understands the text is also a resource; I utilized my own cognitive schemas to produce my own understandings. For each participant their article was investigated for the modes of production discovering what knowledge base, ideology and paradigm informed the text content. Secondly I reflected on what knowledge base, ideologies and paradigms were used to interpret the text. Finding the interpretive value is to connect the text with the social world, supporting that text does not exist alone but is representative of discursive formations.

### **Social/Historical Value**

The social/historical value is investigating the explanatory context of the text, tracing words and phrases within the text to understand social relationships or historical events that inform the article or are the larger context from which the text was written. The analyst is offering interpretations of invisible stake holders of the content. Understanding the context from which the article is produced from gives deeper understanding about whom and how the statements and discourses were constructed and what historical events may have contributed to the construction of the text. Analysing the social/historical value also provides a critical understanding of the power relations that support or suppress the statements within the article and if the article itself sustains or transforms existing power relations (See Appendix B for CDA Template).

Norman Fairclough's CDA is in line with a Foucauldian approach because it understands that discourse is produced directly from power relations within society and instructs how people think, talk and behave. CDA has been used in other studies to understand the power relations within society; Rocha-Schmid (2010) used CDA in a study of adult education, Farrelly (2010)

used it to analysis the empowerment agenda in political studies and Lazar (2007) completed CDA to articulate a Post-feminist discourse. This study through CDA of the selected texts will highlight emerging Indigenous discursive formations. Indigenous discourse has been subjugated since European invasion in 1788. For the discipline of social work to be informed by Indigenous statements and challenge the dominant episteme, it will have to start with the Indigenous author, which is where text analysis begins.

### 3.6 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness in this research has been constructed at the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007), and using Indigenous methodology this research has addressed in detail Western academia's understanding of trustworthiness. This research has also addressed Indigenous ethical concepts of emancipatory resistance, political integrity, privileging Indigenous voices (Ridney, 1997) and the principle of respect, within research aims, methods and outcomes (Porsanger, 2004). Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains that respect is essential to maintaining relatedness, emphasizing the significance of relationships within the universe. Martin (2008) states that research must maintain respect to land, laws, Elders, culture, community, families and the future. As stated Indigenous methodology is centred on relatedness, to gain trustworthiness the research must include relatedness to the emancipatory needs of community, be conducted by Indigenous researchers if possible and create intellectual space for Indigenous voices. This research has utilised Foucault as a theoretical perspective so as to emancipate subjugated Indigenous discourse and my standpoint as an Aboriginal woman includes respect as an axiology from My Track. Reliability has been addressed through pro-longed engagement, saturation and observation of literature written by Indigenous authors and the research data, meticulously maintaining analysis procedures from CDA, checking with participants (authors I have met) that I have accurately perceived the data and clearly stating my critical subjective position within the study (Sarantakos, 2005).



On the surface  
talking is the same  
ways of knowing  
in a foreign wind

My own voice  
seems a little strange  
collected meanings  
birthed within pain

Stumbling to the trees  
recognizing twisted roots  
consumed by my thirst  
I dig with bare hands

In fertile earth  
drink a familiar sound  
beneath the country  
river songs are found.

Michelle McMahon  
Reflection of research  
process  
June 2010

## 4 Findings

The following findings have emerged through the CDA analysis. The CDA template used for this analysis explored particular values within the text. These were experiential, relational, expressive, interpretative and social/historical. These values uncover the social context, relationships, lived experiences, statements, modes of production, ideologies and historical events explored using these values. From this detailed overlapping analysis of each text, rich descriptions full of nuanced meanings constructed particular Indigenous discourses. These discourses, as Foucault stipulates, could be traced back to particular ideologies and epistemologies. This findings chapter has organised the Indigenous discourse into three major themes, the Indigenous authors 'set of meanings' connected to the *Western World*, *Metaphysical World & Community* and *Indigenous Epistemology*. Within these three themes are demonstrated the particular discourse used by participants when constructing meanings connected to these areas. Particular words within this exploration of Indigenous discourse, that construct Indigenous theory, standpoint or concept will be in italic and capitalised, whereas they may normally be lower case. This is done purposely, placing Indigenous knowledges forefront within this paper, challenging the Western construction of English as the continued accepted norm and addressing the emancipatory requirement of Indigenous methodology.

### 4.1 Indigenous authors' relationship with the Western World

Participants described subjugation as the complete refusal from non-Indigenous Australian society to acknowledge Indigenous epistemologies which have existed prior and post European invasion. The texts explained the experiential history of Indigenous subjugation and the mechanics within Western society that maintained modes of production for its dominance (West, 2000) (Nakata, 2006) (Foley, 2003) (Moreton-Robinson, 2006). Subjugation circumscribes Indigenous culture, history, discourse, language, communities and sovereignty. This is underpinned by *Intellectual Terra Nullius*, an Indigenous expressive term that explains how Europeans determined that Australia was empty of communities and a corpus of knowledge (Rigney, 1997) (Martin, 2003). Subjugation and *Intellectual Terra Nullius* are historical,

experiential statements; they reveal what Indigenous Australians have experienced, within Indigenous discourse.

“There has been no burgeoning renaissance in the white man’s thinking regarding the presence of Indigenous paradigms” (West, 2000:241).  
“Australia’s colonial government, judicial system, education and its knowledge construction factories were built on the graves of Indigenous Australians systems, on the assumption that the race of Indigenous non-humans has no such system in place prior to the invasion” (Rigney, 1997:113).

Participants also discussed the *World Wide Racist* movement, an interpretive, experiential phrase that incorporates western science, social Darwinism, western research and racism. Indigenous authors explained that this movement is part of the western society’s strategy to maintain status quo and dominance. The *World Wide Racist* movement was discussed by participants in relation to Foucault theory of bio-power and was revealed as a significant social/historical value throughout the study. Discursive formations such as racism were derived from social Darwinism, so as to keep alternative knowledges marginalised and to discredit and regulate particular people groups based on physical features (West, 2000) (Rigney, 1997) (Foley, 2003) (Moreton-Robinson, 2006).

“Fundamental to the World Wide Racist movement is the construction of race via scientific theories of polygenism and social Darwinism”(Rigney, 1997:112).  
“The process of racialisation declared that my people’s minds, intellect, knowledges, histories and experiences were irrelevant” (Rigney, 1997:114).

From this historical backdrop participants identified the Australian subject (Martin, 2003) (Foley, 2003) (Moreton-Robinson, 2006). Indigenous Australians were discursively and legally constructed as objects post European invasion. From this position the *Indigenous Rights* movement has been building momentum since the 1967 referendum which allowed Indigenous Australians to be counted in the census as subjects. The Australian *Indigenous Rights* movement was fuelled by the International Indigenous Rights movement and the First Nations movement. Over time taking the campaign from civil rights, land rights and finally to sovereignty for both communities and Indigenous knowledges (Martin, 2003), demonstrating the interpretive value of Indigenous standpoints within their historical context.

“The 1970’s in Australia can be identified as a historical-political field because a new Indigenous subject emerged in history to challenge the myth of patriarchal white sovereignty through a counter narrative” (Moreton-Robinson, 2006: 390).

The participants positioned themselves within their experience of western society from this *Counter Narrative* (Nakata, 2006). Immediately constructing that Western society’s narrative is not the only perspective or standpoint within Australia. Part of this narrative is the story of survival; participants were not just victims of a colonised world but also heirs to their own culture and methodologies (West, 2000). Relational values existed between the participants and their epistemologies, creating the foundation for Indigenous expressive statements.

“We are still here, we have survived, and we might ask ourselves and our community if now, after 30 years of activity in higher education, a more positive narrative of survival might take us further than a narrative of cultural loss” (Nakata, 2006: 273).

Moreton – Robinson (2006) explained that non-Indigenous Australians needed to utilise an unfamiliar sociological imagination to comprehend an existing parallel *Counter Narrative*. The western concept of ‘lived experience’ is an expressive phrase participants used to explain how Indigenous knowledge is constructed and compiled, as opposed to the concepts of ‘rationality’ or ‘empirical’ knowledge construction.

Through a relational value to the *World Wide Racist* movement, participants examined the universal normalisation of *Whiteness* (Foley, 2003). Indigenous people were positioned as abnormal and the dominant pale skinned Anglo society positioned themselves as the universal representation of humanness. These expressive statements are formalised in Moreton – Robinson’s (2006) description of *Whiteness* theory. This is a theory that investigates how non-Indigenous Australians constructed *Whiteness* to be the norm and in doing so regulated to themselves power, dominance, authority and a communal sense of self efficacy to all its members.

“During modernity Whiteness became an invisible norm, through the universalisation of humanness” (Moreton-Robinson, 2006: 388).

“This literature identifies Whiteness as the invisible norm against which other races are judged in the construction of identity, representation, decision making, subjectivity, nationalism, knowledge production and the law” (Moreton-Robinson, 2006: 388).

Throughout the articles participants also examined relationally the Western concept of difference and how this concept produces ‘Othering’ (Nakata, 2006) (Foley, 2003). Culturally sensitive western theories fail to connect with Indigenous knowledge systems because they understand ‘difference’ as only an attachment to western perspectives. From this position Indigenous ontology and epistemology may not be allocated a space within contemporary Australian society. Nakata (2006) argues an expressive statement that ‘Othering’ is re-created through simple comparisons between Indigenous and western ontology’s. The relational value between western and Indigenous knowledges needs to be understood as complex, some concepts, ‘modes of production’ are from traditional knowledges; while others occur within the space different paradigms intersect and overlap.

## 4.2 Indigenous Relational World

For the authors the *Metaphysical* world is a daily experiential, relational value, this relationship with the *Entities* is cyclical, equal and allows Indigenous people to live. Indigenous discourse in this area explains that the connection between the spiritual world and physical earth acts in accord together. The *Relational* concept within Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing centres everything on the existence of connections. Indigenous knowledge is this relationship between the spiritual realm and the physical realm and this connection is directly related to specific geographic locations (Foley, 2003). From this the *Metaphysical* world is not something detached from day to day life or the processes that underpin all Indigenous interactions. It’s present, continuing and directing all aspects of the physical world as a central interpretative value.

“So people are no more or less important than the Entities, the strength of the country can be seen in the relationship between the Entities, we establish connections to determine relatedness, without this knowing we are unable to be” (Martin, 2003: 207).  
“Our ontology is the inherent meshing of the spiritual events and the material world; this includes literal geographic connections and related events that occur regularly in our lives” (Foley, 2003: 47).

“Aboriginal philosophy is the triangulation of the physical world, the human and sacred worlds” (Foley, 2003: 47).

Discursive meanings were also attached to the Indigenous community, stating that it has *Sovereignty* of Indigenous knowledge. Non Indigenous people can utilise Indigenous knowledge but ownership belongs to specific communities and Elders. Within these communities knowledge is not acquired through academic merit as in non-Indigenous communities but through life experiences, gender, belonging to a community and age, a foundational expressive statement from all participants (West, 2000) (Martin, 2003) (Nakata, 2006) (Moreton-Robinson, 2006) (Foley, 2003). This connection that knowledge and Indigenous individuals have to Indigenous communities is a relational value, and means that all Indigenous academic endeavours must always *Privilege* and *Liberate* the Indigenous community. Indigenous standpoints have been created from Indigenous communities nationally and internationally as expressive statements.

“In theorising epistemologies I call on the powerful life experiences and history of myself and my community, I wish to employ my research for Indigenous liberation struggle” (Rigney, 1997: 117).

### 4.3 Indigenous Epistemology

Participants expressed that there is no *epistemological homogeneity* between Indigenous people groups; each way of knowing stands alone with its own beginnings, language and meanings, an expressive value stated by Foley, (2003) and Rigney (1997). When Indigenous epistemologies are compared to the Western paradigm then similarities may occur between Indigenous communities. These similarities form an Indigenous discourse around methodology from expressive statements that the *Metaphysical* world is the primary informant for Indigenous knowledge, and Indigenous people are the traditional owners of this knowledge. Cognitive concepts or ‘ways of knowing’ are always connected to the personal self, the Indigenous person and relationship with community, country and the spiritual world. This makes Indigenous epistemology derived from the lived ‘*Relational*’ experience; it is endogenous (Nakata, 2006).

“It is the concept of Metaphysics, I propose that our philosophy is based on” (West, 2000: 238).

This process of knowledge production between the *Metaphysical* world and specific geographic areas or intellectual spaces is centred and fluid through the Indigenous concept of *Locatedness*, which contains; experiential, relational, expressive and interpretative values. This concept was discursively explained as not a closed but a continuing complex method of study and engagement with the immediate environment. *Locatedness* in the Indigenous contemporary environment, which includes both traditional knowledge and a critical analysis of Western knowledge, allows Indigenous people to assert expressive Indigenous contemporary standpoints. These standpoints cannot by their holistic attributes be positioned by western discourse as the ‘other’ ‘irrational’ or ‘unscientific’, because Indigenous intellectuals change the rules of the game when they ignore the knowledge boundaries created by the colonisers.

“Our traditions have not been closed systems, but have been based on Locatedness, an understanding of our selves in relation to our surroundings, not just environmental but also knowledge systems” (Nakata, 2006: 269).

Post European invasion Indigenous standpoints must also contribute to the Indigenous political liberation struggle, addressing colonisation and Indigenous sovereignty. Indigenous epistemologies through the interpretive concept of *Locatedness* are multidimensional, different knowledges exist parallel occupying the same intellectual space. This is the *Cultural Interface*; different knowledge’s intersect, cross over and create new concepts. From this experiential position the Indigenous paradigm is complex, inclusive and not binary.

“So we consider the intersections of knowledge, not just as simple Indigenous non-Indigenous intersection but as an interface that is complex and layered by many, many historical, discursive intersections” (Nakata, 2006: 272).

“The strength of our community can be seen in the relationship between the Entities, these relations are not oppositional, nor binary, but are inclusive and accepting of diversity” (Martin, 2003: 207).

#### 4.4 The Cultural Interface as the Way Forward

The central, pervasive, expressive Indigenous statement throughout the findings is the demand for recognition of the Indigenous paradigm. This paradigm is informed by *Relational*

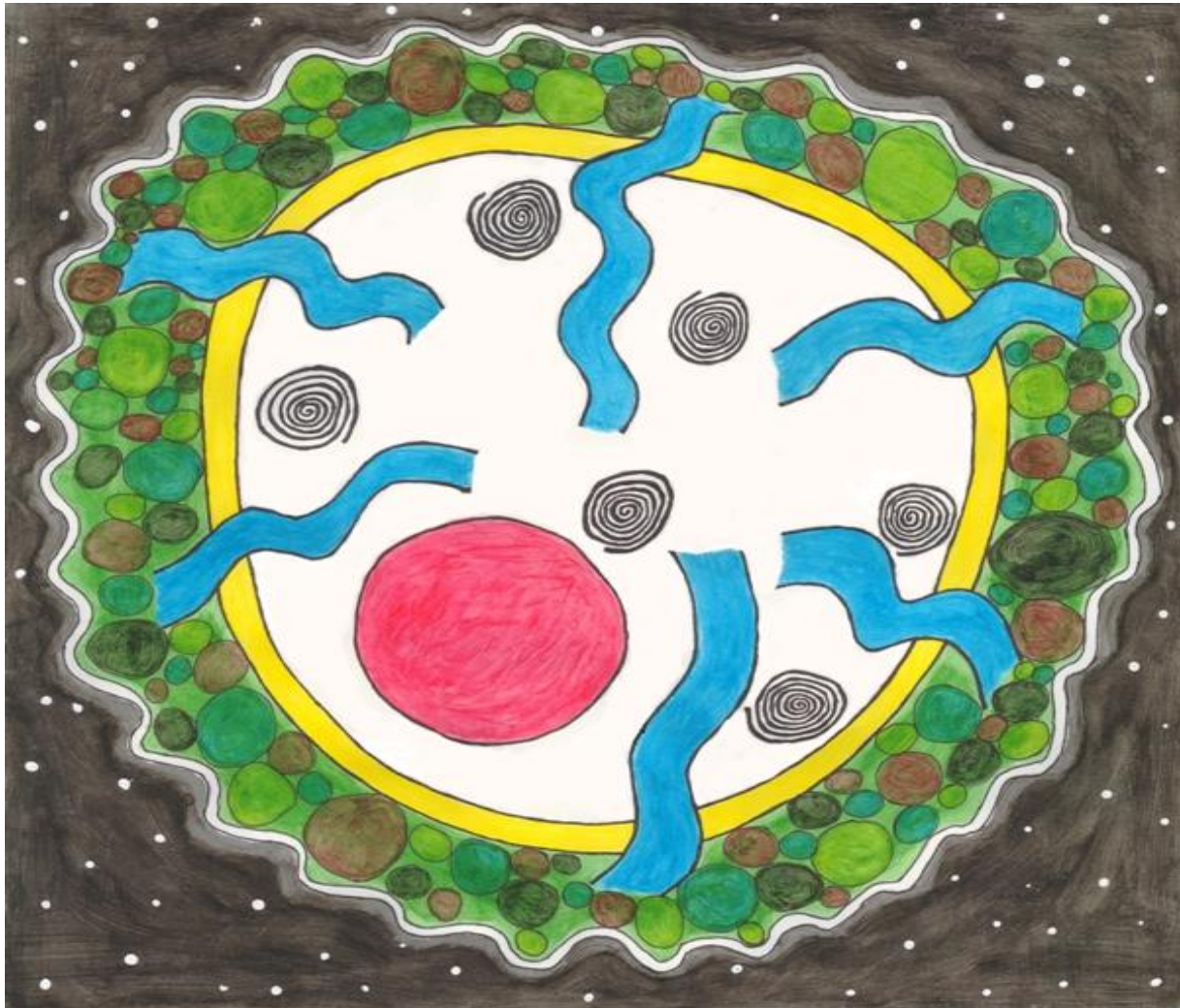
Indigenous epistemologies located at the *Cultural Interface*, a complex intellectual space where Western and Indigenous paradigms overlap and re-create (Rigney, 1997) (West, 2000) (Moreton-Robinson, 2006) (Foley, 2003).

“Indigenous research is recognition of our world views, our knowledges and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival” (Martin, 2003: 205).  
“Indigenous studies is not just to decolonise through revival of Indigenous knowledges but also to defend them by reinstating Indigenous ontology’s and epistemologies through the development of new frameworks” (Nakata, 2006: 268).

These findings are relevant to the research question because they have outlined Indigenous discourses which emerged through CDA of academic Indigenous texts. These Indigenous discourses clearly demonstrate through their positioning, language, origin, values and collected meanings that they are a discursive formation from the Indigenous paradigm, signalling an Australian epistemic shift. According to Foucault (1972) discursive formations can inform or create theoretical perspectives within institutions such as academia, thus bringing the Indigenous paradigm into conversation with western disciplines.

The journey I have taken as these findings emerged is displayed shortly in a process diagram I refer to as a ‘Mud Map’. The term ‘Mud Map’ is used from my standpoint, growing up in rural Bush areas mud maps were used to explain to others where I have come from or where I am going. Drawing a picture in the dirt was a form of communication, a way of knowing my current position and is part of My Track. The Mud Map in this research shows the landscape crossed while gathering the findings. This Mud Map crosses knowledge boundaries that have historically been separate and binary, instead representing a singular Australian intellectual space for Indigenous discourse. From this map Indigenous discourse talks from and back to the Metaphysical world, country, community, academia, institutions, the dominant episteme and history.

*Diagram1. My Mud Map*



The painting (Mud Map) is made of four circles, each one representing a particular world. To portray the processes within the diagram as worlds is inspired by Fourth World theory. This theory explores language and discourse as a source of Indigenous oppression, Fanon (1967 as cited in Close, 2002: 9) states that “a man who has a language, consequently possess the world expressed and implied by that language”. This theory seeks to reject the notions of superiority or ‘othering’, instead Indigenous people assert their Indigeneity and neither Indigenous Nations nor Western States will be superior or the ‘other’ (Close, 2002). In this theory there is a first world (Capitalist), a second world (Communist), a third world (Developing) and a fourth world (Indigenous).

In the Mud Map the lines between these worlds are not fixed, as states change their political orientation and Indigenous nations exist within first and third worlds. The large

dominant white circle is the First world, the red circle is the Second worlds both past and present, the yellow circle is the third world it contains a large percentage of the population but yields little power. The outer circle represents the Indigenous Nations; it is made up of smaller circles of different sizes and colours to represent the uniqueness of each Indigenous Nation. These circles are not rings but whole circles with the Indigenous circle being the largest and the first that all others were built upon. There are two wavy lines outside the Indigenous circle; these two lines represent the cyclical, equal relationship that Indigenous nations have with the Metaphysical world. Outside these lines is the night sky, representing the Metaphysical world, which is in contact with all Indigenous nations.

The blue rivers crossing to the Indigenous nations from the dominant white Western world have currents that flow in different directions. These currents carry standpoints, discourses and perspectives that allow the Indigenous worlds and Western world to talk back to each other and communicate. These rivers bring change and growth, by their nature they determine progress and deeper understanding. From the findings of this research the rivers are human rights, critical, feminist, empowerment, whiteness and complexity theories. These theories are expressed through different discourses depending if they have originated from the Indigenous world or Western world, but there are enough shared underlying characteristics for communication and change.

Within the white Western world there are mechanical coils that spin and churn continuously re-creating the Western world. These are discursive formations and theories that maintain the status quo. By their nature they are autopoiesis, constructed to support epistemological dominance. The byproduct of these mechanical coils is exactly the same knowledges, discourses, structures, institutions and narratives. The coils discussed by the participants of this research are western science, racism, colonialism, individualism, universalism and othering. These standpoints or theories only recognise that there is one way of knowing, for all humans, and any effort to recognise Indigenous people is done through Othering. Indigenous methodologies, standpoints and discourses discussed in this chapter are not only positioned in the outside Indigenous circle but throughout the whole Mud Map, as discussed earlier. The Mud Map is a representation of the theories, processes and concepts I was informed by, as I analysed the different texts, identifying emerging Indigenous discourse.

## 5 Discussion

“Mal Brough came and he drove out to meet me. I waited for him at the place of my fathers, Dhanaya. I waited for Mal on my fathers land, looking over my mother’s clan’s waters, surrounded by memory and feeling. This is a place where fresh water, stirred up by the sacred stingray, meets saltwater. It is a rich, vibrant place, full of life and for a fleeting moment, on this land, we talked as men should” (Yunupingu, 2009: 5).

Galarrwuy Yunupingu explains a small part of his ontology in this extract, his ancestors, his family, his country, his sacred world and finally a clue to discursive Indigenous social relations. As if he has been waiting there, patiently in his ontology, waiting for new Australians to meet him in a very old, subjugated Indigenous episteme. Australia’s historical knowledge fails to recognise that pre and post colonisation, thinkers as great as Plato, Einstein and Marx existed and continue to exist, in Indigenous communities (Rigney, 2001). This study has attempted to listen to Indigenous epistemology. The following discussion will summarise the findings, discuss how they relate to other studies and theories, examine implications for advancing theory in social work curriculum and explore possibilities for future research.

### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings discussed Indigenous discourse which emerged through CDA of the articles. Key statements from these findings will now be summarised. From the application of *Intellectual Terra Nullius* across the Australian landscape, Indigenous knowledges were measured from the scientific paradigm as non-existent. This historical event created complete subjugation of Indigenous epistemology, ontology and axiology, continuing to this present time (Moreton-Robinson, 2006). Re-creating this *epistemic violence* is racism, a discursive formation constructed through science to maintain European dominance in the colonies (Rigney, 1997).

Since the 1960’s as explained by (Foucault, 1972 cited in Moreton-Robinson, 2006: 390) there has been an eruption, called a historical-political field, in which a new subject, the Australian Indigenous person, with an *Counter Narrative* emerged through key events such as the 1967 Referendum, High Court ‘Mabo’ decision and the international Black Rights movement. This narrative included both stories of dispossession and of survival. Turning the sociological lens back onto the dominant society Indigenous authors critically examine ‘Whiteness’ and how it came to be constructed as normal, universal and the possessor of societal

power. From this position it is clearly seen that through science, racism, *Whiteness* and the new humanist theories of difference, Indigenous people have always been artificially constructed as the 'other'.

Challenging this binary powerless position, Indigenous authors have put forward *Indigenous Epistemology*. At the core of this way of knowing is *Relational* knowledge construction, a cyclical, equal relationship between people, country and Ancestors, which creates knowledge and enables life (West, 2000) (Foley, 2003) (Martin, 2003). *Locatedness* is a complex Indigenous method of study and engagement with the changing environment. This occurs at the *Cultural Interface*, a multidimensional complex physical and intellectual space, where traditional knowledge, western knowledge and new knowledges emerge, intersect, overlap and inform each other. *Locatedness* at the *Cultural Interface* ignores the knowledge boundaries established by the colonisers (Nakata, 2006).

## 5.2 Analysis of Findings in Relation to Theoretical Understandings

The findings make important links to the research studies from the literature review. The CDA investigating the modes of interpretation and production of the English curriculum within High Schools in Kenya and Australia, by Kiprono Lang at' (2005) included an anti colonial cultural critique as suggested by Rigney (1997) throughout the study. Other CDA studies by Lazar (2005) analysing data on post-feminism and Germond-Duret (2007) discovering how Cameroonian Pygmies are constructed in organisational text, endeavoured to argue the practical application of resistance discourse, suggesting the utility of the Indigenous paradigm for practice, the key question identified by this research. Several studies Kiprono Lang at' (2005) Lazar (2005) Germond-Duret (2007) and an action research by Gair, Miles & Thomson (2005) which explored *Whiteness* (Moreton-Robinson, 2006) to expose Eurocentrism within Australia's social work curriculum, investigated subjugated knowledges, othering and alternative narratives, concepts discussed by all participants of the research. However, alternative narratives or epistemologies were not taken into the methodology of these studies; all were positioned from the qualitative paradigm, though these investigations did establish the foreground that future research should be constructed and implemented by marginalised ways of knowing, in line with this research's findings.

Epistemic violence is widely discussed throughout current theoretical understandings. Through analysis of dominant discourse it is understood that discourse itself subjugates Indigenous knowledge and allows mainstream knowledge to establish accepted meanings. Colonialist textuality works at the level of image and language to produce a distorted representation of the colonised, denying their voices, autonomy and agency. A critique of colonist discourse makes visible the internal economy of this discourse and the active resistance of the colonised (Scott, 1999).

Taking subjugated discourse to CDA Fairclough (1989 as cited in (Germond-Duret, 2007: 3) states that CDA positions the power issue at the centre of investigation as “language connects with the social through being the primary domain of ideology, and through being both a site of, and a stake in, struggles for power”. CDA reveals the way in which discursive activities construct institutions in which power is embedded, when taken for granted understandings serve to privilege some actors and disadvantage others. CDA focuses on the role of discourse in the re-production and challenge of dominance. It can be used to show the practical implications of mobilisation, resistance discourses, constructing CDA in a socio-political stance (Van Dijk, 1993). Understanding CDA to be political connects the findings with the methodology of this research. The theoretical understanding of discourse and the political utility of CDA is aligned with the Indigenous discourse around epistemic violence, racism, othering and whiteness, introduced in the findings.

The relational characteristic of Indigenous epistemology explained by West (2000) Foley (2003) and Martin (2003) is also discussed in broader theoretical terms. Kincheloe (2006) discusses that European “Christomodernism” transformed the individual from a connected participant in nature to a detached, objective, depersonalised observer. The Western individual emerged alienated and torn apart from cosmological ontology. From this Western development, Cartesian rationalism excluded Indigenous knowledges. Western scholars became ethnocentric and unable to recognise the genius of Indigenous relational epistemology, a paradigm that continues to situate humans as part of the world of nature through interconnectedness. Indigenous epistemology involves more than just knowing something, it is tuning yourself into nature’s mode of being and entering into a life generating relationship.

Recognition of the whole Australian Indigenous paradigm, epistemologies, standpoints and methodology is, as already stated, the central theme of Indigenous discourse discussed in the

findings. At a theoretical and physical level this is already occurring, as seen in the Kaupapa Maori research paradigm from New Zealand, which is a source of knowledge production and cultural capital for New Zealand academia. Kaupapa Maori translates to mean the traditional Maori way of doing, being and thinking. From the Maori renaissance, Maori intellectuals challenged Western models of knowledge construction. Kaupapa Maori research includes traditional beliefs and ethics, while also incorporating resistance discourse for self determination and empowerment (Henry & Pene, 2001).

### 5.3 Implication of Findings for Social Work

This study questioned how ‘Indigenous discourse could inform social work?’ Indigenous discourse could inform social work, but it must be given the opportunity and space to assert itself within the discipline. Indigenous discourse, standpoints and methodologies have continued to exist, as this study in a small way has illustrated. It is social work, itself, through critical-reflexivity, which needs to remove the Eurocentric lens and become informed by the actual landscape it occupies. Findings generated from all participants also arrive at a key discursive statement, which is for the abolition of ‘Australian Intellectual Terra Nullius’. With this constructed concept dismantled from the Australian landscape, and with the recognition of the ‘cultural interface’, intellectual space in discourse, theories, institutions and practice will be opened up for the renaissance of Indigenous epistemology. All participants (Rigney, 1997; West, 2000; Foley, 2003; Martin, 2003; Nakata, 2006 and Moreton-Robinson, 2006) demand and argue for recognition and the utility of the Indigenous paradigm.

Social workers have been unique among professions in their attention to examining their own values, through adopting a critical reflexive stance. Social work within Indigenous communities has historically been enacted within white systems, using white perspectives and representing a world view that originates from a time when non-white people were depicted as less than able, less than civilised, less than competent and misguided in a primitive ontology, Young (1999 as cited in Moreton-Robinson, 2005:110). From a critical reflective stance, social work must analyse its involvement in Whiteness. Advances in theory and practice could include the Indigenous paradigm, recognising that Australia’s social world is a complex space informed by different epistemologies. By accessing only mainstream text, students are denied rich diverse historical, social and cultural insights that Indigenous discourse holds (Kiprono Lang’at, 2005).

Currently the Eurocentric curriculum at the tertiary level contains minimal content where students can build knowledge and skills for practice to work from an Indigenous perspective (Gair, 2007). As Trevithick (2007) and Ife (2001) summarise, Indigenous knowledge has been seriously overlooked in the past by social work. The voices of Indigenous people must be an important part of the education of every social worker.

Positioning Indigenous people within the theory of 'difference' has the continued affect of marginalising Indigenous people as the 'other' (Nakata, 2006). Social work curriculum will have to re-think its position so as not to be an agent of continuing colonialism. Most social work practices derive from theories developed in UK or USA, the knowledge base for Australian practitioners are dominant world views, implicating social workers in the process of colonisation, Young (1999 as cited in (Moreton-Robinson, 2005:113). Critiques of post-colonial literature argue that the current usage of Western text in global institutions replay colonial relations and as such require more critical studies. Pedagogies of teaching mainstream text only, may need rethinking by education stakeholders (Kiprono Lang'at, 2005).

The social work profession has not yet fully understood itself as racialised or explored what this means for practice Young (1999 as cited in Moreton-Robinson, 2005: 114). Malcolm Payne (2005) argues that there is currently one paradigm informing social work, which is socially constructed through the Western discourses of Reflexive-therapeutic, Individualist-reformist and Socialist-collectivist approaches. There has been criticism since the 1970s about the way social work allows the culture of Western countries to dominate knowledge. As Nakata (2007) explains, any new theoretical approach must understand that the Indigenous experience is constituted in complex sets of social and discursive relations. From this understanding Indigenous Standpoints for the non-Indigenous person has to begin with a critical reflection of Whiteness and the privilege it brings to the mainstream way of knowing (Moreton-Robinson, 2006).

Indigenous discourse could inform social work curriculum and practice within academia. Though for this relationship to begin, from a Foucauldian perspective, a historical-political field must occur, so that the marginalised subject (Indigenous) can voice their story, their statements and can collectively construct discursive formations for their own epistemological emancipation. This epistemic shift creates a new complex landscape informed by both Indigenous and Western knowledges for academia. Social work as a critically reflexive discipline needs to evaluate

through further research how that landscape has changed and re-construct its curriculum so it is informed at the Cultural Interface and not by the ongoing agenda of colonisation. This will place Indigenous theoretical Standpoints, authored by Indigenous people, grounded in the Indigenous paradigm, alongside other social work perspectives such as feminism, in a space where it can begin to inform practice.

## 5.4 Further Research

Further research analysing Whiteness is suggested by the findings, so social workers can clearly understand how their position and ontology has been shaped through white discursive privilege. White race privilege works by normalising whiteness, justifying colonisation (Moreton-Robinson, 2006). White Australians assume that a white rational, autonomous, liberal, humanist model of subjectivity is appropriate for understanding the experiences of all people. From this rather than only working on ways a discipline can better support or engage with Indigenous people, it is also critical to look at the ways in which white people talk about Indigenous people, and how this discourse reflects a privileged position (Riggs & Augoustinos, 2007). One knowledge system can not verify the claims of truth of the other knowledge system via its own standards and justifications (Nakata, 2007).

Research also needs to investigate the complexities of Indigenous epistemology. Indigenous knowledge differs from Western knowledge in characteristics, methodologically and epistemologically because the two forms of knowledge use different methods to investigate reality. However commitment to the dichotomy of Indigenous and Western, fails to understand the spaces these epistemologies overlap and inform each other (Nakata, 2006). To successfully build new epistemic foundations, innovation and insight must bridge the Indigenous / Western divide in application. In this relationship Indigenous epistemology must be given, by all theorists, the utility to inform methodology, currently most research of Indigenous knowledge still requires validation by the scientific criteria (Agrawal, 1995).

Research needs to be embodied (Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2010) and connected to the epistemology of the subject and the researcher. The movement between text, discourse and the social world is complex and fundamentally an epistemological matter; epistemology needs to precede research method. Neglecting to 'situate' research within a particular epistemological

tradition, may lead to oversimplified, detached method, which will struggle to be emancipatory, (Lee, 2005, as cited in Pierides, 2007: 3). Situated research is when the epistemology of the subject, informs the method as opposed to the dominant world system, recognising an Australian epistemic shift. This places relational dynamics central to the study, allowing the method and researcher to be both embodied in the context (Pierides, 2007). Robert Cooper (2005) explains that human agency is the ontology of research, when it is constructed from the raw matter of the environment. Critical discourse analysis developed through situated methodology, such as this study, is about giving space for the possible which has not yet come into being (Pierides, 2007). Further research which is constructed from Indigenous methodology facilitates the opportunity for Australian academia to be situated in its own environment.

## 6 Conclusion

This study questioned how Indigenous discourse could inform social work theoretically. It has been accepted for some time since Foucault's work on knowledge/ power that there is a relationship between theories within academic institutions, professions and contemporary discourses. This relationship has established the proposition that by analysing Indigenous academic articles to learn Indigenous discourses, constructs the argument that space within social work curriculum be allocated to Indigenous theoretical standpoints. An examination of colonisation, racism and othering throughout this study demonstrated historically how social work came to be constructed Eurocentric. However, contemporary social work which includes the principle of critical-reflexivity, positions the discipline to aptly examine 'Whiteness' and provide intellectual space for the Indigenous paradigm.

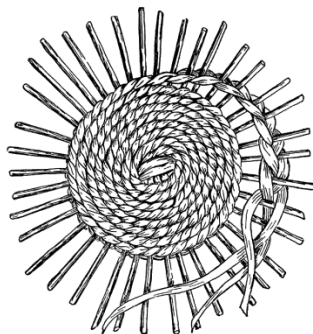
Key Indigenous discourses emerged from the findings, that could be utilised within academia and provide important links back to the Indigenous paradigm. From this study Indigenous discourses and their attached meanings and ideologies include terms such as *'intellectual terra nullius'*, *'narrative of survival'*, *'Indigenous Rights movement'*. Ways of being for Indigenous people is always 'embodied', and the 'self' is always centrally located. All ways of doing must 'privilege and emancipate community', liberate 'relational knowledge construction' between metaphysical world, country and community, facilitate 'Locatedness' at the 'Cultural Interface' and analyse 'Whiteness'. The key discursive statement from the

discussion is for the abolition of Australian *intellectual terra nullius*. With this concept wiped from the Australian landscape, Indigenous intellectual renaissance is given opportunity to continue in its inheritance and create new meanings.

This study has made a very small contribution to research that as yet has not been addressed by Australian social work. A social work informed by Indigenous knowledges is just beginning. This study has identified the research gap and demonstrated through CDA a method for which Indigenous discourse can inform an academic discipline. Specifically how these findings could be embedded as social work theory or applied as practice has not been addressed within this study. The Foucauldian perspective underpinning this research instructs that change is understood retrospectively, however, emerging discourse does signify a change in power, heralding the opportunity for new social order.

In a circular motion the methodology, the participants and myself, have been intricately interwoven throughout this study. The Indigenous epistemology of the researcher and participants, necessitated I critically examine my own way of knowing, being and doing; recognising that I have been informed by both Indigenous and Western worldviews.

As a child my sisters and I would sit by a creek in the warm sand and try to weave with the reeds. Hours would pass, as we talked and selected reeds, hoping to create something special. As an embodied researcher this and other moments from My Track have informed this study, I have carefully selected reeds from various authors, from both the Indigenous and Western epistemologies, in the hope to begin weaving a beautiful basket.



## 7 Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix 1

#### Participants (Texts) Selected for CDA

- Foley, D. (2003). Indigenous Epistemology and Indigenous Standpoint Theory. *Social Alternatives*, Vol 22, 1.
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## 7.1 Appendix 2

### Template for CDA (Summarised)

Text Title:	
Author:	
Date of Analysis:	
<b>Experiential Value</b>	
Clues/Traces/Quotes	Abbreviated Themes
<b>Relational Value</b>	
Clues/Traces/Quotes	Abbreviated Themes
<b>Expressive Value</b>	
Clues/Traces/Quotes	Abbreviated Themes
<b>Interpretative Value</b>	
Clues/Traces/Quotes	Abbreviated Themes
<b>Social/Historical Value</b>	
Clues/Traces/Quotes	Abbreviated Themes

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