Indigenous Cultures in Contemporary Australia:

A Wiradjuri Case Study

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.

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Date: January 2013
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ABSTRACT

Any understanding of Indigenous history, and by association, Wiradjuri history, must take into account that this history dates back some 120,000 years, making them part of the oldest living cultures in the world. Wiradjuri country covers two thirds of New South Wales and parts of the state of Victoria. Prior to invasion, Wiradjuri had control over their lives, but this control was to come to an abrupt end with the genocide that followed.

Invasion was declared on the basis of unilateral possession with the land being defined as terra nullius, or land belonging to no-one. Although Britain had taken over the land on the basis of ‘first discovery and settlement’, violence ensued because the Wiradjuri peoples resisted invasion of their lands. Different legislation and policies were drafted in order to subjugate and control the everyday lives of Wiradjuri peoples, and these Acts and policies dictated who Wiradjuri peoples were, what they could and could not do, where they could go and how they were to exist alongside the dominant society.

From the very first point of contact, ‘others’ have looked at and given opinions on Wiradjuri peoples, cultures and country. Social scientists examined Wiradjuri peoples and cultures, with an enormous amount of published material here in Australia and abroad. In the majority of instances these opinions have not been kind. Classed as either non-human or sub-human, Wiradjuri peoples and their respective cultures, under the guise of ‘settlement’, have had their lives completely turned upside down. This published material, collectively forms a narrative reflecting the authors’ perspectives or cultural viewpoint on Wiradjuri people. This thesis will explore that narrative and how it relates to other narratives utilised in the research; contemporary reactionary narrative and the contemporary decolonising narrative.
The historical published narratives had repeatedly stated that Wiradjuri cultures were either lost or dead. These narratives have been detrimental to Wiradjuri peoples and cultures and in the minds of many in the broader Australian public, these narratives are taken as the ‘truth’ with no thought given to what Wiradjuri peoples have to say about themselves. The mentality of some implies that those Wiradjuri peoples that live in more urban areas are not ‘true’ Wiradjuri peoples, that their cultures have long since been forgotten or lost, therefore Wiradjuri peoples have no cultural identity, no connection to country, and therefore are not the ‘real’ thing.

In contemporary Australia, Indigenous peoples and by association, Wiradjuri, are still controlled by colonial legislation and policies that in turn control their identity, their right to self-determination and their right to social justice, and in contemporary Australia, there are those that still cling to a colonial mentality and question the authenticity and identity of Wiradjuri. The public discourses that emanate from so-called historians and reactionaries through public forums such as the popular media for example, still try to undermine the continuity of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures.

This thesis provides a platform from where the research participants can give ‘voice’ to their thoughts, ideas and concerns on the issues of identity and authenticity. In giving this voice, the research participants are actively participating in a process of decolonisation whereby the contemporary decolonisation narrative provides alternative viewpoints of history. The data from this thesis highlights that the battles for recognition and authenticity as Wiradjuri will be hard fought battles with the victors on one side and the vanquished on the other, with various ‘others’ choosing which side to support. This thesis also highlights how pathways to real self-determination and social justice will be very hard pathways to tread, but in the minds of the
research participants, they are pathways that must be taken by all Wiradjuri peoples, for there is a deep-rooted belief among them, that in time, the unwanted elements that exist in their lives in contemporary Australia (reactionaries and racists for example), will be long gone, whilst Wiradjuri peoples and cultures will still be here; alive and well.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. Framework

Murdoch (1917) stated that Australia was ‘colonised’ as a matter of political need; the need for a penal colony, the need for a colony for free settlers, and a need that would satisfy transportation problems that the British were currently facing. However, according to Mabo and Others v State of Queensland (1992, pp. 37-61), there were only three different ways that one country could assert or claim any rights over another country and of course to some degree, the original inhabitants: “cession, conquest and settlement”. Chalmers (2005, pp. 152-153) suggested that the first two, cession and conquest, are different from the third (settlement) in the sense that the first two recognise the original inhabitants as people. The third, applicable to the situation in Australia, that of settlement, did not, as it looked at Indigenous peoples as “animals, or animal-like (not fully human)” and it was this early misrepresentation by the British that eventually led to ongoing colonial processes of physical and political domination of Indigenous peoples in Australia.

The three ‘needs’ that Murdoch (1917) had highlighted may be simple enough if one looks at the surface of them, but when one looks deeper, one finds that these political needs are far outweighed by the impacts of colonisation on Indigenous peoples. Colonisation meant that Indigenous peoples “rights were massively restricted, their voices largely unheard...[and] neither their bodies, nor their children, nor their labour, nor their fruits of their labour were their own” (Rose, 1991, p. xxi). “Settler colonizers came to stay: invasion is a structure not an event” stated Wolfe (2006, p. 388), therefore colonisation was a process of ever increasing political exploitation and subjugation (Smith, 1999) whereby control over Indigenous peoples lives would ensure control over lands and resources (Wolfe, 2006). Colonisation also meant
that Indigenous peoples would be subjected to genocidal practices such as murder, rape and massacre; the “practical elimination of the natives” as stated by (Wolfe, 2006, p. 389).

Driven by political motives, alongside murder, rape and massacre came incarceration in missions and reserves, the taking of children (the Stolen Generations) and the misrepresentation of peoples and their cultural ways of being and doing, and as noted by Macdonald (1998, p. 169), for Wiradjuri, colonisation meant the “denial of their own presence”, the taking of identity.

If one takes the perspectives of Rose (1991), Wolfe (2006), and Smith (1999) for example on board, then colonisation was also a process of cultural interruption, whereby all that Wiradjuri knew and did, was structurally impacted upon. Whilst Macdonald (1998, p. 163) may have been writing about Wiradjuri and Wiradjuri country, she implicitly tells us that colonisation took from Wiradjuri all that was theirs, including their lands when she stated that, “The landscapes message about Wiradjuri people is ‘disappearance’ because these signs in the landscape are read within a discursive space that implicitly interprets them as evidence of European activity.”

Hinkson (2012) informs that settler colonialism as a process has had devastating effects on both peoples and cultures. Hinkson also informs that coming to terms with what has occurred through the process of colonialism may also show us that settler colonialism can re-emerge in other forms. This is important in the context of contemporary discourses as highlighted throughout the thesis.

Colonisation also came to mean that the ‘official’ history of this country was one that came from Western mentalities. Ann Curthoys (2003, p. 199) suggests that “The legacy of the
colonial past is a continuing fear of illegitimacy, and therefore an inability to develop the kind of pluralist inclusive account of the past that might form the basis for a coherent national community. Debates over the numbers killed on the frontiers (and these are important debates to have) are for all these reasons not simply debates about numbers, or about empiricist versus postmodernist or Marxist or any other philosophy of history. They are, inevitably, no less than debates about the moral basis of British settlement in the past, and of Australian society in the present.” According to Macdonald (1998, p. 165) “Colonisation creates new relationships of meaning...[and] Meanings are contested and marked out by difference...[and] The extent of difference becomes what is contested.” In order to contest the difference in meaning as suggested by Macdonald (1998), a process of the ‘decolonisation’ of Western methodologies must be undertaken so that Wiradjuri can reclaim their own history; a critical point that will form the basis of this thesis.

Writers such as (Smith, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Swadener and Mutua, 2008; Wolfe, 2006; Muecke, 1981; and Veracini, 2007) for example however, have shown that it is nearly impossible to separate the term ‘decolonisation’ from the term ‘research’. When one speaks of, or writes of decolonisation, the term is invariably linked to the term research as noted by Smith (1999). This is because the process of decolonisation is also mostly about looking at research on Indigenous peoples and cultures from an Indigenous standpoint, not of the need to fulfil an ‘academic’ need, or to satisfy the political agendas of non-Indigenous organisations or institutions (Smith, 1999).

It should be noted here however that there are people that contribute to the process of decolonisation that do not undertake research in an academic manner. These people are Indigenous writers, artists, poets and those who engage in some form of media, however their
works are an integral part in the continuity of Wiradjuri cultures and bring to the attention of the broader Australian community that Wiradjuri are providing alternative perspectives of history through a common cultural lens, but through different media. Those Indigenous peoples who promote their individual cultures and identity are also contributing to decolonisation.

Decolonisation is all about the “process in both research and performance of valuing, reclaiming, and foregrounding indigenous (sic) voices and epistemologies” (Swadener and Mutua, 2008, p. 31), and according to Battiste (2008, p. 502), “Indigenous peoples must control their own knowledge...[and] to not include Indigenous peoples in developing and defining research...is to repeat that familiar pattern of decisions being made for Indigenous peoples by those who presume to know what is best for them.”

Forrest (2007, p. 2) contends that failure to acknowledge the stories of Indigenous peoples “permits an interpretation of the colonisation of Australia by the dominant English/European cultures that denies the validity of the unwritten accounts of frontier violence.” Forrest (2007) also contends that “failure to acknowledge the stories and oral histories of Aboriginal people perpetuates their marginalisation in Australian history.”

If colonisation was politically driven, then it stands to reason that the process of decolonisation is also politically driven (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). However, whilst Wolfe (1999) contends that the more one has lost, the less one can regain, the political nature of decolonisation is located in the challenges to historical narratives and the challenges to the dominant view of history (Phillips, 2005), in the rewriting of history (Veracini, 2007) in the challenges to misrepresentations, (Miller, Dunn and Currell, 2005), in the challenges to
contemporary discourses, especially those that emanate from the various types of media, and in the challenges to regain “lost political autonomy, lost property rights, lost regional integration, lost economic self-sufficiency, lost pride, lost languages and lost identities” (Sutton, 2001, p. 151).

Muecke (1981, p. 73) contended that many non-Indigenous people had a “cultural bias” that was “brought to bear on the events of the time.” Muecke also suggested that researchers in relation to Indigenous history should “reassess many accounts of Aborigines written at a time when Aborigines were not considered a part of history as active shapers of history.” Smith (1999) suggested that writing an alternative history through the process of decolonisation means taking power away from the powerful, ‘understanding how they became powerful and how they used that power in order to dominate and continue to dominate, others’. Here again, if one takes the perspectives of Phillips (2005), Veracini (2007), Miller, Dunn and Currell (2005), Sutton (2001), and Smith (1999) on board, then one can see how the process of decolonisation is also a process of cultural recovery, allowing Wiradjuri to reclaim their identity as Wiradjuri and assist in the validation of that identity.

Denzin & Lincoln (2008, p. 2) on decolonisation, call for a merging of Indigenous and critical methodologies to form what they call critical Indigenous pedagogy (CIP). CIP, according to Denzin & Lincoln, “understands that all inquiry is both political and moral...uses methods critically, for explicit social justice purposes and embraces the commitment by Indigenous scholars to decolonise Western methodologies.” Smith (1999) also suggested that ‘coming to know the past is a vital element in the critical pedagogy of decolonisation as CIP is integral to having alternative histories hence alternative knowledge’s’. CIP according to Saunders, West and Usher (2010, p. 1) “offers a useful alternative to mainstream research
approaches that draw upon orthodox Western knowledge systems.” CIP approaches
challenges Western knowledge systems in which there is a ‘subjugation’ of Indigenous
knowledge that is linked to an “ongoing cultural attack on the identity of Indigenous people
under the legacy of colonisation” (Saunders, West and Usher, 2010, p. 3).

The cultural attack by Bolt is a clear example of reactions to movements by Indigenous
peoples to claim back their rights and identities and to throw off the shackles of colonialism.
Bolt however would wish to retain some sort of historical power and positional balance in
contemporary Australia, balances that would still see Indigenous peoples subjugated
politically and physically.

In April, 2009, Andrew Bolt, writer for the Herald Sun newspaper wrote an article titled “It’s
so hip to be black.” This article concentrated on how Indigenous peoples in contemporary
Australia identify as being Indigenous. Bolt took many notable Indigenous peoples to task
over the way they look, the colour of their hair and eyes, their genetic background and the
colour of their skin. In August of that same year, Bolt wrote another article “White fellas in
the black.” This article focussed on the sexual preferences of one Indigenous male, but again
mentioned the colour of the hair, eyes and skin. In an article in 2010, written for the
Bennelong Society, the Hon. Dr Gary Johns quotes Bolt as stating that...“this self-
identification as Aboriginal strikes me as self-obsessed, and driven more by politics than by
any racial reality” (Johns, 2010, p. 1). At the time of writing, nine of those people that Bolt
mentioned in his articles pursued a claim of racial discrimination against Bolt. The nine were
successful. Joel Zyngier, lawyer for the nine puts Bolt’s articles into context stating that “We
see this as a really important case...we see this as clarifying the issue of identity – who gets to
say who is and who is not Aboriginal...essentially, the articles by Bolt have challenged people’s identity” (2010).

Bolts reaction brought Wiradjuri peoples into an on-going political dialogue or debate over who should have the right to assert their own cultural identity (Zyngier, 2010; Marr, 2011), and in so doing also continued what is known as the ‘history wars’, where the events of the past are now political bullets in the political armouries of those on both sides of the debate. It is important to note here that the legal system in this instance, in finding Bolt guilty of racial discrimination (Quinn, 2011; Bodey, 2011), has shown the broader Australian community that whilst there are those who would retain some semblance of historical power and positional balance in contemporary Australia, there are those in positions of political power that would take a stand against them (Parker, 2011).

Smith (1999, p. 24) in relation to decolonisation, noted that there are two important components, that of a “notion of authenticity” and that of the need to “have an analysis of how we were colonised, of what that means in terms of our immediate past and what it means for the present and future.” Veracini (2007) suggested however that colonialism sees a relationship that is endless whereby the coloniser continues the process of colonisation. Veracini added however, that the process of decolonisation can disturb the colonial process.

This research is also a process of decolonisation in that it has been undertaken by an Indigenous researcher and provides “a means whereby Indigenous peoples can reconnect to their own histories, their own lands, their own languages, their individual and communal social relationships and their own ways of being and doing” as suggested by Smith (1999, p.
The major aim of this research therefore is to provide an understanding of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures in contemporary Australia, in the context of a process of decolonisation.

The voices of the participants that emanate from the following pages are stories that provide alternative perspectives to the dominant ‘coloniser’ perspective on the history of this country presented in historical records and in much of the contemporary popular media. These alternative perspectives come from those who have historically been largely powerless and silent as a result of the politics of colonisation. That is, these perspectives come from the voices of the ‘colonised’ in their attempts to ‘decolonise’ Western perspectives of history, because as Curthoys (2006, p. 7) explains, “Australian histories written before World War II had emphasised Australia’s place within the British Empire and had erased or minimized the history of colonisation of indigenous (sic) peoples...”

The importance of Wiradjuri ‘oral’ stories in contemporary Australia, and the need to give ‘voice’ to Wiradjuri peoples comes from the forty-one Wiradjuri peoples that agreed to participate in this research project. The participants highlight how the road to recognition of both peoples and cultures will be a hard road to travel. One of the most important points that the Wiradjuri participants wish to make is that they are not the same as other Indigenous groups of people, that recognition of this by the broader Australian community will go a long way to understanding that the differences between Indigenous groups is that which makes them unique to the rest of humanity, with Fraser (2000, p. 1) contending that “Claims for the recognition of difference now drive many of the world’s social conflicts...which seek to promote both universal respect for shared humanity and esteem for cultural distinctiveness.”
Historical literary discourses have stressed time and again that ‘Indigenous cultures were either dead or dying; that cultures were lost or had no meaning’ (United Nations, 2009). These thoughts still permeate in contemporary Australia where the image of Indigenous peoples was that of a male standing on one leg, boomerang in one hand and spear in the other as depicted by Baglin and Mullins (1976) and by Hobbs (1976) for example. This was the ‘traditional’ lap-lap wearing, ‘full-blooded’ Indigenous person (see for example Maddison 2009). This image implies that those urban dwelling Indigenous peoples are not ‘true’ Indigenous peoples, that they have no cultures and therefore no cultural identity, however Darnell (2001, p. 16) informs that “Traditional culture is a moving target, always changing and adapting to new circumstances...tradition does not imply returning to some idealised pure culture that existed prior to invasion...[Indigenous] people recognise that all societies change, that all peoples have traditions that are ongoing in terms of invention and re-invention.

1.2 Research Aims

The major aim of this research is to provide an understanding of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures in contemporary Australia. In contemporary Australia there are many instances where Wiradjuri peoples are asked to ‘authenticate’ either themselves, or their cultures to those who would question ‘authenticity’. This research seeks to provide an insight into Wiradjuri peoples and cultures; to examine and discuss the importance of non-Indigenous policies and practices on Wiradjuri knowledge systems and processes; to examine and discuss various components of the historical and academic published narratives, to consider the effect of the historical published narratives on Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia, and how the popular media contributes to the contemporary discourses that surround the authenticity of peoples and cultures. Therefore the research question is: Are Wiradjuri peoples and cultures as authentic in contemporary Australia, as they were prior to invasion?
In the context of this thesis, we use the term narrative to mean “a spoken or written account of a sequence of events, experiences, etc; the art or process of narration” (Geddes and Grosset, 1999, p. 401). While in some cases, the term narrative is adopted to describe an individual story offered through some particular source or media (e.g. the perspectives presented by a contemporary media commentator, or the ‘oral narratives’ of research participants as they weave their ideas and beliefs into a story); this thesis is constructed around the presentation of three central collective ‘narratives’.

The first of these is a collective narrative built on the historical published work of the colonisers as they sought to understand Wiradjuri, and other Indigenous Australian peoples. The second consists of a narrative constructed from the stories and perspectives of the Wiradjuri research participants, as they seek to express their own perspectives on their histories and the place of Wiradjuri in today’s Australian society (essentially a decolonising narrative as they seek to reclaim rights). The third is a collective narrative from contemporary politics and the popular media that is ‘reactionary’ in nature, in that it is founded in the thinking of the coloniser, and in the face of the political actions associated with the ‘decolonisation’ of Indigenous Australian lives and identity (including the second narrative above) and seeks to retain the political and power relations established over two hundred years of colonisation and domination. The debate between these contemporary narratives of decolonisation (presented by Indigenous peoples but also many academics and commentators in the public sphere), and the reactionary narrative has been termed the ‘History Wars’ (see Chapter three for example).

The importance of Wiradjuri ‘oral’ stories in contemporary Australia, and the need to give ‘voice’ to Wiradjuri peoples comes from the forty-one Wiradjuri peoples that agreed to
participate in this research project. It should be noted here, that whilst the focus is on Wiradjuri peoples, cultures and country, there will be many instances where the need to refer to other Indigenous peoples, cultures and country will arise. All Indigenous peoples have been affected by invasion, and legislation and policy that have seen them situated as the ‘vanquished’, living in a world controlled by the ‘victors’, which fails to recognise the differences between individual Indigenous groups of peoples and this failure, as noted in preceding chapters, impacts on Wiradjuri as they strive for authenticity of peoples and cultures.

Gibson (2008, p. 306) refers to the literature of both Kahn (1995, p. 125) and Morton (2005, p. 196) in contending that “a consuming and erotic passion” for difference has emerged in the broader Australian society, and this can be located in the ‘trope of the remote, traditional, real, authentic Aborigines: those who are accorded a particular culture, and who are granted (at least in the imagination) the possession of the kind of Dreaming that is seen to resonate’ “most closely with anthropological and popular portrayals of traditional Aboriginal society.” Here “the ‘authentic’ stands alongside the ‘fake’ or ‘not real’ stated Lindholm (2008).

Nigel Rapport (2009, p. 151), suggests that “there are two overlapping modes for characterising an entity as authentic: genealogical or historical (concerning origin) and identitarian or correspondent (concerning content)”, and “In application these two modes may produce incompatible results, and they may be differently invoked.” The point here is that despite all that has befallen Wiradjuri peoples and cultures (see for example chapter five) Wiradjuri still exists, peoples still identify as Wiradjuri regardless of where they live, or how much their cultures have changed and adapted (see chapters four and six).
1.3 Wiradjuri in Contemporary Australia

“I am Wiradjuri….I was born Wiradjuri…I belong to Wiradjuri…I am not dead…I am alive…simple as that” (Research Participant (Frank) 2006).

The challenges faced by Wiradjuri are many, the pathway not an easy one. The challenges are centred on their right to identify as Wiradjuri and to be recognised as such by both governments and the broader community. Fraser (2000, p. 2) suggests that “Recognition from others is thus essential to the development of a sense of self. To be denied recognition-or to be ‘misrecognized’-is to suffer both a distortion of one’s relation to one’s self and an injury to one’s identity.” In stark contrast to Wiradjuri, the Pitjantjatjara peoples and cultures for example are recognised as traditional by the Government and this is no better illustrated than by looking at the title of a specific Land Rights Act; *Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act 1981 (SA)* (Tehan, 1994). It would appear that the Governments only recognise specific groups of Indigenous peoples and do not extend this recognition to all groups.

There are however some organisations within the broader community that have recognised Wiradjuri as being authentic. The Murray Catchment Management Authority (2012) has identified the “Nation of Wiradjuri” as being traditional owners and of having contemporary cultural links to the Murray Catchment (pp. 10-11). The Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) is “an organisation that has formed as an alliance of 10 traditional owner groups from along the River Murray and its tributaries” (Weir and Ross, 2007, pp. 185-187) and in so doing has officially recognised the Nation of Wiradjuri as a “traditional owner group.” Inherent in this recognition are the issues of social justice and self-determination with “free, prior and informed consent” (Bauman, 2003-2006, p. 1).
However claims to self-determination and social justice are framed within the majority legislation and policy and are subjected to, in many instances, media scrutiny such as the article by Andrew Bolt, which could represent views held by many in the broader Australian community.

One of the challenges Wiradjuri must overcome is that of being seen as belonging to cultures that still have continuity. Cultural continuity is a necessary ingredient in facing High Court judges when Native Title is claimed for example. Here, on the field of land rights battles, Wiradjuri must prove not only connection to country and continuity of cultures, but must also prove to all and sundry, who they are (their identity). Importantly however, cultural continuity alone acknowledges the relevance of cultures in contemporary Australia despite the differences of opinion that can be located in various historical published narratives and the perspectives that exist in contemporary Australia regarding perceptions of ‘traditional’ as authentic. The challenge becomes harder in light of the decision in the Native Title claim regarding the Yorta Yorta peoples (see for example Minnerup and Solberg 2011).

My thesis is thus: Despite the genocidal practices that occurred, despite the dispossession from country, despite internment in missions and reserves and despite the Aborigines Protection era and assimilation policies, Wiradjuri were resilient enough to adapt and change to what was happening around them. Whilst Wiradjuri peoples and cultures are still governed by legislation and policy not of their own making and whilst Wiradjuri may not be seen as being ‘traditional’ in the way this term is often used, this thesis highlights how Wiradjuri peoples and cultures, according to the research participants, are just as valid in contemporary Australia as they were two hundred, one thousand, or even one hundred and twenty thousand years ago.
This research is significant because it allows the contemporary decolonising narrative to be a part of the decolonisation process and this involves becoming a part of the debate on the ‘history wars’ that have emerged more noticeably since former Prime Minister John Howard joined others and declared that the Indigenous side of the story (history) was a ‘black armband’ view of the history of this country (Howard, 2006). According to Howard, his opinion in relation to the history of this country is the correct one and narratives that differ from his own are radical views and is not the truth (Tatz, 2011). Howard, in taking the stance that he does, sides with the online media known as Quadrant. Celebrating Quadrants fiftieth anniversary Howard stated “Of the causes that Quadrant has taken up that are close to my heart, none is more important than the role it has played as counterforce to the black-armband view of Australian history” (Howard, 2006, p. 2). Howard is obviously opposed to anything resembling decolonisation and in his taking for granted, one sided-view of history... “was praising those who had led the campaign to deny both the Aboriginal child removal and the reality of frontier violence and brutality” (Mann, 2009, p. 2). Howard is seeking to perpetuate the historical approach of not considering Indigenous opinions such that Indigenous voices could not be heard or taken into account and thus contributing to the ‘white-washing’ of the history of this country, or as Wiradjuri peoples would say, ‘unfinished business’.

1.4 The Research Process

This research explains the influence and interpretations of different narratives, perspectives and opinions. The narratives come from the historical published narratives and more recent contemporary reactionary narratives that were utilised in the research process. The oral opinions, views, or beliefs are part of the contemporary decolonising narrative and came from the forty one Wiradjuri peoples that consented to participate in the research. This gave a balance to the research and provided an avenue for Wiradjuri peoples to be a part of the
research and provided them with the opportunity to give voice to their thoughts, ideas and concerns through the process of decolonisation. The historical published narratives, contemporary reactionary narratives and the contemporary decolonising narrative are presented in the pages of this thesis for the most part, alongside each other where they either complement each other, or offer very different perspectives on the issues being examined and discussed.

Chapter two introduces the research methodology. It was apparent very early on in the research that in order for the participants to actively take part in the process of decolonisation, a qualitative research approach through CIP/CIM, be undertaken. It was thought that a qualitative approach would enable the opinions, views, and beliefs of the participants to be presented more fully where their voices would show through, where their stories would bring new and fresh voices to the attention of readers.

The historical published narrative and more contemporary published narrative are examined in chapter three. Chapter three, through examination of these narratives, highlights how there are many different lines of thought on the issues located in the research question.

However, to fully understand where Wiradjuri peoples and cultures are in contemporary Australia, one must have as a basis, an understanding of who Wiradjuri were prior to invasion. Chapter four examines and provides discussion on Wiradjuri peoples and cultures and does so by examining and providing discussion on a range of topics that were considered as being central to peoples and cultures.
According to Peter Read (1994), the year 1813 saw contact between Wiradjuri and settlers and explorers. Whilst peaceful at first, conflict soon began with the result that Wiradjuri were brought to the very edge of extinction. The impacts of invasion were many. Whilst colonialism took many forms, Hinkson (2012, p. 1) suggests that “predominantly it is the denial of basic rights of sustenance — the removal of the means of existence of Indigenous peoples — and their core cultural practices that are inextricable from the means of existence, that left them profoundly vulnerable…”

Wiradjuri were murdered, raped and massacred. Martial law was introduced during the Wiradjuri Wars in Bathurst, Wiradjuri were dispossessed from country, placed in missions and reserves, had their children taken from them and were forbidden to undertake cultural practices necessary to Wiradjuri spiritual belief systems and were defined by degrees of blood (Read 1994). The impacts of colonisation are defined as genocide. The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2002, p. 8) inform that the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, ratified by Australia in 1949, defined genocide as “Killing members of the group; Causing serious bodily or mental harm of members of the group; Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the groups; and Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

Chapter five combines the historical published narratives and the contemporary decolonising narrative of the participants in examining the impacts of invasion on Wiradjuri peoples and cultures. The impacts or consequences of invasion did not cease in the first 100 years of invasion; as this thesis has shown, they are still being felt physically, emotionally, and
politically. These impacts or consequences initially included murder, rape, massacre (Grassby and Hill, 1998), the stealing of lands (Pilger, 1989; Reynolds, 1982), the taking of children (Edwards and Read, 1989), forced internment in missions and reserves (Maddison, 2009), and legislation designed to subjugate and control Indigenous peoples. Whilst the practices of murder, rape, massacre, the stealing of lands and the taking of children, and forced internment in missions and reserves do not occur in contemporary Australia anymore, there is still legislation that continues to subjugate Wiradjuri peoples and cultures (Smith, 1999).

Chapter six utilises the historical published narratives, the contemporary reactionary colonising narrative emanating from the popular media, and the contemporary decolonising narrative of the participants in providing a discussion on Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia. The written narratives come from the historical and contemporary opinions, perspectives or arguments in the literature and this chapter uses those to look at issues that are central to Wiradjuri peoples and cultures and how these issues dictate the how, when, where, why and who of their lives. Wiradjuri have undergone many substantial changes to both peoples and cultures during and since open hostilities ceased and this has implications for Native Title claims for example. Maddison (2009) and Minnerup and Solberg (2011) have suggested that in the interim, governments have let many chances slip past them, either intentionally or unintentionally, that would have seen Wiradjuri tread a much easier pathway to cultural recognition and continuity.

Chapter seven provides a synthesis of the data. This chapter brings all the elements of the historical published narratives, the opinions, perspectives and arguments from the contemporary popular media and the oral opinions and beliefs of the participants together and combines them in order to present the thesis more fully. The data highlights how there are
‘tensions’ between an oral account of history and the literature. Colonists and many people in
contemporary Australia have believed and acted upon the written words, words that
contributed to the many biases that continue to surround Wiradjuri peoples and cultures.
Central to the issue of violence in the early days of colonisation for example, is according to
Forrest (2007), the issue of how accurate are the oral accounts, or oral histories of Indigenous
peoples, and the difficulty of some in the field of research with supporting stories that are not
supported by historical works written by non-Indigenous peoples, usually people who hold
positions of power. As the data highlights, the participants are at odds with the written word
on most occasions and continually strive to tell their versions of events in their own way. For
many of the participants this means an avenue whereby the ‘imbalance’ that currently exists
in regards to the history of this country can be addressed, but it is also an avenue whereby the
participants can contribute to the decolonisation process.

The data highlights how decolonisation, through the contemporary decolonising narrative of
the research participants, identifies the issues of authentication of peoples and cultures, their
identity and rights, (self-determination and social justice) as being pivotal roles in their
endeavours to have cultural continuity that is recognised in ‘real’ terms, by not only the
political powers that be, but by the broader Australian community. Chapter seven examines
similarities and differences in an international context as well as examining how this data can
contribute not only to the process of decolonisation, but to the national debate.

Chapter eight looks at the importance and the implications of the research. This research does
not and nor can it, provide the ‘whole’ story; it is not the ‘complete’ narrative by any means.
There are far more published and oral viewpoints out there. It is envisaged however that this
thesis will provide food for thought among those who read it for themselves, or for those who
read it and then speak about it to others. Perhaps in doing so, they will take the alternative versions of history provided by the Wiradjuri participants out into the wider Australian community and help to foster a greater understanding of the need for decolonisation and a greater understanding of Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia.
CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2. Introduction

This chapter describes the research approach and methods and provides a discussion of the issues inherent in the chosen research approach. There are separate sections devoted to the research area, research design, research requirements, interview development and selection of participants. Not all the research activity ran smoothly however; problems and issues faced were an important part of the research process and are also discussed in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the personal experiences faced during the research process.

There were forty-one Wiradjuri peoples that were invited to participate in this research project. Each research participant provided information vital to the research and each highlighted how research and the narratives of the past have impacted upon them in contemporary times. Whilst many of the interviews took place under a Liberal government led by John Howard, others did not, but in terms of the political nature of some of the responses by the research participants, the Howard era was still fresh in their minds.

In 1969 Saberwal & Henry (p. 1) emphasised that “Research strategies and techniques vary, depending in each case upon the researcher’s personality, the nature of the sociological system studied and the specific problem for enquiry.” Blaikie (1993) later commented that given the diverse range of research approaches, the task before a social researcher is to decide which is considered to be the most appropriate method of research, according to the researcher’s project requirements and research philosophy.
Saunders, West and Usher (2010, p. 3) suggested however that critical researchers must be aware of the need for participants to undertake Indigenous research in their own way and to have control over their own research, which alludes to what Denzin and Lincoln (2008) call ‘Critical Indigenous Methodology’ (CIM), and further suggested that research undertaken in such a way is decolonising and “unashamedly political.” The theory behind Indigenous research that is decolonising, is that the voices of Indigenous peoples shows through and in so doing, provides alternative narratives of the past, a past where research on Indigenous peoples came from the colonisers that contributed to the subjugation of Indigenous peoples according to Smith (1999).

Most research, driven from Eurocentric approaches give no ‘voice’ to those being researched, simply because to do so suggested Congalton & Daniel (1976), would be to question ones own belief system and there are few who would willingly be led down that path, or as Bradfield (2004, p. 1) observed...“the articulation of a distinct Indigenous identity challenges the notions of one Australia.” Veracini (2006, p. 447; 2008, p. 368) stated that there are those who would contest the theory behind the process of decolonisation and suggested, in what he describes as “the settler colonial situation”, that there were “ongoing concerns with existential threats and a paranoid fear of ultimate decolonisation.”

There are however many facets to research and there are many approaches to the way in which research is conducted. Patton (1987) suggested that whilst one type of approach can be used in conjunction with a number of the other approaches, there are also a number of philosophical and theoretical perspectives underpinning these methodological approaches.
2.1 Research Approaches

Past research on Wiradjuri has been undertaken from a mostly anthropological perspective which according to Kardiner & Preble (1963, p. 12) “had its roots in the vast social changes that took place in Western society between 1770 and 1850, that anthropological perspectives have been, since the turn of the century, a significant influence shaping Western thought.” Whilst Voget (1975, p. 772) added that “anthropologists were the interpreters of primitive man and his society”, Darnell (2001) suggested that the mind-set behind past anthropological research on peoples and cultures however, was ever changing, and hence became confusing to those on the ‘outside’.

The research approaches that are applied to social science then, are very diverse. To further illustrate this, Sarantakos (1993) provides a number of research approaches, and comments that most researchers have utilised one or all of these approaches according to their own research needs and philosophical beliefs. The diversity of approaches emanated from the fact that research projects come in all shapes and sizes, and are undertaken for many different reasons. These research approaches according to Sarantakos (1993, p. 6) include quantitative research and qualitative research.

Patton (1990) however had suggested that rather than take a philosophical approach, researchers can take a pragmatic approach which selects methods according to what can be deemed appropriate with regards to the question, or topic of research. The dilemma then, is which research method does one use?

In order to justify the chosen research methodology it is important that the differences between them are examined. Crossan (n.d. p. 48) suggests that in examining “how research
based on a positivist philosophy (quantitative), differs from that based on a post-positivist philosophy (qualitative), the appropriateness to the research needs is simplified and the nature of the most appropriate approach clarified.”

2.1.1 Quantitative Research

Ways of knowing inherent in quantitative research stem from the philosophy of ‘positivism’ where the use of experimental methods can be used to test generalisations (Patton, 1990), and rejects speculation by emphasising the positive (Dooley, 2001). The philosophical approach that underpins quantitative research comes from the nineteenth-century and is a ‘positivist approach to research’ stated Crossan (n.d.) where for positivists...“the purpose of research is scientific explanation” stated Tuli (2010, p. 99). According to Nightingale (2012, p. 1) the positivist approach to research relies very heavily on “experimental and manipulative methods [where] scientific methods or experimental testing are the best ways of achieving knowledge, where this generally involves hypothesis generation and testing: proving and refuting.” Hudson and Ozanne (1988, p. 509) contended that “The positivists tend to take a realist position and assume that a single, objective reality exists independently of what individuals perceive.”

The main aim of quantitative research is to “determine the relationship between one thing (an independent variable) and another (a dependent or outcome variable) in a population” (Hopkins, 2000, p. 1). A quantitative approach allows for the measurement of reactions of many people using a limited number of questions, which assists comparisons and involves statistical information (Patton, 1990). The strengths of quantitative research are that the “research is structured, logical, measured and wide” (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995, p. 208). Quantitative researchers “emphasise reliability and replicability” (Rist, 1977, p. 7), where the
quantitative approach often allows researchers to make observations that are “more explicit” stated Babbie (2001, p. 36).

Quantitative approaches though, tend to ignore or overlook the personal and social experiences of the respondents (Kellehear, 1990). The philosophy behind quantitative research is that this method is systematic, has as its core, the scientific approach where data collected is rigorously examined and measured (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Saunders, West and Usher (2010, p. 2) argue that quantitative Western methodologies have however had a colonising effect on Indigenous peoples and “serves to perpetuate ongoing racism and colonialism, and fails to value Indigenous ways of knowing or recognise Indigenous worldviews.”

2.1.2 Qualitative Research

The term ‘interpretivism’ is used in relation to qualitative research (Livesey, 2006). The term ‘qualitative’ is used to describe research methods and techniques which use, and often give rise to, qualitative information, and in this respect according to the viewpoint taken by Veal (1997), is deemed flexible in their requirements. In the context of this research study, Patton (1990) stated that “the human experience matters” (p.37) and according to Seidman (1998, p.4) the best way a researcher can carry out investigations is through “the experience of the individual people.” Coffey & Atkinson (1996, p. 4) have suggested that qualitative data can emerge in a variety of forms. In this type of research method, the “data can take the form of field notes, interview transcripts, transcribed recordings of naturally occurring interactions, documents, pictures, and other graphic representations” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 4).
According to Livesey (2006, p. 3), interpretivism has as its base, three principles: Consciousness (An awareness of ourselves and our relationship with others); Action (People make deliberate choices about how to behave in different situations); and Unpredictability (If behaviour can be unpredictable it means we can’t study it in the way Positivists suggest we should). Bouma & Atkinson (1995, p. 208) have suggested that the strength of qualitative research is that it “is more intuitive, subjective, and deep.” In qualitative research, a researcher’s viewpoint on a specific situation can be imposed on the research respondent. Consequently the researcher determines what issues are important and determines from that, what questions will be asked.

However, the validity and reliability of data collected using this type of research method depends on the overall skills of the researcher (Patton 1987, 1990). The philosophy underpinning qualitative research is that the experiences, thoughts, opinions and perceptions of the respondent matter, and as such, have a valid place in relation to research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

### 2.2 The Chosen Research Approach

In alluding to positivism approaches, Yalmambirra (2002, p. 53) makes the statement that “Western understanding or view of ‘science’ and ‘knowledge’ differs to that of Wiradjuri peoples, and Western research, aimed at the collection of information pertaining to Wiradjuri peoples and/or issues, utilises methods vastly different to those that Wiradjuri peoples would have used, with the end result being that Wiradjuri peoples cannot ‘see’ themselves in the final analysis.”
In reference to qualitative research and decolonisation, Denzin & Lincoln (2008, p. 3), stated that “Around the world, government agencies are attempting to regulate scientific inquiry by defining what counts as good science” and that “Conservative regimes are enforcing evidenced-based or scientifically based biomedical models of research.” This sits outside of Denzin and Lincoln’s call for a paradigm that follows the concept of critical Indigenous qualitative research where ‘the researcher must always take into account how the research will benefit and promote the ideal of self-determination to the research participants’.

For the purpose of research into Wiradjuri peoples, a qualitative approach is the more appropriate as it lends itself to providing an opportunity to ‘see’ and give ‘voice’ to the participants. But it is much more than that. It is also an avenue that the participants can utilise in their efforts to decolonise Western methodologies and Western ways of thinking about them (Smith, 1999). Kellehear (1990) suggested that a qualitative research approach will take into account the personal and social experiences of the respondents, with Creswell (1994, p. 4) noting that “reality is constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation and is forthcoming from the interaction of those being studied.” Livesey (2006) stated that “For Interpretivists, “facts” about behaviour can be established, but these facts are always context-bound; they will not apply to all people, at all times, in all situations. They may not even apply to different people in the same situation.”

Smith (1999, p. 39) suggested that the ways Western methodologies are undertaken and the results that come from them should be looked at carefully and critically; “they need to be decolonised.” Smith (1999, p. 39) further stated however that the process of decolonisation does not mean rejecting everything Western, rather it is all about our own concerns and world views, and knowing and understanding theory and research from our own perspectives and
purposes and of wanting “to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes.” Swadener & Mutua (2008, p. 33) suggested that the process of decolonisation “is not an adherence to a specific research method or methodology... rather the process is located “in the motives, concerns, and knowledge brought to the research process.” So, according to both Smith and Swadener and Mutua there can be an accommodation of both Western methods of research and Indigenous ways of researching.

In relation to Indigenous peoples, Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 2) call for research to be undertaken qualitatively, adopting a paradigm that utilises what they describe as “critical indigenous pedagogy” which is a “merger of indigenous and critical methodologies” and that this merger forms what they call critical Indigenous pedagogy (CIP). CIP “understands that all inquiry is both political and moral...uses methods critically, for explicit social justice purposes and embraces the commitment by Indigenous scholars to decolonise Western methodologies” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 2).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) point out that all research on Indigenous peoples must however meet specific criteria. Denzin and Lincoln suggest that the research must be “ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonising, and participatory...must be committed to dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy...must resist efforts to confine inquiry to a single paradigm or interpretive strategy...must be unruly, disruptive, critical, and dedicated to the goals of justice and equity” (p. 2). This, according to Denzin and Lincoln, is the basis for appropriate critical Indigenous inquiry through CIP/CIM approaches.
In adopting a qualitative research method, it was taken into account that qualitative research is generally an open research approach where participants have the opportunity of identifying issues that are seen by them, as being important to them.

Yalmambirra’s (2005, p. 2) viewpoint in support of qualitative research over quantitative research stated, “[that]...the dynamics of people, how one person moves from one to the other, how that interaction leads to interaction with others, the smiles, grimaces, pats on the back, hugs of welcome and tears of goodbye. These are the ingredients that make people who they are, but also separate them from one another; people are not all the same, they do not all react the same in any given situation and this is the one overriding principle of research that is qualitative oriented: peoples’ reactions are different.”

Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008, p. 2) suggest that critical Indigenous qualitative research must take into account how research can be of benefit to Indigenous peoples’ quest for self-determination. They further suggest that research is “assessed in terms of the benefits it creates for the participants...the work must represent the participants honestly, without distortion or stereotype and must honor Indigenous knowledge, customs and rituals and must not be judged in terms of neo-colonial paradigms.”

Critical Indigenous methodology as a paradigm “includes axiology, which is a set of morals or a set of ethics” (Wilson, 2001, p. 175). In undertaking research into Wiradjuri peoples and cultures, a number of ethical considerations had to be followed as suggested by Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008, p. 2). Considerations emanated from guidelines formulated by Charles Sturt University (CSU), the United Nations (UN) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).
2.3 Ethical Considerations

2.3.1 Charles Sturt University

In the initial stages of research, ethical considerations followed guidelines as stipulated by Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee. Under CSU’s guidelines, a participant was provided with specific information that was relevant to the research being undertaken. This information, in accordance with specific criteria, consisted of an Information Statement and a Consent Form.

2.3.2 An Information Statement

This form introduced me as the researcher, the host institution that I was connected to, the purpose of the research, the title of the research project, and the way in which I would conduct research. This form also provided an explanation of risk, an explanation of how data would be used and an explanation of confidentiality.

2.3.3 A Consent Form

This form provided the participant with details of the researcher and of the supervisors of the research project. The consent form informed participants that the interviews would be recorded on tape and that notes would be taken during the interview process, that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview at any stage should they wish. Through this form, participants were advised that information provided by them could be used in writing the thesis and that there was a distinct possibility that the thesis, or parts of it, would be published in the future.

This form also provided information to the participant in regards to his / her rights, in relation to confidentiality, and provided contact details for the Charles Sturt University Ethics in
Human Research Committee should they (participants) wish to speak to that Committee regarding the research project. It should be noted here that of the forty-one participants, thirty eight asked that their names not be used in the thesis. The oral opinions, viewpoints and perspectives of all the research participants are shown in italics and are presented using pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy and to ensure confidentiality.

2.3.4 United Nations

In accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Appendix 1), this research was conducted following Articles 8 and 11 of the Declaration and will ensure that the participants are not subjected to research that will deprive them of their “integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities” (p. 6). In this way the research will recognise ... “that the situation of Indigenous peoples varies from region to region...that the significance of historical and cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration” (p. 6). This research was not conducted without the “free, prior and informed consent” (Article 11 p. 7) of each participant.

2.3.5 Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

The Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies as developed by AIATSIS (2011) has 14 Principles that are designed to guide researchers (see Appendix 2). The principles deemed to be applicable to this research have been followed and included in the research design and implementation.

Principle 1...This research does not “presume that the view of one group represents the collective view of the community” (p. 2).
Principle 2...The ‘rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination and full participation’ have been recognised (p. 2).

Principle 4...This research protects the ... “privacy, integrity and wellbeing of participants...[and] in any publication, acknowledge information obtained from Indigenous peoples” (p. 3).

Principle 6...This research was conducted ‘with the free, prior and informed consent of participants, involved the traditional owners of country, observed appropriate and ethical protocols, conducted interviews in appropriate places/areas and by face-to-face methods, clearly informed the participants of the identity of all key stakeholders, and came to an agreement that no individual would be acknowledged by name, in any publication’ (p. 5).

Principle 7...All participants were provided with time to decide if they wished to participate or not, were informed that interviews would be tape recorded, and were informed that they could withdraw from the project should they wish to do so (p. 6).

Principle 8...The participants were informed of the potential benefits of the research (p. 7).

Principle 12... The participants will receive a copy of the research project following the opportunity to discuss the significance of the results for themselves, the Wiradjuri Nation and other relevant stakeholders (pp. 10-11).

Principles 13 and 14...All participants were informed of the progress of the research project and of any/all changes to it (p. 12).

2.4 Reason for Research

It is important to Wiradjuri that their motivations and their actions are understood by those who would research them. Wiradjuri are different from other Indigenous peoples and other Indigenous peoples are different from each other, therefore circumstances are just as different (for example, AIATSIS, 2011: Yalmambirra, 2005) and in the opinion of Patton (1990),
Indigenous peoples react according to their own perspectives. This is important in the context of historical published narratives that have often portrayed Indigenous peoples as being the same; a homogenous group of peoples.

Elkin (1938, p. 279) stated “that the Aboriginals are one people”, with (Kohen, 1993) also suggesting that Indigenous peoples all did the same things, lived the same way, ate the same foods, carried out the same ceremonial activities. For the most part, this would infer that all Wiradjuri have the same skills and knowledge that other Indigenous peoples have. The very fact that Indigenous peoples were classed as being a homogenous group of peoples is testimony to the fact that research from those (Western) perspectives, in the long term, did no justice to Indigenous peoples, but instead cast many aspersions that have led to innuendo, stereotyping and misconceptions (Craven, 1999). The following examples illustrate the point being made here in both the past and current situation.

Yalmambirra (2005, p. 6) points out that in the past there were a number of ‘forms’ utilised that defined Indigenous peoples. These forms came from various government organisations and were instigated under various Acts or Policies that were used to control the lives of Indigenous peoples. Somewhere in the form was the question: “Are you full blood Aboriginal or half-caste? Tick the box. Having done so, they would have been classed as a ‘black’ Aboriginal, or as ‘half white’ and ‘half black’. If they ticked the box ‘full blood’ then they would have been classed as an Aboriginal, not as a Wiradjuri lady or man. If they were to tick the other box, they would be entered into a data base that does not take into consideration the confusion that sat heavily on their shoulders when they tried to decide what part of them was ‘white’ and what part ‘black.’”
“Some things have changed. At one stage there were two boxes in most forms: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (‘half-caste’ had gone)...The form still did not allow for the difference between Indigenous groups. The information from the application forms is collected and entered in a data base that does not give any consideration to the reasons one identifies, or how long one has pondered and procrastinated over whether or not to identify...”(Yalmambirra, 2005, p. 6).

They are still there, those obligatory boxes, but they are marked Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Curtin University of Technology, 2005). Ticking ‘Aboriginal’ still does not identify Wiradjuri peoples as Wiradjuri and in the year 2008 the Berringa Community News carried some information from the 2006 Census courtesy of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The information on page 3 of the newsletter states that there were no Indigenous persons living in the township of Bethanga in 2006 (Casey, et al 2008). There were two Wiradjuri people living there at the time the Census was taken; a father and son. The father filled out the section asking whether or not there were any persons in the household that were either Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander. As he had done in the past, the father crossed out the words ‘Indigenous/Torres Strait Islander’ and wrote ‘Wiradjuri’. The father’s action here in writing the word Wiradjuri, could be thought of as another way of decolonising Western research.

Research will highlight that there have been, and will be in the future, many non-Indigenous people in the field of research that still cling to the ideals of colonisation and through that mentality, will not take into account the diversity of Indigenous peoples, that they really are different, have different languages, different mannerisms, identify in various ways, and have different ways of being.
Research will also highlight that the identity of Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia is ever reliant on those who are not Wiradjuri, understanding that Wiradjuri are a separate nation of peoples, and that to be classed as other Indigenous peoples are classed, is detrimental to that identity. Some people may still cling to the concept of ‘one shoe fits all’ and this mentality will still contribute, through their research, to continued colonisation and the subjugation of Indigenous peoples.

This research gives voice to forty-one Wiradjuri peoples and in so doing, will highlight how colonial narratives of the past still impact on their ability to have what could be recognised by the broader community as ‘authentic’ identities, cultures and beliefs. This research is driven by the experiences of the Wiradjuri peoples who participated in the research, therefore the context and intent of this research is not to provide an historical viewpoint or perspective in any chronological sequence. The research is designed in an attempt to provide a window of opportunity through which the lives of the Wiradjuri participants can be viewed.

The voices of the forty one participants though are an important aspect of decolonisation because not only do they offer alternative versions of history for example, they bring to the attention of the reader that despite the impacts of the past 200 plus years, Wiradjuri peoples, cultures and beliefs are still as valid now as they were in the past. But the voices of the participants are only ‘one’ source of information.

The research brings together multiple narratives where the historical published narratives, the contemporary decolonising narrative of the participants, and the contemporary reactionary colonising narrative highlighted how the ‘broader’ approach to the research is more often
than not, ‘contested’ ground, as highlighted by Macdonald (1998, p. 165) in the Introduction to this thesis.

2.4.1 Selection of Participants

The participants utilised for this paper were considered ‘primary’ resources; the very peoples that the research was about. It was deemed ethical and appropriate that the first peoples approached were to be members of the Wiradjuri Council of Elders. The Wiradjuri Council of Elders is an organisation set up by the Elders to look after Wiradjuri interests. These interests include but are not limited to: social, political and cultural issues within Wiradjuri boundaries. This organisation has among its members, peoples from diverse areas of Wiradjuri country, they are both female and male, and are at different ages in their lives.

I attended a meeting of the Wiradjuri Council of Elders for a number of reasons. Firstly it was protocol that the Elders were informed of the research project (Yalmambirra and Spennemann, 2006), who I had been talking with and where I was up to, secondly, to invite the Elders to participate in this research project, and as a member of this organisation I would be, as Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008, p. 15) have suggested, “responsible, not to a removed discipline (or institution) but rather to those studied.” The Elders were informed that I would be talking with Wiradjuri peoples on the research issues and that the research project would provide an avenue for the Elders to give ‘voice’ to their thoughts, ideas, concerns and feelings. It will be their ‘reality’, their ‘ontology’ that will emanate from the pages of this thesis. A number of Elders consented to be interviewed and provided their respective contact details. These were followed up and arrangements were made to talk with the Elders at a time, date and venue that would suit their needs and where they would feel most comfortable. This also provided the opportunity to plan the interview dates, times and venues. Members of
the Council also provided additional contact details of persons that they thought may have been interested in participating in the research project.

Not all participants were members of the Council of Elders. Some were chosen simply because the Elders identified them as being peoples who had knowledge on Wiradjuri (Yalmambirra, 2007), or as peoples that may be helpful in other ways such as directing me to other Wiradjuri peoples that may wish to participate.

In the initial stages of the research, twenty Wiradjuri peoples were invited to participate. This was a ‘comfortable’ figure, however this number grew to twenty seven peoples when others asked to be invited and allowed to participate. The final number grew as more Wiradjuri peoples wished to participate; the final number being forty one.

The participants were both women and men, and as a personal observation, aged between eighteen and the late eighties. The participants were comprised of twenty women and twenty-one men. Whilst it was obvious during the interviews that there were at the most, five participants that were young adults of eighteen to twenty five, the ages of the participants was never asked of them. As part of the ethics process, all participants however were informed that they could not participate if they were under eighteen years of age. As a personal observation, the age groupings consisted of: aged between 18 and 25 (5 participants); between 26 and 50 (15 participants); and between 51 and the late 80s (21 participants). In the age group, 18 to 25 there were 3 females and 2 males. In the age group 26 to 50 there were 10 females and 5 males. In the age group 56 to late 80s there were 7 females and 14 males. Some participants were considered Elders of their respective parts of Wiradjuri country,
whilst others informed that they would simply like to be recognised as Wiradjuri peoples; belonging to the Wiradjuri community.

Whilst the participants were chosen using the *purposive* sampling approach (Patton, 1987; 1990; de Vaus, 1985; Seidman, 1998; Fielding & Gilbert, 2000) in order to choose people who it was thought may have had a lot of knowledge in regards to the research project, they were also chosen because they all have felt the impacts of colonisation and the continued subjugation of their beliefs, cultures and their right to self-determination and social justice. The participants were chosen because it was they who “best meet the purposes of the study” (Bailey, 1994, p. 96). Whilst the Elders informed that they ‘knew’ of some people that would be able to help in the research, purposive sampling provided an opportunity to use my own judgement about who the participants may be. In reality, the research was driven by the participants themselves and the final choice was really ‘opportunistic’. As potential participants referred me to other Wiradjuri peoples, the selection of potential participants became a ‘snowball’ effect whereby the more people I selected, the more others were willing to participate in the research.

The logic behind purposive sampling is that the selection of participants allows for meaningful comparisons regarding the research question, the theory, and the type of explanation that may develop (Mason, 1996). It was decided to approach different Wiradjuri peoples rather than concentrate on any one particular group. Mason (1996, p. 97) suggested that this was a vital step in the process of purposive sampling as the range of peoples chosen would provide the opportunity to identify “similarities and differences, to test and develop theory and explanation to account for those similarities and differences.”
2.4.2 The Research Area

Within the States of NSW and Victoria, (Australia), the research area is known by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as being ‘Wiradjuri country’. There are differing opinions however on where Wiradjuri country starts and ends as highlighted in later chapters. As a Wiradjuri person I felt it necessary to conduct research applicable to my own country, peoples and cultures. The participants were members of various sections of Wiradjuri country including places such as Wagga Wagga, Tumut, Corowa, Bathurst, Orange, Lithgow, Gundagai, Condobolin, Parkes, Forbes, Dubbo, West Wylong, Albury, Wodonga, Lavington, Bethanga and Lake Cargellico, as depicted in Appendix 3. It should also be noted here that whilst the interviews took place at the locations mentioned above, not all participants resided in those areas. There were some participants that lived on the north coast of NSW, some lived on the south coast, some lived in Sydney’s western suburbs, and some lived in Victoria. They all however, identified as Wiradjuri. The inference here then according to Langton (1981, p. 20) is that urban Wiradjuri are just as much a part of those Wiradjuri in other areas; they must be seen socially and culturally as being part of ‘complete, integrated and consistent systems relevant to their members’.

It would not be ethical or appropriate for me to conduct research in ‘someone else’s country’. As a Wiradjuri person I am not allowed to enter, without permission, another clan’s country and conduct business unless I am invited to by the Elders and knowledge holders of that area. Permission or an invitation would only be provided to me following formal discussions between the Elders and knowledge holders. This was how it was in ‘traditional’ times, and this research has continued to respect that tradition.
2.4.3 The Interview Process

“Interviewing is an approach that provides access to the context of people’s behaviour and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behaviour”

(Seidman, 1998, p. 4).

According to Seidman (1998), interviewing is a process by which the researcher can learn from the participant; that it is a process whereby the researcher can gain an understanding of the basis of their perceptions; their reality. The purpose of interviewing, in this research context, was to record the experiences of Wiradjuri peoples, therefore the interviews provided access to Wiradjuri people’s perceptions of their ‘world’ and presented opportunities that would allow them to reclaim their own versions of who they are through their own individual contribution to the process of decolonisation, whilst also providing an opportunity for me to try and understand their perceptions.

All voices however are valid in one way or another and so the voices of Wiradjuri should have and hold as much credence as those who have or would write about them. The underlying reason for undertaking research from a CIP/CIM approach is to give ‘voice’ back to Wiradjuri peoples, to provide a forum in which they can give their own perspectives on the issues contained in this thesis. For too long, Wiradjuri people’s voices have been those from the shadows of others; Wiradjuri thoughts, ideas, concerns, knowledge and experiences have been overlooked and in most instances, not considered. There is also much confusion in the broader community in regards to whose knowledge is correct and who should be believed. This thesis provides an opportunity for readers to decide for themselves what to make of it all.
As depicted in the Introduction to this thesis, the responses that were forthcoming from the participants through the interview process gave them the opportunity to provide a ‘voice’ in relation to the research question. These participant responses could be termed ‘oral narratives’ as they enable the participants to relay their respective experiences (Rains, 2009; Seldess, 2009). Such personal stories provide us with an understanding of the participants; their thoughts, experiences and cultures in terms of the past, where they think they sit in contemporary Australia and where they see Wiradjuri peoples and cultures in the future according to Rains (2009). The oral stories should not be confused with the ‘collective narrative’ introduced in Chapter 1 which forms the framework for consideration of this thesis.

It was also very important to remember that in inviting someone to participate in the research project that those Wiradjuri peoples were not speaking for all Wiradjuri; the perceptions of one Wiradjuri were not the perceptions of all Wiradjuri. My research approach allows for a deeper understanding and analysis of the perspectives of those interviewed, but does not lend itself to generalisation across the wider Wiradjuri population. Who would actually participate would come to be dependent on the purposive sampling approach and who would be available. It was not possible, and certainly beyond the limitations of this research project, to invite all Wiradjuri to be involved.

In deciding that a face-to-face, semi-structured approach to the interviews would be my preferred option, the thoughts of Furze et al (1996) were taken on board as it allowed flexibility within the questions, but also allowed the participants to give their own personal interpretations and perceptions on the questions. It was also decided that the interviews would
be conducted in a place in which the participants felt comfortable; a relaxed environment in which the respondents could concentrate (de Vaus, 1985).

In semi-structured interviews such as those undertaken for this research, flexibility proved to be very important both for myself and the participants as it allowed me to modify and add to the questions when a participant felt the need to expand on the type or amount of information being given. The flexibility of this approach would also provide the opportunity to conduct follow-up interviews should the need arise and was to become an ally as witnessed when the interviews were delayed through interruptions such as a fire-drill (see section on “Problems and Issues”).

In making the decision to undertake semi-structured, face-to-face interviews a dilemma presented itself. The dilemma was firstly, should the interviews be taped only, or secondly, should notes also be taken. The advantages of tape recording the interviews according to Dooley (2001) are that it can be expedient in that tape-recording interviews would allow me to record specific words of the participants; their perspectives. The disadvantages were that this approach to the interview process proved to be very time consuming simply because a large amount of time had to be given over to the transcribing process.

The advantage of hand written notes is that short ‘anecdotal’ headings can be inserted into a note book and filled with detail as soon as the interview is completed. Dooley (2001) suggested that this may be a disadvantage because the detail, hence the accuracy of the data collected, may be compromised in some way. Taking into account the thoughts of Dooley (2001), it was decided to integrate both approaches. The interviews would be tape-recorded,
whilst at the same time hand written notes would be taken. It was envisaged that the two approaches would also act as insurance should either tape, or note-book, become lost or misplaced.

All of the tapes of the interviews were fully transcribed word for word. As tape recordings do not supply information on body language (how participants were reacting) the notes taken during the interviews were used to include the reactions of the participants during the interview process. The reactions of the participants are included in the data synthesis chapter.

The data produced from the interviews was utilised in an effort to understand the motivations and actions of the respondents (de Vaus, 1985) and to try and provide an insight into the reasons for them. Patton (1990) stated that ‘the experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge of research respondents come from the interview data which is reported as direct quotations, and data from observations give detailed descriptions of how different people react to different circumstances’. The stories that result through the interviews are considered as being central in the provision of alternative voices and in the process of decolonisation. Veracini (2006, p. 447) stated that ‘for Indigenous peoples, continuity of connection to lands and in identity, for example, were crucial to meeting their demands for self-determination, social justice and the recognition that past narratives have also contributed to the process of colonisation’.

The first interview provided an opportunity to fine-tune the interviewing technique; I was able to ‘see’ myself interviewing and how that interview was taking shape. The first interview also provided an avenue that led to the type of questions asked; not what I thought I
would ask. I was able to see how answers to some questions would lead to others that were not included in the original list of questions.

In order to make the interview process as comfortable and as pleasant as possible for the Elder, a number of venues were suggested. This interview was held at the property of the interviewer at the request of the participant. At the completion of this interview, a number of elements were highlighted as needing to be improved. The set of questions used was not fully utilised at the time because the Elder had to depart for home. We spoke about meeting again, but this did not eventuate because the Elder became very ill. This Wiradjuri Elder has since passed away.

The first interview was very constructive. It highlighted the fact that I appear to have a rushed form of interviewing. This meant that some questions from the list were missed and not asked. It appears that the Elder felt ‘rushed’ when a pause was taken before the question was answered. In hindsight, I felt that I rushed the Elder more often as the interview progressed; as the time set aside for the interview started to run out. It also became obvious that a set of questions was going to be fairly dynamic, as it is possible (and foreseeable) that more questions would be added after each interview. This would occur simply because the answers given can lead to other questions that could/should be asked. This first interview also provided an opportunity to recognise the importance of developing a sound interviewing technique.

In conducting subsequent interviews, the first interview proved to be substantially helpful. The interview forced me to focus on not only the questions I wanted to ask, but forced me to focus my attention on what information the participant was providing. This enabled me to
modify questions, elaborate and to add more questions as the interview progressed, or to delete questions that had already been answered when participants respond to earlier questions.

2.4.4 The Historical Resources

Research on Indigenous peoples has mostly been undertaken by non-Indigenous people; research that has played a large part in the process of colonisation according to Smith (1999). The research process for this thesis also included the necessity of obtaining and researching historical documents so that the published narratives from these could be utilised in providing a sense of how the process of colonisation impacted on Wiradjuri. At the same time, the historical published narratives were compared with the contemporary decolonising narrative of the participants, and to reflect the way in which society has seen and understood Wiradjuri peoples over the last two hundred years in comparison to the way in which Wiradjuri peoples see themselves.

A vast proportion of written resources for this paper were located in the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in the ACT. A one hundred page bibliography on Wiradjuri was available on arrival at AIATSIS. An attempt to locate each entry in the Wiradjuri bibliography was for the most part, very successful. There were some resources that were forbidden to be quoted from unless permission was forthcoming from either the author, or the person giving or donating the item to the organisation. It was envisaged that this may be a long term activity and as such was not utilised for the very small number of items in question.
A number of microfilm archives were used to obtain information from historical diaries and journals. This proved very important in some ways. It was of course beneficial that the diaries and journals of the past were still available and that these writings could also be classed and utilised as ‘primary’ resources. The micro film archives also showed that the writings of many early historians, archaeologists, sociologist and anthropologists could have been misinterpreted by others as their respective writings were nothing but scribble and attempts to decipher them proved a lost cause. This also meant that while attempts to locate written material from specific authors proved fairly successful, some of their writings could not be used.

2.4.5 Analysing the Data

Reliability and validity of research methods rely on the skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the person doing the research, where according to Patton (1990), the main focus is on the instrument used to measure the research. The instrument here then is the researcher. It is the researcher who will decide what questions to ask and how data will be interpreted, and how it will be presented. Commenting on this de Vaus (1985, p. 57) explains that “there is no ideal way of determining the validity of a measure…the method chosen will depend on the situation”, that the researcher must word the questions that they use carefully.

Robbins (1993) asks many questions in relation to the discipline of anthropological research. Does anyone have the ability to put aside their own cultural perceptions in order to ‘see’ those being studied? Is it possible to ‘see’ the world through the eyes of others? Can anyone immerse themselves so deeply in their research that they become the researched? Can one really know an informant though? These are very valid questions. I cannot claim to know my
participants even though I myself am Wiradjuri. My research approach indicated that all a researcher can do is seek to understand the participants and reflect their perspectives in an honest manner in the knowledge that these reflections are a necessary component to the research process.

Glesne & Peshkin (1992) suggested that a researcher, in attempting to interpret data that is both reliable and valid, must be continually alert to their own biases and subjectivity. Research on Indigenous peoples has mostly been undertaken by non-Indigenous people; that is a given. But therein lays the problem. Is it really possible that an anthropologist for example can research Wiradjuri and do so by forgetting who he or she is? Congalton & Daniel (1976, pp. 56-60) state that “it is usual for members of each society to take for granted that their own culture is superior to others...that in an effort to evaluate someone’s behaviour, there is the danger that you will be evaluating it from your own cultural standards, from your cultural viewpoint.”

In analysing the data, I reflected on the different narratives; the historical published narratives; the contemporary reactionary colonising narrative, and the contemporary decolonising narrative of the participants as highlighted in the Introduction to this thesis. The purpose of utilising multiple narratives was to examine the different sources of information and utilise this in discussing the nature of the data. I looked for commonalities and differences between them both in an Australian and global context. The commonalities and difference were highlighted and the implications and importance of these to the stakeholders were identified.
All responses from the participants will be utilised as ‘direct quotes’ where possible, in an effort to ensure accuracy of the data. The participants’ real names will not be used in this thesis as all wanted to remain anonymous and so pseudonyms have been used.

2.4.6 Problems and Issues

There were 52 people invited to participate in this research. There were 11 that declined for one reason or another. Other problems or constraints came about due to communication issues. Many letters were written to prospective participants with 4 not being answered. Telephone calls and e-mail messages were made and left, however 6 were never answered. The reasons that peoples were reluctant to participate were never asked of them; it was their personal business, but in some instances they did freely provide reasons. Those that did not participate mentioned family business as being a deterrent, whilst some were moving, visiting family or friends, or going away on holidays.

Changes of dates, times, venues and constant interruptions during interviews added to the problems and during some of the interviews, some participants moved the time allocated to a shorter period impacting on the number of questions asked and the responses given. Some persons could not meet at the agreed time and place because of constraints placed on them by their respective places of employment and some had to attend sorry business (funerals). There were instances where some participants were visited a number of times in order to conclude the interview.

Other problems were attributed to constant interruptions. These were caused by a number of factors. During one interview there was a fire drill. The building had to be evacuated for over
an hour and this impacted on the time set aside for the interview. The use of a library at three
of the participant’s place of employment caused interviews to be put on hold many times due
to the noise emanating from the photocopier. This venue was used in accordance with the
wishes of the participants.

In arriving at one venue to interview two people, it was found that the tape-recorder had been
left behind in the office in Albury. This meant that the interview became very long owing to
the need to write everything down. The participants in this instance, whilst patient at first,
became more impatient as time moved on and extended responses to the questions were less
forthcoming. As many of the interviews were conducted in the participant’s place of
residence (their homes) a number of interviews were constantly being interrupted by the
telephone ringing and being answered. Visits to the toilet, the need to speak with people
knocking on the door, tea and or coffee making and the need for a cigarette, all caused the
interviews to be shortened and again, the responses were impacted upon.

At one stage during an interview a request was made to turn off the tape recorder. A Jirri Jirri
(willy-wagtail) had entered the interview area and had begun to dance and speak. The
participants suggested that the bird had brought a message to us and that it was necessary to
be quiet and listen to what it had to say. A further few minutes were spent listening intently to
the bird as it carried out its obligations. The message that had been delivered was not
discussed after the bird had departed; it was as if each of the participants had understood the
message and that I, as a Wiradjuri Elder, had understood also. In retrospect, the directive to
“turn the tape recorder off” had been a test of sorts; these ladies are recognised within their
respective communities as ‘Elders’ and as such their wishes were to be respected or the
interview process would not continue. The lesson? Should I ignore the wishes of the Elders,
then it would most likely be that I would not be able to continue my research in the direction that I wanted it to go; no Elders would consent to be interviewed in the future. Even as a Wiradjuri person, I have to follow certain protocols with my own peoples, in my own community, and in many instances these are more severe than those that non-Indigenous people are asked to follow.

It appeared that many potential participants were uneasy with being ‘interviewed’ and so it was decided very early on, not to use the word ‘interview’ and the term ‘discussion’ became the norm. The potential participants were informed that I wanted to ‘discuss’ Wiradjuri issues with them and my perception was that this helped put potential participants more at ease with what it was that I was trying to accomplish. For the most part, my perceptions were correct as once they went from potential participants to actual participants they appeared to be relaxed during the whole process.

2.4.7 Personal Experiences

Whilst a number of problems and issues arose before and during the interviews as outlined above, there were some instances where these reached a more personal level. It is not an easy task being Wiradjuri, interviewing Wiradjuri peoples. In every interview, I felt myself wanting to give my own personal life experiences on issues so the participants could understand that I felt the same way that they did; by association, their stories were my stories; their perspectives were in many instances, my perspectives. After all, I was Wiradjuri and so were they.

Being a Wiradjuri man (an Elder) had its advantages and disadvantages as I was to learn very quickly. Many of the advantages could be located in contacting Wiradjuri peoples in the
initial stages of the research; many peoples informed me that they consented to participate because they knew of me. When I asked them how they knew me, or of me, most stated that they had heard of me through the ‘black grapevine’. The black grapevine is a system whereby Indigenous peoples are kept informed of activities, people and or issues that may have some kind of impact upon them, or their respective family or community. Information moves through this system, hence through country, very quickly. For the most part this meant that I was greeted into various areas within Wiradjuri country with respect; I was one of them. I was informed by some participants that they had access to my 2002 Honours Thesis “Heritage Management in Wiradjuri Country: Indigenous Perceptions of Consultation” and the research undertaken for that thesis had made an impact on them. To this end I was informed that previous research with Wiradjuri had their ‘seal of approval’ and this also added to the credibility of the research.

In the initial stages some participants however had other thoughts. When presented with the information sheet and consent forms (highlighted earlier) to fill out before the interviews could take place, some referred to the fact that I was doing ‘white mans business’. In their eyes it appeared that the research was being pushed by non-Indigenous people, using a ‘black’ man to do the work. I was regarded by them, in the beginning at least, as ‘suspicious’. A considerable length of time was taken before the interviews began in order for me to explain my position as a Wiradjuri man and as an academic. This involved me in trying to foster an understanding that the research was my own idea, that I was undertaking this particular research project in order to provide a forum for Wiradjuri peoples, where their voices could be heard, where they could see that their respective points of view would be beneficial to all Wiradjuri and the broader community as well.
For the most part many of these participants ‘softened’ their opinion when I explained to them that whilst I was Wiradjuri first and foremost, there were certain rules and regulations that I had to follow should they wish to have their perspectives of the research issues included. I informed them that they could not be interviewed if they did not sign the forms, that the forms afforded them protection in regards to confidentiality and privacy. I talked further with them and explained that whilst my research had to be undertaken in a certain way, had to be written in a certain manner, (a Western methodology) it was only in this way could I give their voices the credibility that they deserved.

While I was clear that my purpose was to provide an avenue for the participants to provide their perspectives (alternative viewpoints) of the issues that have become part of their daily lives, I was not fully prepared for Wiradjuri to look upon me with suspicion, as representing the colonisers. I had envisaged that because I was Wiradjuri, that any Wiradjuri would accept me and the motives behind the research project. This became a little unsettling and hence a little sad whenever a prospective participant raised the issue of ‘doing white man’s work’. Rather than being a Wiradjuri man talking with Wiradjuri peoples, it seemed to me that I was on the ‘outside’ looking in.

Another disadvantage that I perceived came in the form of some information given to me during the interview process. This information took me into areas where I would rather not have been, but to the participants, the connection between story and individual peoples played a significant part in their responses. Many participants when responding to a question would provide the names of other Wiradjuri (and non-Wiradjuri) peoples. For the most part this portrayed others in a good light, but there were many instances where it did not; it cast
aspersions on peoples who could not have the right of reply. I informed participants that I would not use these names in the final analysis.

A further disadvantage arose during some of the initial interviews. Some people would begin to respond to a question, but would stop because they assumed that I had that information or knowledge already. When asked to give their thoughts on a specific question without assuming, many were reluctant and were adamant that they would only be repeating what I already knew.

The greatest advantage came through the information provided by the participants. Whilst I brought a certain amount of knowledge to this research project, the participants built upon that knowledge. Whilst I had my own slant on the issues that surround Wiradjuri peoples, the participants had their own way of telling, their own way of doing and their own way of being Wiradjuri. I came away from every interview feeling either one of two things: exhilaration or sadness. Exhilarated because not only were my own thoughts and ideas clarified, but I learnt much more than I knew; saddened because some participants had apologised for not having what they believed they should have had; vast amounts of knowledge pertaining to Wiradjuri peoples and cultures.
CHAPTER THREE: A DISCUSSION ON THE PUBLISHED NARRATIVES

3. Introduction

“When people talk about ‘the history of Australia’ they mean the history of the white people who have lived in Australia. There is a good reason why we should not stretch the term to include the history of the dark-skinned wandering tribes who hurled boomerangs and ate snakes in their land for long ages before the arrival of the first intruders from Europe...for they have nothing that can be called a history. They have dim legends, and queer fairy tales, and deep-rooted customs which have come down from long, long ago; but they have no history, as we use the word. When the white man came among them, he found them living just as their fathers and grandfathers and remote ancestors had lived before them...Change and progress are the stuff of which history is made; these blacks knew no change and made no progress, as far as we can tell. Men of science [i.e.; anthropologists] may peer at them and try to guess where they came from, how they got to Australia, how their strange customs began, and what those customs mean; but the historian is not concerned with them. He is concerned with Australia only as the dwelling-place of white men and women, settlers from overseas. It is his business to tell us how these white folk found the land, how they settled in it, how they explored it, and how they gradually made it the Australia we know today” (Murdoch, 1915, pp. 9-10).

Bain Attwood, (1996) offered this opening passage of a “school primer” in his narrative that examined amongst other issues, Native Title. Attwood points out that this is one of many narratives that have been added to interpretations of the past that excluded Indigenous peoples from their rightful place in history, suggesting also himself that the mentality of the
times by some such as Murdoch meant that ‘Australian history’ “only began with Europeans, and so not only ignored the past but also erased the indigenes’ prior presence” (p. xii).

Attwood went further and stated that “Aborigines were further confined to the past but not to history by dint of becoming the subject of anthropology rather than history...[Indeed] the Aborigines were construed as artefacts of the human past (p. xii). Murdoch’s 1917 comment highlights how the mentality of some in the early days of colonisation pushed Indigenous peoples into the shadows and/or confined them to the periphery of history as suggested by Hart (2010).

The selected historical published documents include those which have been written from different people in different fields, from different places and from different times. These narratives are discussed in the context of culture, the representation of Indigenous peoples, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of accounts by non-Indigenous peoples and the debates surrounding representation of Indigenous peoples. The documents were chosen so that readers have the opportunity to ‘see’ the complexity of what has been written and said by the writers of ‘history’ and by those in a more contemporary sense.

The historical published narratives used in this thesis are interpretations of the past and writing from a particular paradigm or understanding of Indigenous peoples and or cultures were interpretations that strongly favoured the notion of superiority. McGhee (2008) contends that there were those involved in research on Indigenous peoples that based their research arguments on a paradigm often called Aboriginal essentialism; that is Aboriginalism, which emanated from the concept of Primitive Man. According to Hodge (1990, p. 2) “The foundation premise of Aboriginalism is the construction of Aboriginals as ‘primitive’, in a binary opposition to ‘civilised’...as primitives they become an endlessly fascinating object of
the White gaze” (see also McDonald, 1998). These interpretations looked at Indigenous peoples as ‘primitive and ‘savages’ (Hodge, 1990), ‘brutal and, animalistic’ (Lattas, 1997; Chalmers 2005). Some interpretations suggested that cultures were dead or dying, that they were lost or meaningless (United Nations, 2009; Dean and Carell, 1955; Mountford, 1974). Much of the early narratives on Indigenous peoples was also based on evolutionary theory (Pearson, 1974), with Europeans being at the top of the evolutionary ladder and Indigenous peoples at the bottom (Pelto, 1965).

These different published documents provide much food for thought and whilst in many instances they allow the reader to see that there is a certain amount of agreement and consistency between the authors, the literature shows however, that when it came to writing and subsequently publishing research findings, the literature was filled with ambiguity, confusion, or inaccuracies which underlies the credibility or not, of the authors (see for example Tatz, 1979). However as suggested by Muecke (1981, p. 71) “The main problem for Aboriginal History, as I see it, is to authenticate the appropriate discourse for its transmission. At the moment the ‘authentic’ accounts of Aboriginal history are firmly locked in academic standard English”.

This thesis highlights that ambiguity, confusion, or inaccuracies in the literature could have come from some of the reasons that the research was conducted in the first place (political agendas for example), or simply because of what people had witnessed at different points in time. This chapter highlights that the historical published narratives are very complex as it is not possible to fully understand the mentality behind those who conducted research into Indigenous and by association, Wiradjuri peoples or cultures. Some of the literature used in this thesis could have been written in an attempt to invoke some emotion, and some literature
could have been written in an attempt to influence a reader’s perspective or opinion, but what is evident, especially in the historical literary sense, is that the ‘research does not, for the most part, include the perspectives, opinions, viewpoints, or knowledge of those that were being researched’ (Cowlishaw, 1988).

The perspectives expressed in these documents allow the reader to understand how these documents contributed to a collective narrative that itself is part of the process of colonisation, that subjected and continues to subject Indigenous peoples to physical and political domination as suggested by Smith (1999) and Denzin and Lincoln (2008). Veracini (2008, p. 363) stated that “an appraisal of the settler colonial situation can contribute to the interpretation of current contestations surrounding Indigenous difference in settler societies.” Referring to these historical published documents, Attwood (2009, p. 236) has suggested that…“the treatment of historical narratives…tend to succeed or fail, be accepted or rejected, according to whether they seem to make sense of something...[that] there is a deep seated will to believe.”

The history of Australia though is not as clear cut as some would imagine. For nearly two hundred years, writers of history, social observers and anthropologists for example, have looked at Wiradjuri with different ‘filters’ (reason or intention) and in contemporary Australia these filters have caused numerous debates; for example, whose depiction of history is ‘correct’ and whose is not (Service, 1968). Macdonald (1998, p. 162) suggested that the debates “take place within political and theoretical contexts which include the issues of identity, Aboriginality / indigeneity, authenticity and entitlement.” The examination and discussion of these early documents suggests that the debates have in no small way contributed to not only the on-going process of colonisation, but also to the history wars and
in so doing have placed Wiradjuri in a position of where they would rather not be, which is, according to Ivison, Patton & Sanders (2000), continually under scrutiny and question, with the different representations of Wiradjuri having placed Wiradjuri peoples in a position where they are continually called upon by those with a colonial mentality for example, to validate their identity and their existence as both peoples and cultures.

### 3.1 Culture Defined

Whilst it is important to highlight that there are many different interpretations of the meaning of ‘culture’ it should be noted at this point that a specific definition of culture has not been adopted. As culture is a central theme it will be reviewed repeatedly throughout the thesis with the participants providing their own interpretation and definition in later chapters. In the later years of colonisation, and in contemporary times, definitions of culture have become very important tools in the hands of those who would still cling to the ideal of colonisation and the continued subjugation of Indigenous peoples as alluded to by Snively and Corsiglia (2000).

In the opinion of Otterbein (1972, p. 2) “The use of the term culture to refer to both a group of people and to their way of life entered the vocabulary of anthropologists after 1900, due primarily to the efforts of Franz Boas, who until his death in 1941 was the major figure in American anthropology.” Voget (1975) has written that around the 1920s and up until the year 1950, there were approximately 157 definitions of culture with most being developed between the years of 1940 and 1950 and that the catalyst for this was the increase in those from the disciplines of anthropology and ensuing publications.
Research has indicated though that the number of definitions give rise to large amounts of variations over the years to the term ‘culture’. For example, Montagu (1962) stated that the most distinguishing thing about human nature is that it is taught; therefore learned, with Trueba (1991, p. 279), commenting that “Culture is quintessentially a socially shared phenomenon”, These three definitions seem to be rather simple ones, but as more and more definitions appear, the more complex they become. What these three definitions have in common however, is that they all allude to cultures being dynamic, rather than static.

J. Mathews (1979, p. 19) regarded cultures and peoples as being different and stated that “The tribes never thought of Australia as one whole country. The tribal grounds of one tribe were separate and recognised as their country, and their own religion, beliefs, and customs made it quite different from others.” Ferraro et al. (1994) noted that culture comprises (a) all material things needed for survival, (b) the thoughts of people, their individual opinions and concerns, the priority placed upon people, places and materials, and the stance taken in life, and (c) the way in which law and order provide a way of being.

In a more contemporary situation, the need to define culture is still on the agenda of some, but the complex nature of such is still there. Gerald Sider (2006) suggests that within culture, there are ‘contests’... “[where] culture/cultures are formed not as the property of a people, not as something people have...but as an aspect of a much larger social formation, where place, position, and profound inequalities are necessarily contested...that what can be defined as culture can be used as a ground for defying state power” (p. 286).

Perhaps Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1954) produced the understatement of the time in commenting that regardless of who first initiated the term, there aren’t too many people that
would need approximately three hundred definitions of the meaning of culture. Culture, it would appear, could be something considered to be very complex. Just as complex are the different narratives that have examined and discussed whether or not cultures in relation to Indigenous peoples, were either static or dynamic.

### 3.2 Cultures-Static or Dynamic

When it comes to Indigenous peoples of Australia, they are regarded by Rintoul (1993, p. 5) as the “oldest living culture on earth”, but there is a considerable difference of opinion when it comes to a discussion on whether Indigenous cultures were either static or dynamic. There are many who suggest that cultures must be static, with just as many suggesting that cultures do change and therefore must be considered as dynamic cultures. Whilst the differences in relation to whether or not cultures were static or dynamic are there for all to see, there are some early observers, writers of history, or anthropologists that have also suggested that Indigenous peoples had no culture at all or if they did, they (cultures) were lost.

In suggesting that Indigenous peoples had no culture, colonialists represented Indigenous peoples incorrectly and by doing so these early observers, writers of history, or anthropologists, have contributed to the process of colonisation by not taking into consideration the ‘worldviews’ of Indigenous peoples as argued by Hart (2010). Dean and Carell (1955, p. 22) for example stated that “In four or five generations these East coast natives have entirely lost their culture”, further suggesting that losing culture occurred because they (Indigenous peoples) “suffered the consequences of being the weaker.”

The comments by Dean and Carell added to the representation of Indigenous peoples and allude to the belief by many colonists that their own cultures were the only ‘real’ cultures and
therefore Indigenous cultures were not considered ‘real’ or valid in the eyes of colonial powers. However the implication here is that ‘lost cultures’ from the perspective of Dean and Carell represent cultures as being static, making no allowances for changes to cultures via changes in ‘environments’ for example. Representations such as this created debates on whether or not cultures were static or dynamic.

3.2.1 Static

M. Charlesworth (1998 p. xvii) implied that differences of opinion on the issue of static or dynamic in regards to cultures, could have developed because “assumptions distorted earlier views of Aboriginal religions.” One such ‘assumption’ could have come from a Presidential address to an Anthropological Congress as noted by Mulvaney (1969, p. 102) “there is a uniformity of culture modified by the availability of different tools for manufacture...everything points to the conclusion that they were an unchanging people, living in unchanging environment.”

Oswalt (1970) in stating that the isolation of Indigenous peoples, geographically speaking, helped in the survival of their respective cultures also suggested that Indigenous cultures stayed at a level that was fairly constant. In his 1974 publication Mountford (1974) appeared not to take into account that he was not an Indigenous person living as he did in Australia at the time and witnessing changes in Indigenous peoples and cultures. Mountford stated that “To the aboriginal, there never has been, nor will there ever be any change in their lives” (p. 10).

Fagan (1983, p. 165) though appears to ‘straddle the fence’ so to speak in suggesting that if cultures changed they did so from within and did not need assistance from outside. Fagan’s
opinion is that “There is good reason to believe that Australian aboriginal (sic) technology developed within Australia over a long period of time in response to local needs, and without the benefit of cultural innovation from the outside.” R. Ellis and J. A. Ellis in their 1983 combined work were more forthright and stated that Indigenous peoples were unchanging and commented that “They were a secure people who looked not for change” (p. 6). Egan (1987, p. 19) appears to sum up the thoughts of others by stating that “In most areas it is probably safe to speculate that there would have been absolutely no change in the last ten thousand years” (p. 19). There were however those who had their own thoughts and ideas about cultures and whether or not they were static or dynamic.

3.2.2 Dynamic

Previously mentioned definitions of cultures as being ‘taught or learned’ (Montagu, 1962); ‘ways of life’ and ‘human adaptations’ (Sahlins, 1964); ‘socially shared phenomenon’ (Trueba, 1991) all suggest that by definition, culture can change over time; and thus imply that cultures are dynamic. Black (1944) in conducting research into the customs of various Indigenous peoples provided Wiradjuri, Kamilaroi and Wollaroi as examples of groups who have a number of social and cultural similarities, therefore also implying that cultures were dynamic. Many early observers, historians and anthropologists kept written records of the environments that went to make up Wiradjuri country in which many and varied cultural activities took place, but adaptation to environment changes had to have occurred in order that the process of survival continued, with some adaptations coming in the form of technological changes that people developed, therefore according to Haldane (1956), the diversity of the actions of humans is dependent upon, in part, the diversity of their cultures.
In his work, Mulvaney (1969) suggested that “By 1870...most theorists agreed that mainland Aborigines were one uniform racial type...although details and emphases have changed, this pattern has gained acceptance by many physical anthropologists over the century.... It must be emphasised that neither Aboriginal culture nor habitat remain static” (p. 57). Craze (1977) notes Evans (1815); Oxley (1817); Cunningham (1817); and Meehan (1820) and many Land Commissioners of 1839-50, as examples of people who kept journals that described various environmental features such as: grasses and shrubs, kangaroos, emus, fish and birds. Anthropology Today (1971), suggested that change from either a social or cultural aspect, comes from how people and their community interact with environments such as those described by Evans (1815); Oxley (1817); Cunningham (1817); and Meehan (1820) and many Land Commissioners of 1839-50.

There are those that have examined technological change, rather than changes to environments when implying that cultures were dynamic. Ember & Ember (1973, p. 332) suggested that “it is only when society accepts an invention and uses it regularly that we can begin to speak of cultural change.” J. P. White (1974, p. 23) pointed out that there is “evidence that over 22,000-18,000 years ago there were differences in the ways of life of Aboriginal groups in different parts of the country.” White could be suggesting that cultures were not all the same; that they were diverse. Shafton (1976) contended that survival in the short and long term depended upon the technological changes or adaptations people had to undergo, with Hoebel & Frost (1976, p. 36) suggesting that “Culture changes by accretion of inventions and the modification or replacement of old ways…an individual culture changes and grows by acceptance of inventions devised by members of its own society or by acceptance of new ways invented elsewhere and brought to the attention of its members through diffusion and borrowing of ideas and behaviours.”
Then there were others that simply looked at differences and similarities between cultural groups in contending that cultures were dynamic. R. M. Berndt’s contribution to Berndt and Berndt’s 1979 publication was to imply that cultures were not the same by writing that “Against a common background, they showed many variations from one area to another: but none of them remained wholly static” (pp. 3-25). N. B. Tindale and B. George (1979, p. 16) in their publication follow the same line of thinking as Berndt (1979) noted by their comment “The daily lives, the customs and beliefs of each of the tribes were different, but there were similarities.”

Brennan (1981, p. 4; see also Mayne, 2003) named specific areas when suggesting that inside Wiradjuri boundaries “there were important differences between people from different areas. The people of the Lachlan valley, for instance, may have seen themselves as distinct from the people of the Macquarie, ‘Kuta-mundra’ separate from the ‘Narrandera’.”

Richard Broome (1985, p. 11) agreed with Berndt, Tindale and George by stating “There is a sameness and diversity of the various groups.” Each of these authors could be implying that whilst there were different Indigenous groups that inhabited Australia at the time of invasion, the different groups influenced each other’s cultures and according to Harrold (1991), whilst there were some differences, they did have things in common such as language and the way they were organised socially.

In disagreeing with the earlier comments of Fagan (1983), are the comments by Podolefsky & Brown (1991, p. 2) stating that “Culture is flexible and fluid, changing through borrowing or invention”, with Kabaila (1996, p. 10) suggesting that the environments provided the
necessary materials that would have been utilised by peoples that make up “hunter and gatherer technology.”

Cultures according to some early observers, anthropologists and historians must have undergone substantial changes over long periods of time. This is evident in the comments of Haigh (2000) who referred to technology (stone tools etc) in suggesting that the state of NSW underwent very important cultural changes and these cultural changes may indicate, as a result, changes in the daily lives of people.

With such a large number of clan groups, the emphasis has to be placed on the ‘plural’ when examining Wiradjuri cultures. This highlights and informs readers of the diversity of Wiradjuri (see Black, 1944; and Brennan, 1981; also White, 1974), and at the same time helps to dispel commonly held beliefs that all did the same things and carried out the same ceremonial activities as suggested by the Australian Information Service (1979).

In relation to Wiradjuri, the vast amount of traditional activity that went to make up Wiradjuri cultures cannot be written of here, in a single paper. A book twice the size as any that has been written could not hold all the necessary information needed to do justice to Wiradjuri cultures.

But cultures and their associated activities did exist, and if as indicated, cultures are learnt, then it may be safe to assume that Wiradjuri cultures were not static; they were dynamic. The suggestion by Ferraro et al (1994), that it matters not how fast a culture changes, it goes without saying that they do; they are not static, is suggestive that the debate on the issue of whether cultures were static or dynamic may prove to be an ongoing affair.
The different definitions of culture and the different perspectives in relation to whether cultures were static or dynamic had enormous and on-going implications for Wiradjuri peoples. These different perspectives contributed to how Wiradjuri were depicted or ‘represented’ by those who were not Wiradjuri. Colonial representations through the various narratives included for example, who Wiradjuri were, what they did or did not do, what they had or did not have and where they lived. Representations led to how they were identified, who should have control over them, where they should be placed and who they should or should not have relationships with. Whilst the implications or subsequent consequences of being represented by those from ‘outside’ will be examined later, the following section discusses representation in more detail.

The intention in this section is not to suggest that there is an active debate in the contemporary academic community regarding whether culture is static or dynamic. It is apparent from the literature that culture is understood today as being dynamic. However, in the past, it was common to consider Indigenous cultures to be static, and this was one component of the colonisers’ viewpoint that Indigenous cultures were in some way ‘inferior’. As will be seen in later chapters, there are examples in the contemporary debate, of people who do not understand that cultures are dynamic. Rather they consider that because cultures have changed, what exists today is not a valid culture, and therefore those who follow those cultures, or who still profess to adhere to those cultures, are not ‘authentic’.

We see commentators such as Andrew Bolt argue that many Indigenous people are not ‘real’ Indigenous people, reflecting this view of cultural change delivering something that is not authentic. Consideration over whether cultures are static or dynamic is then very relevant to this thesis – the comparison between the colonising perspective that Indigenous cultures are
unchanging, is in some way inferior; the contemporary scientific understanding that cultures are in fact dynamic, which corresponds to the effort of Indigenous peoples to reclaim their identity by highlighting the authenticity of their cultures, and the parallel narrative expressed commonly in the popular media, which could be argued to be seeking to continue the coloniser power relationships by seeking to subjugate Indigenous cultures.

3.3 Representation of Indigenous peoples

Indigenous peoples have been represented in many different ways over different periods of time. However the representation of Indigenous peoples that came from the research, voices and minds of many of the colonists did not project Indigenous peoples in a good light. As highlighted by Smith (1999), Hart (2010), and Denzin and Lincoln (2008) these representations arose out of the research of many colonists and reflected their own thinking, cultural attitudes and biases and excluded the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous peoples. For many years according to Cowlishaw (1988) the prevailing, dominant images of Indigenous peoples were that the peoples were savages. Watkin Tench (1793, p. 281), Captain of the First Fleet, provides an account of Indigenous peoples that followed the same line of thinking as that of those early voyagers and stated that “they certainly rank very low, even in the scale of savages.” Early observers may also have coined the phrases ‘doomed to extinction; ‘doomed to die out’, ‘doomed to disappear’ the ‘extermination of the simple race of Australia’ located in McGregor (1997).

Attwood (2009) looked mostly at the ‘so-called’ treaty that Batman had instigated with local Indigenous peoples of Victoria. Within the pages of this literature are the thoughts that “around the 1870’s and 1890’s...a particular kind of foundational history is evident...fundamentally temporal in nature...[where] settlers created for themselves a sense of
place-by claiming a relationship with the past, present and future that was radically different from the one they constructed for the Aboriginal people.” Attwood further suggested that “History came to be defined by Europeans...as the story of change, and Europeans were deemed to be the agents of it...history was held to commence in this context at the point settlers arrived...Aboriginal people were denied their place in a country, including their rights of possession” (pp. 153-154). Attwood has highlighted how colonial thinking contributed to how Indigenous peoples were represented and how, in the following years, Indigenous peoples were ‘controlled’ in their every waking moment because of the belief that the colonists were the higher ranking in culture and beliefs. Indigenous history according to Attwood did not exist.

The period of time that Attwood (2009) refers to (1890’s) witnessed significant changes in how Indigenous peoples and cultures were represented, researched and by whom this was done. Whilst the ‘vanguard’ for the representation of Indigenous peoples and cultures may have been the early observers such as settlers and explorers for example, Cowlishaw (1988, pp. 2-12) informs us that “Until recently the authoritative voices on the identity of Aborigines have been those of the anthropologists.” But most anthropologists were not trained in researching Indigenous peoples and cultures in such a way as to present Indigenous voices that reflected cultures and beliefs as perceived by Indigenous peoples themselves and as Laura Thompson (1969) suggested ‘without specialist training anthropologists, amongst other researchers, have a tendency to still observe others through their own individual’ lenses (p. 7). These authoritative voices were observing peoples and cultures from particular academic perspectives and in many instances carried out research as individuals employed by those with vested interests in the results of that research (see Sullivan, 1996 and Clarke, 2003).
The Anthropological Society of Australasia was developed in the year 1890 according to Kidd (1997). Kidd stated that the need arose over the years for anthropological training and a school of anthropology thus began in the year 1923 under the direction of “A. Radcliffe-Brown, with A. P. Elkin taking over as chairperson in the year 1934” (p. 117) and that the “marriage of anthropology with Aboriginal administration was Elkin’s ultimate aim...[as] Elkin wanted superintendents trained in anthropology to ensure that they would become more ‘efficient’.” In due time, Elkin gathered others around him that agreed with his vision. The Rev Hey was one such man. He, according to Kidd (1997, p. 123), suggested that at least one year’s study in anthropology was needed so administrators could “gain an insight to the mind of primitive man...otherwise the greatness and importance of the task is only partly understood.”

Russell McGregor (1997, p. 101) noted that the Proceedings of the Pan-Pacific Science Congress of 1923, which in suggesting that room should be made for anthropology as a discipline in Australian Universities, also mentioned that anthropological research would contribute to be the ... “method of dealing with and governing such peoples...[especially] those tribes that are, as yet, comparatively uninfluenced by contact with civilization.”

Researchers such as anthropologists however, trained or untrained, sometimes represented Indigenous peoples from their own cultural and intellectual perspectives, therefore, there is the danger that personal bias may enter into their research. David Lowenthal (1985, pp. 216-229) is suggestive of the fact that all accounts of the past tell stories about it, and hence are partly invented...[indeed] the better a narrative exemplifies an historian’s point of view the more credible his account...[therefore] bias is inescapable.” Lowenthal is also suggestive that the past as narrative has “now known consequences” (p. 191). The ‘consequences’ that
Lowenthal suggests are, according to the arguments put forward by Smith (1999) and Denzin and Lincoln (2008), the continued subjugation of Indigenous peoples by those who still wield the baton of colonial power.

Pat Cavanagh (1999, pp. 150-162) stated that in writing about Indigenous peoples, ‘historians wrote with such ethnocentric bias that Aboriginal issues and the history of dispossession has for the most part either ignored Indigenous peoples or confined them to just a few short sentences in many of the written narratives that historians for example had put together’, Hart (2010, p. 4) argued that these historians contributed to the process of colonisation by “Blinding Indigenous worldviews”, with David Lowenthal (1985) also suggesting that there is an ‘inescapeable’ bias in the historical narratives.

Cavanagh (1999, p. 152) provides the following examples of some who have confined Indigenous peoples to those few sentences, and whilst contributing to Lowenthal’s ‘inescapable’ bias, they also highlight how writers and researchers contributed to the plight of those they wrote or researched about: Indigenous peoples. According to Cavanagh (1999), R. M. Crawford’s “Australia”, first published in 1952 and through reprints and revision contained only two references to Aboriginal people; Manning Clark’s “Short History of Australia”, first published in 1963 and reprinted several times contained 17 short references; Humphrey Mc Queen’s popular “A New Britannia”, published in 1970 with several reprints contained four short references; and Frank Crowley’s “A New History of Australia”, first published in 1974 provided more extensive coverage, but the focus was confined to more central issues in Australian history, such as “wars and conscription, agriculture and pastoralism, mining and development, class conflict, trade unions and the Labor party.” Such works support the argument of Anna Doukakis in her publication of 2006, “The Aboriginal
people, parliament & “protection” in New South Wales 1856-1916”, who noted that there are “gaps in the historical record...to the Aborigines of New South Wales...[they] are mentioned relatively rarely in their own right in histories of Australia until the 1940s, with not much improvement until the 1960s.”

Ion Idriess on the other hand spent many years with Indigenous peoples, however whilst providing some interesting stories (see for example Idriess, 1963), appeared to be a little confused in providing terminology to what he describes as “our stone age men” (p. 158). In his 1963 book titled “Our living stone age” Idriess separates and identifies Indigenous peoples, and in doing so, Idriess provides a number of illustrations where he offers terms such as “lively miss tarzan...our stone age people...stone age man...amazon...wild women...as wild as she looks...wild tribesman...northern territory romeos...woman hungry warrior...witch-doctor...stone age eves...a dinkum aussie.”

There were some early observers, historians and anthropologists that wrote about Indigenous peoples and cultures, but did not actually spend all their time in the field whereby they could have been the recipients of much more information (Stanner, 1968). Stanner (p. 35) notes for example that “Fison and Howitt did much, though not all, of their work in the long-settled areas and much, though again not all, by correspondence, questionnaire and interview rather than by the protracted field expeditions and face-to-face observations of actual tribal life.”

There were some like Berndt (1947) who were given information, wrote about it but did not actually see or participate in order to receive that information. Berndt’s (1947, pp. 328-329) literature examined and discussed various aspects of ceremonial activity that could only be attributed to ‘secret and sacred ‘men’s business’. Berndt suggested that his research could not
be substantiated by “actual observation” nor did he attempt to correlate material from other areas, but did state that his informants were Wuradjeri affiliated or descent from Wuradjeri.

Sutton (2009) writes that somewhere along the way, researchers (i.e. anthropologists) make connections with someone of standing who is acknowledged as being the provider of certain information; partnerships between informant and researcher were hence developed. Peter Sutton (2009) in discussing partnerships between Indigenous informants and researchers such as anthropologists provides examples such as: Lancelot Threlkeld (1830s-1840s; W. Lloyd Warner (1920s); Ursula McConnel (1920s-1930s); W. E. H. Stanner (1930s-1950s); Donald Thomson (1930s) and Ronald Berndt (1940s-1970s)” (pp.165-187), all of whom acknowledged the vital role of their respective informants.

Sue Wesson (2000) also suggested that some early observers, historians and anthropologists relied on informants for information. D. Barwick (1984, see also Kelly & Pollock, 2005) suggested however that whilst the information gathered from informants by the likes of E. M. Curr, a Victorian sheep farmer, (1886-87) and R. H. Mathews, a NSW land surveyor, (1898-1909), was “invaluable, they should be treated with caution...they appear to be distorted in the first instance and heavily embellished and unreferenced in the second.”

Julie Collins (2006, p. 77) in her PhD thesis looked at various ‘biases’ and stated that ethnographic anthropology ... “ignored the flux, chaos and dynamism of societies, especially those subjected to colonisation by others. Not surprisingly, the legacy of such a preoccupation can be a ‘gaze’ that is extremely biased.” The gaze that Collins wrote of is how Indigenous peoples were looked at, how the eyes of the colonists saw Indigenous peoples and how the pictures sent to the minds of writers and researchers for example,
contributed to the narratives that became the ‘truth’ and contributed to the ongoing process of colonisation as alluded to by Lowenthal (1985).

3.4 Accuracy and Comprehensiveness of Narratives told by Outsiders.

How accurate and comprehensive then are the accounts of early observers, historians and anthropologists? How does one gauge the accuracy and comprehensiveness of historical accounts? Charlesworth (1998, p. 48) noted that in relation to early observers, historians or anthropologists, it had been suggested that regardless of the fact that early observers etc, had information, some education and a sense of humanity and were very sure of what they were doing and why, they were for the most part, unable to see and understand the facts before them in crediting Indigenous peoples with any form of religious belief...this gave those early observers etc, a sense of blindness that affected the way they treated Indigenous peoples. The data will show that the historical published narratives and the contemporary decolonising narrative of the participants are at odds with each other in most instances. The written representations of Wiradjuri for the most part do them no good, instead portraying to the broader Australian community false impressions that in contemporary Australia are taken as the ‘truth’.

David Lowenthal (1985, pp. 214-217) suggested that...[yet] “it is impossible to recover or recount more than a tiny fraction of what has taken place, and no historical account ever corresponds precisely with any actual past...[and] three things limit what can be known: the immensity of the past itself, the distinction between past events and accounts of those events, and the inevitability of bias-especially presentist bias.” David Lowenthal offers...[that] “the language of historical accounts also reconstructs images of the past...the historian translates his impressions into words; to absorb these impressions, the reader or auditor reconverts the
words into images...but the images differ from the historian’s originals”, further commenting that “the narrator’s perspectives and predilections shape his choice and use of historical materials; our own determine what we make of them...[that] the past we know or experience is always contingent on our own views, our own perspectives, above all our own present.”

Veracini (2008, p. 373) contended that “The point here is not that reconstructions of the past that operate like screen memories are dishonest, consciously concealing or inherently untruthful.”

D. E. Barwick (1982, p. 12) suggested that the full story of Indigenous peoples, cultures and contact have not been forthcoming at the time of his writing that, “Anthropologists have helped to make the indigenous culture of Aboriginal societies known and esteemed the world over, and have provided Aborigines with a written record of their own traditions. All ethnographies emphasize the central importance of indigenous belief and ritual. These accounts of ‘traditional’ life say little about the impact of missionaries, administrators, police, pastoralists and politicians, or about Aboriginal evangelists and reformers. In their anxiety to record survivals of the pristine past before assimilationist tuition triumphed, anthropologists have long concentrated upon the analysis of ceremony and myth in remote communities... anthropologists virtually ignored the southern communities...[and] when anthropological writing did filter into school textbook definitions of Aboriginal culture, these antiquarian preoccupations seemed to confirm popular belief that Aborigines who had lost their ceremonies had lost their culture” (p. 12). Barwick’s comments highlight how historical narratives are still the ‘Bible’ by which some people such as Bolt take as ‘gospel’ when commenting on Indigenous peoples or cultures in contemporary Australia. It is here in this way that the reactionary narratives are founded or based upon.
The accuracy and comprehensiveness of historical published narratives is a critical issue in the process of decolonisation, but is also a critical issue in the context of the history of land rights and Native Title. The historical published narratives have highlighted how perspectives presented by the early colonist anthropologists have become an ‘official’ representation of Wiradjuri peoples and their rights. As mentioned in the following pages, the Native Title Yorta Yorta decision was in part, the High Court’s rejection of oral narratives and the acceptance of the historical narratives in rejecting the Yorta Yorta contemporary culture. In the minds of some High Court Judges, Indigenous cultures today are in some way not as valid or authentic as they were prior to invasion.

Barwick’s comments become vitally important when one considers the issues surrounding dispossession from country, land rights and the battle for recognition of Native Title throughout the High Courts of Australia from 1982 to present time. Peterson (1981) stated that whilst in the year 1966 no Indigenous peoples owned land just because they were Indigenous, this had changed dramatically in 1981 through land rights legislation. The doctrine of terra nullius though, continued to be the yardstick by which most land rights legislation was developed. The doctrine of terra nullius was subjected to further questioning and in a landmark decision it was overturned in 1992 and the Native Title Act then became the legislation that promised so much, but delivered so little.

Invasion saw the rights by birth taken from Indigenous peoples. Lands taken, put in missions and reserves, not allowed to follow or practice cultures, raped, murdered and massacred, given new identities such as full-blood; half-caste, or quadroon, children taken from mothers and families, they were administered by state legislation and policy enforced by Governors, aimed at the extinction of them all. These ‘exterminating wars’ against Indigenous peoples
lasted for many years...[and] “their reason to exist both as individuals and as an entire race, has been systematically leached away by two hundred years of dispossession” (see Elder, 1998, p. 255; also Shaw, 1992).

B. Morris (1988) states that the Australian Constitution was amended in accordance with the 1967 Referendum “that saw the removal of the reference to Aborigines...[which] enabled the transfer of legislative controls to the Commonwealth Parliament” (p. 66). Supporting Morris, Rowena MacDonald (1995) stated in her publication on the stolen generations, that the role of the Government in administering and assuming responsibility for Indigenous affairs came into effect in 1967. Control of peoples and cultures meant also control over who should and should not have access to lands.

The commonly held view has always been that Indigenous peoples did not have any land rights simply because they did not farm the land, and with this mentality came the dispossession of all Indigenous peoples from their home country (see Reynolds 1992). Reynolds further suggests that invasion of Indigenous lands came about because of “two distinct reasons...European ignorance and European philosophical and political ideas” (p. 22). In their book of 2008, the authors Beherndt and Kelly have suggested...[that] “in invading Indigenous country, the invaders brought with them the doctrine of terra nullius- the justification for the stealing of lands without regard for the wishes of Indigenous custodians...a doctrine that stayed in the minds of non-Indigenous people until the High Court decision in Mabo v Queensland (No 2) (Mabo)” (Beherndt and Kelly, 2008, p. 2).

Nicolas Peterson (1981, p. 3) suggests that land rights, the term, is used in relation to peoples dispossessed by other people. This dispossession takes away the rights of the original people and results in “a loss of personal and political autonomy and group sovereignty.”
The Working Party of Aboriginal Historians for the Bicentennial History (see Birckhead, 1994, pp. 7-8) suggested that the stealing of lands contributed to the stealing of Indigenous identity by commenting that “Most of this country has been taken from our people in a little over 190 years of colonisation. In tandem with the theft of our land, has been a cultural repression denying us an identity in Australian history...[but] the Aboriginal technique of telling history is a particular form, as valid as any other, including white historiography...overzealous white historians and editors have altered the structure and form of Aboriginal stories, myths and oral records to make them more comprehensible to a white audience.” The WPAHBH highlight how research from Indigenous perspectives can contribute to the process of decolonisation, but the WPAHBH also follow the same line of thinking as that of Hart (2010). They both suggest that the worldviews of Indigenous peoples have been ignored because anyone thinking outside of the mentality of the coloniser (Eurocentric thought) is confined to the sidelines by a more ‘superior’ way of looking at the world.

Reynolds (1992, pp. 80-124) states that ... “the first land rights movement...[was] in the 1830s and 1840s.”...[when] the British Government recognised native title in Australia in the 1830s...[and] between 1838 and 1848 three provisions were made...to give some substance to the commitment to Aboriginal land rights...[the] establishment of reserves...[the] recognition of rights of use and occupancy on Crown land...[and] the provision for compensation.” But there were many people that did not like this agenda and fought the ideology of land rights, culminating in relegating the first land rights movement to history. Perhaps they thought as McGregor (1997, p. ix) suggested, that “for most of the last 200+ years, non-Indigenous Australia was of the belief that Indigenous peoples and cultures were destined to become extinct.”
The Gove Land Rights Case of 1971 determined that Indigenous peoples did not actually own (emphasis added) the land but had only a sense of duty to it (see Reynolds, 1992, p. 3). This decision took Indigenous peoples back to the days of early invasion when the doctrine of terra nullius existed and Indigenous peoples were not regarded as having ownership of lands regardless of the historical narratives of the many, including those in the Colonial Office, that saw ownership of lands by Indigenous peoples as legitimate.

Native Title describes the rights of Indigenous Australian peoples that are connected to traditions, their laws and their practices, in relation to common law rights (Australians for Native Title, 2003) and that recognises Indigenous rights to land. Native Title overturned the colonist’s lie of Terra Nullius (land belonging to no one). The catalyst for Native Title came through the High Court in 1992 when it was recognised that Native Title existed on the traditional lands of Mr Eddie Mabo and his peoples (Mer Islands). Twenty years later in the year 2012, there is a very large push by some Wiradjuri peoples to have Native Title recognised over the entire Wiradjuri country (see chapter eight), but this in itself, regardless of outcome, is a process of decolonisation as it will be necessary for Wiradjuri to ‘state their case’ and when they do, it will require them to provide alternative viewpoints of history; alternative viewpoints of what has been written and said about them.

The concept of Native Title appeared to give something back to Wiradjuri peoples; the chance to be recognised as the true custodians of lands and presented Wiradjuri peoples with the opportunity to return to country and resume cultural practices in relative peace. However, Marr (2001, p. 22), writing for the Good Weekend, does not agree and comments that governments have never been on the side of Wiradjuri peoples when it came to Native Title and that the “stock response of all governments is hostility.” Jan Roberts (1981, p. 166) cited
the case of Paul Coe, then a Wiradjuri solicitor with the New South Wales Legal Service. Paul Coe was standing in battle between the years 1977-79 against the governments of Australia and Britain having charged the governments of Australia and Britain with unlawful disposssession. Coe was unsuccessful.

The Native Title claim by the Yorta Yorta peoples (Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Community v the State of Victoria and Ors, 1998) highlighted the fact that current western ideologies provide a challenge for Indigenous peoples when making a legal claim for traditional country which is based on their own ways of thinking, and their own ways of seeing the past and the present. This Western ethnocentricity can be blamed for the uncertain cultural future that the Yorta Yorta peoples now face, simply because their oral stories held no ground in the face of how historical published narratives of themselves and their history are interpreted by non-Indigenous people.

The Yorta Yorta case highlighted the use of the term ‘traditional’. Whilst the Yorta Yorta live on country, their contemporary expression of caring for country was not enough to satisfy Justice Olney. Justice Olney found that the Yorta Yorta had ‘abandoned’ their native title traditions and that environmental conservation was not Yorta Yorta culture according to Weir (2012, p. 7). Justice Olney’s decision implies that the adoption of commercial farming by the Yorta Yorta was antithetical to their status as traditional owners (Strelein, 2009, p. 75).

Dodd (2002, p. 9) in an article written for The Australian suggests that “there is the belief amongst 400 respondents opposed to the claim, that the use of contemporary materials such as boats with motors, has eradicated the Yorta Yorta culture because it (culture) has changed too much.” The question that should be asked here is: Can the legal system in this country,
take into account and make room for, the changes that contemporary Indigenous cultures and communities undergo?

If the recognition that Wiradjuri peoples are entitled to land “under traditional laws” (see Wilson-Clark, 2002 cited in Western Australian p. 4) then successful Native Title claims are vital in the hope that future generations of Wiradjuri peoples can continue their cultures; free and unhindered. Native Title has been successful for some though. Hickman (2003, p. 6) and Neate (2002, p. 11) in writing for The Australian and The Canberra Times respectively, wrote that through the success of a Native Title claim, Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi peoples can continue their association with their lands and customary practices can be continued by the Elders and community members. The Kaurareg, Wik & Wik Way, Arakwal, Indjilandji and Spinifex peoples have all been successful in their attempts to have their respective lands recognised under Native Title, or within the boundaries of negotiated agreements states Neate (2002, p. 11).

But what of others? In an article published in The Sydney Morning Herald Jopson (2002a) comments that ‘an Elder had to write to the company that now owns his country, in efforts to gain access so he could visit his land and rivers, creeks and streams’. A Native Title claim in an area of NSW was dismissed by the High Court that led one Elder to comment that “his people will never get access to their traditional lands to practice their culture” and that ‘he is saddened by the powerlessness of his descendants to be proper custodians of their land, (Biles, 2002 cited in Jopson, 2002a, p. 10). As stated earlier, Native Title has not been good to the Yorta Yorta peoples either, as can be witnessed by this statement: “The Federal Court found history had washed away the Yorta Yorta claim because by the late 19th century the
claimant’s ancestors were no longer living on tribal land and had abandoned traditional customs” (AAP, 2002, p. 6).

R. M. Berndt (1977, p. 11) commented that “it is impossible to restore the totality of traditional Indigenous life”, with Peterson & Langton (1983) tending to agree as they add that “no human tradition is fixed and unchanging…they are a social process which are always undergoing adjustments, manipulations and reappraisal.”

Saunders (2002, p. 4) quoted in The Australian highlights that “Native Title alone will not ensure the future of Indigenous peoples and/or cultures in this country.” Saunders (2002) reflected on the opinion of MP John Hewson (1993 in Goote and Rowse, 1994). In his ‘Address to the Nation’ in 1993, Hewson told all that Native Title would not do anything for Indigenous peoples and will only lead to ‘uncertainty and division’, however the then Prime Minister Paul Keating (1993 in Goote and Rowse, 1994) in his ‘Address to the Nation’ was of the opinion that not to recognise the decision of the High Court would be...[to] “deny justice” (p. 237).

Attwood (1996, p. xxxvii) stated that “Under the Native Title Act, like other Aboriginal land rights legislation, Aboriginal communities are required to prove a prior and continuous association with the land they are claiming...[and] this necessitates the production of ethnographies and histories to support such a past event though these might be contradicted by empirical ethnographical and historical records which tell a story of discontinuity and dispossession.” It seems however that the narratives of the past are more central to the decisions of the present, whereby the written word is taken over that of the contemporary decolonising narrative.
Whilst Indigenous peoples have stated their case on numerous occasions in relation to the past, research undertaken on Indigenous peoples from a CIP/CIM standpoint by those within the world of academia, would not only provide avenues from which Indigenous voices could travel, but would also contribute to providing alternative viewpoints of what had and has transpired over the last 200+ years of colonisation, but just as importantly, would lend itself to the process of decolonisation. Marcia Langton (1981, p. 11) suggested that anthropologists must change their ways and wrote that “White anthropologists and historians have a great deal of difficulty in translating Aboriginal concepts into white terminology...they simply cannot do it well...[and] when anthropologists start working for governments which ask them to define who we are, what we want and how we can become integrated into the white law system they go against our interests.”

Forced removal from country and being forcefully situated in another, led to conflict between opposing or neighbouring clan groups. This conflict is still evident in contemporary times. Kinsley Palmer (1986, pp. 30-33) summed up group conflict when he stated that...“Aborigines who disagree among themselves on such complex issues as land ownership contribute to the dilemma by employing an anthropologist, who then by default is caught between “two competing Aboriginal points of view.” In this situation, who then does one believe? Palmer also provided readers with a case study whereby two opposing groups employed two different anthropologists in order that both points of view were heard, however as Palmer so rightly stated, this could contribute to the existing conflict as anthropologists could be “accused of setting one Aboriginal group against another, for in cases that go to law, if there is a winner, there is inevitably a loser too” (p. 32).
Alper (1987) in examining issues involved in how land rights are looked at by those on the ‘outside’ suggested that, “Lastly, it is appropriate to consider the relevance of this work to the ongoing political issue of Aboriginal land rights...in this regard the book contains some careless statements...[as] the recognition of Aboriginal land rights in Australian law...[has] hinged on the retention of traditional cultural modes of relating to land...[and] until an agreement is achieved, it is potentially quite damaging to these aspirations to speak, (as these contributions do, on the basis of linguistic elicitations and not anthropological research) of forms of social organisation in the past tense, to confidently predict language extinction (instead of restricting statements to facts about ages and numbers of speaker), and to leave by default the impression that when the last members of a group die who speak an Aboriginal language, the group ceases to exist” (Alper, 1987, p. 73).

Native Title is not just about land however. Native Title is also about social justice and the opportunity for Indigenous peoples to determine their own futures (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997), with the added opportunity to practise cultures in order to maintain cultural continuity. Continuity of cultures is a vital ingredient in submitting a claim for Native Title as stated in the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner’s Native Title Report of 2000.

Attwood (2009, p. 236) argues that “the treatment of historical narratives...is primarily governed by factors other than empirical verification...[arguably] narratives tend to succeed or fail, be accepted or rejected, according to whether they seem to make sense of something.” Attwood continued and stated that Indigenous peoples were in the 1960s, creating their own history through their own narratives by telling their own stories. In the last few decades the narratives of Indigenous peoples from all over the continent have become more prominent in
the process of decolonisation and their fight to reclaim what is theirs by rights of birth; their authenticity and identity (see for example chapter Eight).

These relatively ‘new’ narratives are taking the historical published narratives to task and in so doing are providing alternative viewpoints on peoples and cultures, of how they were represented and the history of this country. In presenting alternative ways of looking at the past they have contributed to the history wars of the present. These alternative viewpoints can be located in various literature, where many researchers and writers are Wiradjuri, whilst many come from Indigenous peoples that are at the forefront of Indigenous activism and many are told by peoples that simply just feel the need to have their say on what has been written and said of them, (see for example, edition’s 1 to 480 of the Koori Mail). Alternative viewpoints are what Stanner suggested may have been missing from the historical jigsaw puzzle that he called in the 1968 Boyer Lectures “The great Australian silence.” Mann (2003) informs readers that Stanner in using the word ‘silence’ did not mean that academics and other researchers had not taken an interest in Indigenous peoples’ lives, quite the opposite. What Stanner was referring to was that those academics and the broader Australian community had up to that point in time, not integrated the history of dispossession and the impacts caused by it, into Australian history, and according to the opinion of Attwood (1969), because of this, Stanner ‘chastised historians’ for not including Indigenous peoples in the history of this country except for some small references to them (Indigenous peoples).

However as noted by Veracini (2006, p. 441) the Great Australian Silence caused “a multivocal debate”. There are those such as Forrest (2007) and Muecke (1981) who believe that there was a silence and that this silence was a part of the politics of colonisation that ignored the voices of Indigenous peoples and in doing so, were guilty of writing Indigenous peoples out of history (see for example Curthoys, 2006).
In contemporary Australia, this silence is still contested. On one side are those who would still cling to the ideal of colonisation (reactionaries and other commentators such as Bolt (2009), and Windschuttle (2003) for example) and attempt to stifle the voices of Indigenous peoples (see Smith, 1999 and Denzin and Lincoln 2008) and on the other side are Indigenous peoples themselves (Kevin Gilbert and Anita Heiss for example). In expressing their own views of history Wiradjuri peoples and other Indigenous peoples are attempting to reclaim their rights and they are declaring their existence as authentic peoples and cultures (see the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples, (2008), but this has caused a reaction amongst those who would stand against them. This reaction would then suggest that there was a silence and the voices of Wiradjuri and other Indigenous peoples in contemporary Australia are attempting to overcome this silence through the process of decolonisation (see for example Fraser 2000).

3.5 Debates over Representation

Historical research on Wiradjuri peoples and cultures addressed the concerns and interests of others, not of Wiradjuri, where Western researchers extracted, appropriated, and distributed knowledge that in the end, would control every aspect of Wiradjuri lives” all research came under the control of Western scholars.

This section highlights how the many differences of opinion between some researchers, from different research backgrounds had contributed to what is now called in contemporary Australia, the history wars (Veracini, 2006). These history wars are not confined to those of the past however, as this thesis highlights. The different perspectives of ‘history’ by various early observers, historians and anthropologists, whilst they contribute to the continuation of colonialism, also contribute to the debates in the present (Curthoys, 2006; Weir & Ross,
The history wars are also an indication of the kinds of debates between anthropologists, Indigenous peoples, and those in positions of political power; they are versions of history that are politically driven, where the victor still seeks to hold power over the vanquished (Curthoys, 2006), but are also avenues that Indigenous peoples can take in their contribution in their provision of alternative narratives as depicted by Saunders, West & Usher (2010). It may be here, in the history wars that Indigenous peoples can also decolonise the representation or misrepresentation of themselves and reclaim their authenticity and identity.

Broome (1996, pp. 54-72) provides some excellent examples of the early representations (or not) of Indigenous peoples. Broome considers a large number of early narratives that either completely ignored Indigenous peoples and cultures, or confined them to only a few words and then these were more often than not, derogatory. Broome (pp. 54-72) refers to Wood’s publication of 1935 and Hancock’s *Australia* (1930) as those who gave virtually no mention of peoples and cultures. Broome suggests however that others tended to be more open in relation to Indigenous peoples and cultures and mentions O’Halloran (1895); Channing (1910); Baldwin Spencer (1927); William Ramsey Smith (1927); the volume, *Oxford Geographies* (before and during the 1920s); the Victorian school readers 1928-1930, issued by the Victorian Department of Education; and the *Sanitarium Children’s Abbreviated Encyclopaedia* (1946).

The representation of Indigenous peoples by researchers of various fields and for various reasons appeared not to be a smooth process. There were and still are many in the field of anthropology for example that disputed the findings of others in the discipline and then there
were those in positions of power that dictated who could and who could not undertake research in specific areas. Some examples of the debate, hence conflict, are outlined below.

According to Manners and Kaplan (1968), for the most part, conflict in anthropological circles is caused by the different research methodologies utilised, but also suggests that the assumptions put forward by researchers do little to quell the fires of conflict. These ‘assumptions’ extend to how Indigenous peoples were represented. E. R. Service (1968) stated that there are weaknesses in some anthropological theories and that these weaknesses were caused due to the freshness of the work undertaken, lack of data and because of the different perspectives of the researcher. Service (1968, p. 6) also informs that many aspects of social organisations were not fully comprehended during the 19th century because anthropologists were not that specific about the culture of specific groups of peoples they were researching...excluding early British social anthropologists who simply spent their time on specific groups...[with] “a recent tendency in British anthropology to replace the concept of “culture” with ‘society’ and ‘social structure’. ” However there were those, according to Drake-Brockman (1953) that found it difficult to write about the intricacies of a people’s ways of being and doing, simply because of the diversity that existed and the different ways in which different groups went about their daily lives.

Editors Robert A. Manners and David Kaplan (1968) suggest that concentrating on specific groups did not serve anthropologists well by informing readers that a “lack of generalisation and reaching toward conclusions had a profoundly negative effect upon the discipline.” However Charlesworth (1998, p. 89) noted that there were some people (academics for example) that believed that what happened in one part of Indigenous Australia, also happens
in other parts of Australia. Generalisations such as these are an indication that the thoughts of some are in complete opposition to the thoughts of others.

The study of peoples and cultures was not always conducted by those trained in the discipline of anthropology; it was not an essential ingredient. However the issue of training researchers proved to be a real concern for those such as Elkin as suggested by the fact that the presence of anthropologists was completely ignored when a highly acclaimed report was discussed at a 1928 national conference that included people from government, those with interests in the pastoral industry and those working in missionary organisations (Kidd, 1997). According to Kidd (1997) there were many people in positions of great power that had a distinct hatred of trained anthropologists because anthropologists felt the need to question the ways in which Indigenous peoples were treated at the time (1920s); were not politically aligned, or did not have the same ideology as those in positions of power.

Many early observers or anthropologists such as Elkin, McConnel, Thomson, Tennant Kelly and Rev Morley for example were continually maligned or ignored by administrators of Indigenous peoples and affairs especially in the State of Queensland because they did not ‘represent’ Indigenous peoples in ways that were the norm, and because they sought to utilise their research findings to foster administrative change.

Kidd (1997, p. 119) notes McConnel in highlighting how being maligned or ignored produced new problems for researchers. McConnel for example was now faced with trying to represent Indigenous peoples in ways that were morally, socially and politically correct and was confronted with how this should be done; should she record with “scientific detachment” in order to placate administrators or should she represent Indigenous peoples as an “informed
observer”? Kidd (1997, pp. 116-151) writes that Elkin’s concerns were not convincing enough for change; McConnel was described as “objectional, very eccentric and somewhat hysterical” and that she was forbidden to ever enter the mission under the control of superintendent Bill Mackenzie; Thomson was subjected to the same treatment as handed out to McConnel culminating in a tirade of abuse from one Rev Kirke who stated that in view of “the high handed demands made, and the superior airs affected by certain anthropologists all such people should never be allowed to come within a 24 kilometre distance from missions”; Tennant Kelly was labelled “a liar and mischief maker...[and] states a great deal of rubbish”; and Rev Morley was deemed to have a warped “sense of judgment.”

However, as no immediate changes to the way in which administrators dealt with Indigenous affairs was forthcoming following the outcomes of anthropologists research, the representation or misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples continued and this was especially the case in relation to young Indigenous girls for example. Many were labelled as having a “temperament and desire” (Kidd, 1997, p. 126) and wanting to have children by their white superiors; they were represented as encouraging white men in every way.

Seymour-Smith’s 1986 “Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology” contains information on a whole range of terms and definitions applicable to the discipline of anthropology. Included in the Dictionary are the thoughts surrounding ‘history and anthropology’. Here, Seymour-Smith states that there “is considerable debate and discussion” when the issue of history and anthropology are brought together (p. 137). The issue can be located, according to Seymour-Smith, in the fact that the “relationship between the two (history and anthropology) have been differently defined by different anthropologists” and highlights Levi-Strauss (1963); Evans-Pritchard (1962); and Malinowski (n.d.) as early contributors to the debate (p.137). Seymour-
Smith indicates that some of the thoughts applicable to the issue by these writers could be considered ‘controversial’. Indigenous cultures were situated in that era/time that was most commonly thought of as ‘pre-history’ by early anthropologists. However many of the next generation of anthropologists had placed those [cultures] in a “timeless vacuum” (see Beckett, 1988).

Tindale (1974, p. 154) clearly indicates that there are huge discrepancies in the works of many writers who have examined and researched Indigenous peoples and he himself has indicated that his work is not without “some serious blunders”, though he does not indicate what they were, rather he occasions to correct others. The discrepancies according to Tindale can be located in a “lack of care in recording names and details of sources...[and] in the locations of the real homes of the tribespeople among whom they have worked...[also] in transcriptions” (pp. 154-155). Tindale mentions East (1889) as having the “poorest ear for aboriginal (sic) words and his tribal names are scarcely recognisable, with Helms (1895) as having “possible hearing defects, or lapses in transcription techniques” (p. 154).

R. Berndt (1947), Catherine. H. Berndt (1965) and Arthur. E. Capell (1942) has not escaped examination by Tindale either. He mentions these writers as having either hearing problems or misnaming tribal groups. Tindale appears to get great delight however from Rose (1956) who according to Tindale, “failed to recognise that the “Ulapula” he was recording was really only the “Other fellow” and no specific tribe.” Tindale stated that whilst the writings of R. H. Mathews (1900), Howitt (1904) and John Mathew (1911) have all contributed to tribal naming with Mathew (1911) being one of the remaining few to do so, these writers made errors that had crept into popular usage. John Mulvaney and Johan Kamminga (1999, p. 42) take Tindale to task and point to the deficiency of his work and comment that whilst Tindale
correctly emphasised the dynamic nature of Aboriginal society...[but] he failed to allow sufficiently for regional diversity and technological adaptation.

History wars are not confined to those of the past however, as the different perspectives of ‘history’ by various early observers, historians and anthropologists contribute to the debates in the present. The history wars are an indication of the same kinds of debates between anthropologists and those in positions of political power and of Indigenous peoples; they are versions of history that are politically driven. Some non-Indigenous people still cling to a colonial mentality and would see the subjugation of Indigenous peoples continue, but on the other side of the debate are Indigenous peoples who question how they were represented and in doing so, contribute to the decolonisation processes (see for example Smith, 1999).

Lawrence (1969, p. 9) commented that “the past tense must be used when referring to Indigenous cultures for no tribes exist with a culture completely unaffected by European contact.” Here Lawrence represents Indigenous cultures as being extinct simply because of change and this thinking is still impacting on Wiradjuri peoples in contemporary Australia. Anderson (1997, p. 5) in the Journal of Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (IATSIS) stated that Wiradjuri peoples, subjected to many changes over time, ultimately became hybrids. The 'hybrid' Indigenous person “lives in a world that exists between that of the invader and that of the invaded, living between traditional and non-traditional, between black and white and being neither.” Anderson may be correct in stating that Wiradjuri live in two worlds, yet here again is a representation of Wiradjuri peoples that takes away identity by failing to understand, or recognise, that there are Wiradjuri peoples that do claim to be someone, that do belong to a specific group, or nation of peoples.
The Australian Heritage Commission (1997) has stated that systematic disempowerment (and misrepresentation) of Wiradjuri peoples has led to their rights and duties, in regard to land and culture under Wiradjuri law, not being fully recognised. Folds (1993) suggests that this must end and comments that it was time that all peoples, black and white, look at what Wiradjuri peoples have, rather than what they have not, and appreciate contemporary Wiradjuri peoples and cultures. Keesing and Strathern (1998) brought the past into the present and stated that whilst the Dreamtime may have been a long time ago it still exists through the present, via the things that are experienced by peoples.

In the years since land rights and more recently, Native Title, it has been incumbent upon Wiradjuri peoples to show that they still have a ‘traditional’ connection to country and that cultures have been undertaken in a ‘continuous manner. In light of this however, there has been little “allowance for change in the character of Aborigines’ relation to country over the period since European settlement” (see Merlan, 2006, p. 192, see also Povinelli, 2002). Land claims under Native Title rely mostly on the involvement of anthropologists and historical records, writes Francesca Merlan (2006). However as witnessed by the literature, the historical records in many instances had written Indigenous peoples out of history, or are at odds with each other in their representation of Indigenous peoples. Perhaps the situation that Wiradjuri now find themselves in was predicted much earlier by Benterrick, Muecke and Roe (1984, p. 14) who suggested that "The 'Dreaming' is not a set of beliefs which is being lost because it is no longer valid, it is rather a way of talking, of seeing, of knowing, and a set of practices, which is as obtuse, as mysterious and as beautiful as any poetry. Reading its present and public forms as religious, as apolitical, and as the relics of past customs is to deliver it a death-blow.”
CHAPTER FOUR: WIRADJURI: PRE-INFRINGEMENT

4. Introduction

Throughout the past 200+ years there has been a great deal of research undertaken on Wiradjuri, the literature testifies to this. However most of this literature comes from a colonist viewpoint of peoples and cultures and does not take into consideration the viewpoints of Wiradjuri, or by association, other Indigenous peoples. This chapter highlights how Indigenous peoples were looked at; the ‘gaze’ as noted by Collins (2006), and how this gaze has played a major role in the colonisation of Indigenous peoples and cultures. In relation to Wiradjuri some of this research has looked at every aspect of the lives of Wiradjuri people (see Read, 1983; White, 1986), others have looked at specific customs or languages only (see Mathews, 1900; Holmer, n.d.) whilst others still, have only paid Wiradjuri a cursory glance (see Gribble, 1882; Heaton, 1879).

As well as considering the writings of non-Indigenous anthropologists and writers on Indigenous, and more specifically, Wiradjuri, history and culture before the arrival of European invaders, this chapter introduces the viewpoints of the research participants, and it is envisaged that by doing so, readers can get a glimpse of an ‘alternative’ narrative that challenges the colonial narrative that has emanated from a more, so-called, ‘dominant society’. By putting forward a Wiradjuri perspective this alternative narrative seeks to reclaim the telling of history, reclaim Wiradjuri identity, and thus contributes to the process of decolonisation (Phillips, 2005; Miller, Dunn and Currell, 2005 and Sutton, 2001). This alternative narrative is made possible through the use of CIP/CIM as highlighted in earlier chapters.
Definitions of culture are provided in order for readers to understand how Wiradjuri life-
styles were looked at by numerous researchers, with the complexity of definitions
highlighting how the emphasis should be placed on content of definition and not on the
number provide by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1954) in chapter three. Also noted in chapter
three was that cultures are not static; they are dynamic; they change and adapt. This chapter
concludes with a discussion on cultural change and adaptation.

It is important to note here that in order to understand where Wiradjuri are situated, socially,
culturally and politically in contemporary Australia, some understanding of where they were
situated prior to invasion must be presented; the contemporary decolonising narrative is
central to understanding where the participants are in the context of contemporary Australia.
Whilst the terms ‘colonisation’ and ‘decolonisation’ were not specifically mentioned by the
participants when they were interviewed, this chapter also provides the opportunity for the
reader to witness how the voices of the participants (their viewpoints for example) are
contributing to the process of decolonisation. For the most part, the participants disagree with
what has been written and said about them as peoples and or cultures. In light of this, the
historical published narratives and the contemporary decolonising narrative presented in this
chapter will be further examined and discussed in more detail and in context of the chapter,
‘Contemporary Issues’.

4.1 Origins – Various Perspectives

The origins of the human animal have been the subject of hundreds of years of research. The
historical published narratives representing the origins of Wiradjuri peoples in an historical
sense come from Western / European perspectives. This chapter highlights the differences
between the historical published narratives (the ‘literature’) and the contemporary
decolonising narrative of the participants. In some cases the literature has a tendency to agree with Wiradjuri peoples on origins, or at the very least, carries some kind of acknowledgement that the beliefs of Wiradjuri peoples differ from that of the writers.

For the most part however, the literature completely ignores or disregards the beliefs of Wiradjuri peoples and in doing so adds to the debate or argument on the issue of origin. Rigney (2001) contends that there is considerable competition between Wiradjuri beliefs and non-Indigenous science. In light of this Rigney also suggests that there is a concern that the academy has a continual reliance on a non-Indigenous paradigm that undermines Indigenous belief systems. Goudge (1961) leaves the gate open on the debate of origin (in a non-Indigenous sense) by suggesting that the origins of Wiradjuri cannot be proven with any degree of accuracy.

Berndt & Berndt (1978) examined and discussed the origin issue and it is their contention that Indigenous people were immigrants, whose origins, according to Pilger (1989) may have been Asia. Elkin (1938); Tindale (1974); Tonkinson (1978); Mulvaney (1981); Trezise (1993); Butlin (1993); and Kohen (1993) in their collective writings have also made some reference to the fact that the origins of Indigenous peoples were somewhere in Southeast Asia.

Laidlaw (1990) informs readers that many researchers have the view that Indigenous peoples came to Australia in the last Ice Age. Laidlaw takes what he terms ‘an evidence based approach’ to issues surrounding Indigenous peoples of Australia, and in doing so provides information relating to so-called ‘visitors’ to this country. Rickard (1992, p. 62) in writing his thirteen page paper on ‘Aborigines’ contributes fairly succinctly to the general consensus
among various disciplines, that Indigenous peoples were immigrants, by stating that there was no way that human evolution could have originated in Australia, simply because the archaeological evidence says so.

The research participants are as one voice on the issue of origin. There is an innate belief among them that they were always here and that the immigration theory projected through the historical, scientific, or academic narrative is not in line with their beliefs. Allan’s comment was given in a very ‘matter of fact’ way, whilst Colin refers to the passing down of knowledge in providing his response. Allan: “Well we didn’t call it Australia, we called it our own area, which we called Wiradjuri, or Uradjuri and that’s where we belong and that’s where we came from. That’s where we were born, bred. That’s where we became in existence…put here by Byaami, the creator.” Colin: “That’s a, tough question. I can only go on what I’ve been told….I have heard though that we were always here…that we always were…and if the old people say things like that then they would know wouldn’t they?”

To those who are not anthropological or archaeological minded, the suggested timeframe of arrival to this country by humans can be cause for much ambiguity and confusion. Peterson (1970) infers without reference to any resource, that Indigenous peoples arrived in this country approximately 35,000 years ago. The Australian Information Service (1979) stated that the year of arrival to Australia by the first Australians was more than 40,000 years ago. Grounds (1982) stated that a lot of country was initially settled by Indigenous peoples, some 30,000 to 40,000 years ago, with Tucker (1985) suggesting that the first Indigenous settlers arrived at the Murray River over 20,000 years ago. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (2001) in developing and producing a timeline of archaeological events suggests that the land was being used by people as long ago as 120,000 years.
The majority of anthropologists, historians, archaeologists, and researchers, however amateurish or professional in their approach, seem to agree that the paddling of great canoes or rafts over vast expanses of waterways such as oceans was a very plausible occurrence (see for example Pfeiffer (1977) and Flannery (1994). Both Pfeiffer and Flannery assume then that Wiradjuri had their beginnings in one or some of those canoes or rafts. Some of those original paddlers were Wiradjuri ancestors (see Birdsell, 1957). However, neither has taken into account the beliefs of Wiradjuri peoples.

Whilst the Wiradjuri participants are at odds with some of the literature, the origin of Wiradjuri is not as big an issue for some of the participants as it appears to be amongst non-Indigenous researchers. The time-frame is irrelevant according to the perspective of Evelyn:

“I don’t think we came from anywhere. I think we were just put here. Put here by our creator…Don’t really give a care what others say when we came here or how long…we were made here and that’s all.”

Some participants looked at the issue of origin more deeply than others and in so doing have provided what is to them, a logical rebuttal of the historic, scientific and academic narratives. Brian provided a ‘tongue in cheek’ response to the issue of origin and then gave his own perspective, whilst another, Frank, provided a response in more detail.

Brian: “Looks like this according to history…[as] the clan got bigger, or as that mob got bigger, the group got bigger and they got split off and made their own groups...[and] when that group got bigger they’d split off and make their own group. And with this pattern we covered Australia. Not the way it happened! We are Wiradjuri because we have always been here...[we] never came from boat people.”
Frank: “And whether we came down from the, the north, as a lot of the scientists say that we did, then you’d sort of hope to see some sort of a, a channel of similarity or something. But whether there is, or I haven’t seen it or known it, so, at a point blank range I’d just say that, yeah, Wiradjuri was created and come from the Wiradjuri creator. The origins of Wiradjuri... came from Wiradjuri country...from the beginning. We were always here. Even though writers say we came from South-East Asia we firmly believe they are wrong. Why is it that we arrived here from somewhere else, moved through the country and created all these small clans of peoples that speak different languages? Why would we do this? Yeah, come from, made and come from the land there.”

However whilst Pfeiffer (1977; and Flannery (1994), have suggested that Indigenous peoples arrived in Australia in a type of water-craft sometime in the last ice age, Fagan (1983, p. 162) appeared resolute when stating that “no one, however, challenges the accepted hypothesis that Australian origins lie in the north.” Brace (1967, p. 3) contended that perspectives on the origins of mankind should not differ from the statement that “Few educated men and no serious scholars doubt that man evolved by natural means from a creature which today would not be considered man.” Brace does not inform whether or not he had spoken to Wiradjuri peoples, or other Indigenous peoples, but one could assume that if he did, then he placed no credence on their belief systems and dismisses them outright. But Gail was just as adamant as Brace; the historical, scientific or academic narratives on this issue meant nothing. Gail: “Some would say from apes!...totally disagree! We evolved from the land...created by our creator.”

Then there are the historical published narratives that have reflected the belief systems of Indigenous peoples and by association, Wiradjuri. For example: Pearson (1974) stated that
Arunta peoples from the central area of Australia believe ‘Numbakulla’ is the creator of everything. Watson (1984) stated that Indigenous people believe that they were created in Australia; Wright (1991) comments that Indigenous people believe that they have always been here; Broome (1994, 2002,) informed readers that the Aranda people and those from Arnhem land believe that they were created in this country by spiritual ancestors, though is confusing when he dismisses this outright by stating that Indigenous people are immigrants to this country. Smith (1996, p. 17) informs readers that a creator known as Nurunderi created Narrinyeri country and that this included the people.

Bowditch (1999) stated rather bluntly that according to Indigenous peoples, they believe that they have been here forever, and that the theories put forward by some researchers are based on assumptions. Clarke (2003, p. 17) pointed out that irrespective of the issues surrounding immigration Indigenous peoples believe that they “originated with the landscape.” Ian was just as blunt as Bowditch: Ian: “We came from the creator...nothing more and nothing less.”

But what were Bowditch and Clarke trying to convey? Perhaps they were noting that there is an inbuilt belief by Indigenous peoples that their origins stem from their attachment to both ancestors and their respective lands. They (Indigenous peoples) have never operated in isolation from one another; they are the same. The participants, Jacob and Louise informed that totemism is their spiritual link to not only country, but to their creator. Jacob: “My link to our creator is through totems like my personal totem, the emu, and through the goanna which is the language totem of Wiradjuri. This connects us to everything that we believe and have.” Louise: “The goanna is the main totem of Wiradjuri and we can have our own totems, but they are all combined and are very important in what we believe and what we do...we are all one.”
Lee (1959, p. 169) suggested “The very spirit of the men is believed to reside in the land…here, when a man moves away from the land of his group, he leaves the vital part of himself behind.” Howells (1962, p. 179) suggests that totemism is not the worship of any animal, bird, fish or other object but is an “affiliation with them.” Bohannan (1966) contributes to the discussion and defined a totem as being either flora or fauna and that community members form a type of relationship to them. Elkin (1967) added that Indigenous peoples, whilst concerned with daily routine were also concerned that they remained as one with the environment. The connection to the land then is seen animistically, and as Leach (1970, p. 40) stated, “It is a fact of empirical observation that human beings everywhere adopt ritual attitudes towards the animals and plants in their vicinity.”

Allan informed that Wiradjuri were “related to the land.” When asked what he meant by this, his response was sharp and to the point. Allan: “We had a connection to it...provided us with our education, through our Elders. A spiritual relationship, that connection, and it gave us responsibility for it. There were laws you see…told us how to look after the land. Land gave us life...water is life...knew where water was in our own country...it was our responsibility. You looked after your mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters and uncles and aunts because their spirits were in the land...were in everything.”

Frank thought that the debate surrounding the origin of Wiradjuri and putting a time on how long Wiradjuri had been here made no sense to him whatsoever; it was more relevant that people learned about cultures. Frank: “We don’t hold what most white people believe when it comes to origins in high regard, someone might turn around and say your beginning was here and your beginning was there and this is many thousands of years ago and so forth. We just say we’ve been here from the beginning and we’re not gunna put a date on that, in a
sense...don’t really believe in the importance of saying, we just know we’ve been here from the beginning, we were created, yeah. A lot of people put maybe too much faith in the science and they need to learn a bit more...the heritage and cultural side of things...Yeah.”

In contemporary Australia there are narratives that ‘challenge’ the very existence of Wiradjuri as peoples or cultures. These contemporary reactionary colonial narratives contribute to the discourses that are inherent in the belief that Wiradjuri knowledge is no longer relevant as they were not who they claim to be, that they did not exist as a named group of peoples and as such, cannot claim to be Wiradjuri in ‘real’ terms in contemporary Australia. Lavallee and Poole (2009) suggest that one of the most important issues surrounding the continual subjugation of Indigenous knowledge is the continual challenge or attack on the identity of Indigenous peoples, forthcoming from a colonial legacy. To be explored more fully in later chapters, these discourses highlight the fundamental nature of contemporary reactionary colonisation narratives which are politically driven by reactionaries such as Windschuttle (2003), Bolt (2009) and Howard (2006).

4.2 Wiradjuri Country

It is evident from the literature that many researchers have made mention of Wiradjuri country. Just as evident is that the extent, or boundaries of country, varies depending on who one is reading, or listening to at the time; there are differing narratives on where Wiradjuri country begins and ends. Chaffe (1981, p. 4) also suggests the same when commenting that “there is some disagreement in the literature about the precise boundaries of the tribal group or tribal confederation, known as the Wiradjuri.” But what is ‘country’?
According to the participants, country was home, lands where their ancestors practiced cultures and performed spiritual ceremonies, where they cared for country, nurtured country, where family were born and died. The participants identify country as their ‘earth mother’ and it is the earth mother that provides for Wiradjuri peoples. Joseph stated that “*Country is where people belong, where peoples had an obligation, a duty of care, to look after country.* But a place where Wiradjuri identity was never questioned.” Joseph touches on the importances of identity here. Prior to invasion, Wiradjuri were never questioned about who they were because it was taken for granted that they were who they said they were. According to Joseph, “*Identity is becoming an ever increasing issue in the present, but in the past, Wiradjuri would only have to have said who they were and that would have been that...no, never questioned.*” The viewpoint of Joseph highlights how the contemporary reactionary colonising narrative that questions Wiradjuri (and other Indigenous) identity from reactionaries such as Windschuttle and Bolt creates increasing pressure on Wiradjuri peoples to challenge those who question their identity.

The literature highlights how there were some disagreement in regards to traditional boundaries of Wiradjuri. The participants put their perspectives in different ways but in the end, the result is the same. One participant, Brian, suggested that country was hard to define and made the following comment: Brian: “*It’s hard to define. It wasn’t the rivers and it wasn’t the hills. It was just knowing not to go past a certain point or mark...they would’ve been taught. But listen, we, all people crossed over rivers and did so to hunt and hold ceremonies so rivers were not our boundaries.*” Brian’s comments infer that the boundaries of country had ‘blurred edges’ whereby rivers for example were not considered as being places where one could not go past, rather they were ‘shared’ areas.
Many researchers, both in the past and in contemporary times, regard Wiradjuri as being the largest landholding group in NSW. Craze (1977, p. 13) cited Beckham (1853) an appointed Land Commissioner between the years 1841-48, in stating that there were “three tribes in the Lachlan district with one tribe occupying the north bank of the Murrumbidgee River, the second tribe living on the south bank of the Lachlan River, with the third tribe living on the Burrowa River.” Elliott (1854) however added another location by suggesting that Wiradjuri occupied another river; that of the Murray. Beckham and Elliot imply here that the rivers were in fact used as boundaries, which is in direct opposition to the research participants.

Both Mathews (1900) and Mitchell (1900) agree with Elliot and stated respectively that the Wiradthuri or Woradgery, occupied a large portion of country that started somewhere near the Barwon River and finished at the Murray River. Neither Mathews (1900) nor Mitchell (1900) indicated whether ‘Wiradthuri’ or ‘Woradgery’ lived along the entire course of the Murray, or specific sections of it. White (1986) does mention that all Wiradjuri country can be located in the area known as the Murray-Darling Basin, and that the river system that flowed through the area contained the Murray, Murrumbidgee, Lachlan, and the Bogan/Macquarie.

Threlkeld and Curr were a little more broad and general in their descriptions of Wiradjuri country. Threlkeld (1892, p. 56) in examining the language, traditions, and customs of the Awabakal people, suggests that Wiradjuri country was much larger than Beckham (1853) inferred, by commenting that “the Wiradhari covers the whole heart of N.S.Wales.” Curry (1981) however, appeared to be locally influenced when stating that only the southern area of NSW was home to people of the Wiradthuri tribe.
In relation to the historical published narratives, it is possible that the discrepancies in the depiction of Wiradjuri country, could be the cause of what some have defined as ‘walk-about’ as can be seen in Craven & Rigney (1999). With Wiradjuri being a semi-nomadic peoples, movement through country, or into other areas for trade as an example, could very easily have confused or simply been misinterpreted by non-Indigenous people as noted in the following examples. Biasutti (1959, p. 7) stated that “Wiradjuri could be located between the Lachlan and Murray Rivers” but does not mention other areas in a specific sense. There were some that mentioned the Bogan River and the Lachlan River as being places where Wiradjuri lived, but without reference to any specific area, further recognise that a substantial distance to the south and east was also Wiradjuri country. Tucker (1985, p. 2) was a little vague in pinpointing the exact territory of Wiradjuri when stating that Wiradgery country ran from “somewhere near the Lachlan River to a little south of Albury.”

Wiradjuri were also grouped depending on where they were located at the time. Bell (n.d.) commented that a tree used as a funeral marker existed in the Gundagai Shire and approximately up until ninety years ago, large numbers of Waradthuri would gather at the tree for annual ceremonies, and as someone of importance was buried there approximately one hundred and fifty years ago…as the story concerns events of 1967, this infers that ‘Waradthuri’ were in the area around 1817. O’Keefe et al. (2002, pp. 3-5) write that “the site of Gundagai originally formed part of the extensive territory of the Wiradjuri people…some of whom were referred to as the Gundagai tribe’ or the ‘Tumut tribe’, or the ‘Gundagai Aborigines’.

Unger (1976) in looking at Indigenous activity in the NSW district of Parkes, commented that the local Indigenous people were Wiradjuri; White & Cane (1986, p. 16) stated that the
township of Yass was inhabited by people who spoke one of either two languages – ‘Wiradjuri’ and ‘Ngunawal.’; and the Griffith Genealogical & Historical Society (1993) commented that the first known occupants of the Griffith area were Wiradjuri.

Connor (1999, p. 99) in researching the issues of armed conflict between Indigenous peoples and the British forces, recognised three groups of Wiradjuri as highlighted earlier by (Craze, 1977, p. 13) and stated that it was “likely that three separate Wiradjuri groups lived on the Macquarie River above Wellington; the Bathurst ‘tribe’ lived on the upper Macquarie around what is now Bathurst; the Mudgee ‘tribe’ on the Cudgegong River between what are now Mudgee and Rylestone; while the Wellington ‘tribe’ lived on the Bell River and the Macquarie River below Bathurst.”

In his interview, Harry was asked if he could provide his version of the boundaries of Wiradjuri country and if he would proffer an opinion on why Wiradjuri was so large. Harry suggested that there was a ‘spiritual’ belief that should be considered. Harry: “Wiradjuri define where they lived but spiritual beliefs had a lot to do with it too. We adapted better than most. Our country grew as we grew...population expanded and so we expanded...course this only happened because the land was given to us by our creator, we didn’t just take over others’ places, lands...that would have been unthinkable...would go against our beliefs to take someone else’s land away from them.”

Wesson (2000) in her historical atlas of Indigenous people quotes numerous sources that question the findings of other researchers in relation to the issue of Wiradjuri geographical area. Wesson states that the likes of Smyth (1878); Howitt (1904); and Tindale (1974) have geographically put Wiradjuri as being on the northern side of the Murray River only. Wesson
then provides another side to the debate/argument when she presents other sources that state Wiradjuri occupied both sides of the Murray River; Robinson (1840) who suggested that Wiradjuri lived in the Barnawatha area; Barber (1841) who suggested that Wiradjuri were people of the Murray River; Lane (1859) who claimed that both sides of the Murray River in areas known as Howlong and Dora Dora were inhabited by Wiradjuri; Huon (1859) who contended that one of the groups at Wodonga was Wiradjuri; and Reid (1878) who stated that the Emu Mudjug language list from the area known as Barnawatha is Wiradjuri.

The Rev Gribble (1884, p. 113) founder of the Warangesda Mission in the vicinity of the Murrumbidgee River, in also indicating the size of Wiradjuri country, wrote that: “The tribal boundaries of the Waradgeri were bounded on the west by the Eta-eta tribe with Hay as a starting point, on the north-west by the Bagunjee, on the north by the Wong-ibon, on the north-east by the Ngun-na-wal, on the south-east, south, and south-west by the Burra-burra-ba, with this latter tribal line completing the circuit by joining the Eta-eta.” Read (1994) utilised resources from the early 1800s and was ‘poetic’ in his descriptions of Wiradjuri country, and in commenting that “There was enormous diversity within Wiradjuri country,” went on to wax lyrical;

“The wheat-belt plains of Condobolin and West Wyalong, the dead-flat blacksoil country of Lockhart, the rolling slopes of Cowra, the red-brown expanses of Ivanhoe, the plunging retreats of Capertee and Sofala, the gentle hills of Wellington and Molong, the river flats of Narrandera: this was, and is, Wiradjuri country” (p. 3).

Whilst Read (1994) highlights the fact that Wiradjuri was a nation made up of groups or clans, others before him have also made reference to the different clan groups that belong to
Wiradjuri. Harrold (1991) refers to many primary resources when discussing country of Wiradjuri. The resources quoted also confirm that Wiradjuri were a nation made up of clan groups with differences and similarities. Fry (1920) refers to “ethnographic evidence” when discussing the diversity of Wiradjuri, whilst Hosking and McNicol (1993) in their study of Wiradjuri draw attention to the fact that there were differences as well as similarities in Wiradjuri languages. Perhaps the comments of Deborah Bird Rose (1991) should be used to put the issue of geographical areas, or boundaries, into context, and therefore is quoted verbatim:

“Each area had its own people; each people had their own country. Where population was dense, the countries were small; where density was thin, countries were large. One way of conceptualising the continent is as series of ‘nations’, each with its own internal divisions, and each marked by its social and cultural practices, and its members’ sense of themselves as part of a group. Each of these ‘nations’ was roughly equivalent to others and was politically independent of the others. Each internal division was also independent of the others. There was no centralised authority and no over-arching political system” (p. 6).

The different perspectives of the literature and the participants have highlighted that there is no total agreement on where Wiradjuri country begins and ends. The participants have their perspectives and the literature has other perspectives and this is to be expected. The overall opinion of the participants however is that country was defined by certain ‘markers’, like trees and mountains, that the river systems were not boundaries and that country had ‘blurred’ edges where trade for example was conducted, where the utilisation of resources was shared with others. The literature in some instances has a tendency to agree with the participants and in other instances do not. However, as will be discussed in a later chapter,
the issues surrounding Wiradjuri country and perceived traditional boundaries are to become central themes in the daily lives of Wiradjuri peoples in contemporary Australia.

Knowing where someone lived, but not knowing who they are, would be tantamount to having a jigsaw puzzle with some pieces missing; the full picture cannot be presented. So the question is: What is meant by Wiradjuri?

4.3 The Meaning of Wiradjuri

The meaning of Wiradjuri takes two lines of thought. Firstly the definition of the meaning and secondly, what it means to be Wiradjuri to the participants. Some researchers, regardless of their field of expertise, acknowledge that Wiradjuri comes from the word ‘no’. MacDonald (1983) also suggested, that translated, Wiradjuri means that part of country where people say no. In their discussion of the commutative suffix of Wiradjuri, McNicol & Hosking (1994) also make mention of the use of two words that make Wiradjuri; “wirraay” for ‘no’ and “dhuurray” which means “having”, or as pointed out by Grant & Rudder (2005), having the word for no. Prior to Grant and Rudder, both Howitt (1904) and Jose (1909) had suggested that the name Wiradjuri is derived from Wirai, or Wirrai which means ‘no’.

The perspectives of the Wiradjuri peoples interviewed for this research in relation to the meaning of Wiradjuri highlighted a number of things. Firstly that the participants presented a range of personal viewpoints on the issue; secondly whilst there were some differences, that there were a number of similarities in the viewpoints; and thirdly, all people were very passionate in responding to the question of the meaning of Wiradjuri. The meaning of Wiradjuri is about “being Wiradjuri and about who we are...our identity as Wiradjuri” stated Colin.
Frank was the only participant however to inform me that he had read literature on the meaning of Wiradjuri. Frank: “And one of the things was that, within all of those language areas, or dialectic differences, there was always a word, or part of the language that was expressed and some of it is in the name. Somewhere I saw written documentation or literature saying that the Wiradjuri people, that we’re the people that say ‘no’. I don’t know exactly why they were called people who say ‘no’ or Wiradjuri, but it must have come from the creator so we don’t question really.”

Ian: “Diversity…very simple…diversity. We were different from others...[had] different beliefs, activities, languages.” Lilly: “Wiradjuri was defined by a number of things such as community and knowledge and family. My father was born in 1893 and he identified as Wiradjuri...His family were Wiradjuri right through... I’m Wiradjuri because of my family being Wiradjuri so that makes me Wiradjuri too. I say I am so I must be.” Pauline: “The laws told us what to do and who we were. The laws told us where to live and how we could live...languages that we spoke and the kinship system that we were given. These things defined us...Wiradjuri were Wiradjuri because the things that were given to us were designed for us...and only us.”

In the context of the meaning of Wiradjuri, the spelling of the word Wiradjuri is also an important issue amongst some of the participants. With many Indigenous clan group names sounding similar, it may have had an impact on how some researchers wrote about specific groups of Indigenous peoples and how traditional Indigenous country, including Wiradjuri country, was defined by some researchers. It is also a distinct possibility that researchers researched the wrong group of peoples. In his interview Frank suggested that there were lasting effects emanating from how the word was spelled. The effects according to Frank
were to be found in the literature, in the writings of those who interpreted or misinterpreted who they were and where they lived. He saw these effects as still being there today. Frank did state that this (spelling), could be useful in that it could point out that those who wrote about his peoples, did so very early on, and this information could be used to argue against those who stated that Wiradjuri were not who they professed to be (see for example Windschuttle, 2003).

Frank: “And down in the southern areas there’s Wiradjuri, it’s a real ‘werr’ sound. And in the north it’s a bit different, out from Condobolin, where I’m from, that’s more of an E-U sound Eur-adjuri (emphasis on first syllable). And so again, that dialectical difference, But certainly, as we move on from this, to the effects that it had and this sort of stuff it becomes a bit clearer in regards to how it affected us today, y’know. Some people may have thought they were researching one group of Wiradjuri, but were really studying some other group and so their research wasn’t really true.”

In defining the meaning of Wiradjuri and in writing about Wiradjuri, some offered their own version of how to spell the word ‘Wiradjuri’. It would appear that a general consensus on the spelling of the word ‘Wiradjuri’ was seemingly a mission impossible for some however. Dulhunty (cited in Science of Man, 1900) spells it ‘Wirrathuri,’ whilst Tibbetts (cited in Science of Man, 1900) spells it ‘Wooratherie.’ There are also other versions offered in the Science of Man Journals between the years 1906 and 1913: ‘Warradgery’; ‘Wooratherie’; ‘Warratherie’; ‘Waratherie; and ‘Woradgery’. MacDonald (1983) and Hosking & McNicol (1993, p. 3) highlight this when they suggested that there were many ways of spelling Wiradjuri (over 50 and 60 respectively).
Nash (1974) also informed readers that there were a number of ways that Wiradjuri is spelled, and in doing so highlights how Gunther adds confusion to the issue. In 1837 the Rev James Gunther spelled it “Wirradurai”, in 1838 “Wirradurri”, in 1840 “Wirradhurri”, and again in 1840 Gunther spells it “Wirradurrei.” In a revised edition of Threkelds 1834 “An Australian Language”, is the Appendix from Rev James Gunther that spells it “Wiradhari” (Nash 1974). Rolfe (1840) spells it ‘Woradgery’; Ridley (1875) ‘Wiradhuri’; Gribble (1882) spells it ‘Waradgery’; and Mathews (cited in Science of Man1898), like Gunther, also confuses the issue even more and proffers two spellings in the same article; ‘Wiradjuri’ and ‘Wiradjura.’

Carroll (1896) “Wooradgery”; Shropshire (1899) “Wooragurie”; Richardson (1899) “Wirradgerry”; Mathews (1900) “Wiradjuri”; Richards (1902) “Wirra’athoorree-Wirrai’yarrai-Wirrach’aree”; Mathews (1904) “Wiradyuri”; Mitchell (1900;1904) “Woradgery”; Baylis (1912) “Waradgery”; and Berndt (1946-8) “Wuradjeri”, all differ in their spellings of the name, highlights Nash (1974). Tindale (1974, p. 129) makes the statement that “No fewer than twenty-six observers between 1846 and the present time have heard the tribal term Wiradjuri”, which is in direct contrast to the statement of Windschuttle (2003) in his Online submission to the review of the National Museum of Australia, that Wiradjuri never existed prior to the 1820’s, as they were ‘named’ as Wiradjuri in the 1890’s. Windschuttle argued that Wiradjuri were not who they professed to be because the name Wiradjuri was given to them by a non-Indigenous person named John Fraser (Windschuttle, 2003). This contemporary reactionary colonial narrative is another representation of Wiradjuri and contributes to the history wars that exist in an Australian context.

Perhaps the thoughts of Rebecca could be used to sum up the participants responses on the meaning of Wiradjuri. Rebecca: “You were Wiradjuri by rights of birth...you were Wiradjuri
because you were born Wiradjuri. You identified as being Wiradjuri and everyone you met knew you as belonging to Wiradjuri...you were respected because you knew who you were.”

Here the responses of the participants join together. All agree that the meaning of Wiradjuri is all about identity. The issue of identity is a common theme throughout this thesis, but is looked at in detail in chapters five, six and seven.

4.4 Wiradjuri - The Peoples

According to Powell & Macdonald (2001) defining Wiradjuri peoples means many things. It is a reference to those people who speak a language they call Wiradjuri; to the country in which those that speak Wiradjuri identify; and is a reference to the peoples themselves. Whyman and Morgan (1981, p. 46) suggested that “The principle unifying force was the common Wiradjuri language.” Read (1983, p. 2) though is a little confusing when he suggested that “Perhaps the most decisive factor imposing a geographic unity upon Wiradjuri was the river system”, but then stated in 1994 that the “chief unifying force was the people themselves” (p. 4).

The peoples who went to make up Wiradjuri were a diverse lot, with many different clan groups as highlighted earlier. Diversity is brought to the attention of readers once again in order to put the following perspectives into context. As the participants came from various parts of Wiradjuri country, one would have expected variations in their responses. For the most part, some variation was noted. In analysing their responses to the question of who were Wiradjuri, a single theme cropped up in every instance; that of Elders.

Allan informed through his interview that there were specific activities that were to be undertaken every day to ensure survival, where survival depended upon the peoples, each
with certain roles within and outside of the immediate community. Allan: “You know this
Yalmambirra…It didn’t matter whether you were male or female, man or women, boy or
girl…[it] didn’t matter what role you had to play, everything was dependant on
education…the elders were our education system. They gave us specialised training; they
were great communicators and had their own specific roles and knowledge. They made all
feel special.”

Deakin (1982, p. 99) commented that “In the daily life in many tribal communities is that
every act, every social contact, and every moment of daily work is wrapped round with
prescriptions handed down in traditions from the spirit beings, and sanctioned by long
observance.” Wiradjuri peoples would have had to rely on their hunting and gathering
abilities with Kimball (1982) suggesting that Wiradjuri divided themselves into groups that
consisted of people who provided the ingredients necessary for survival.

Harris (1991) labelled these groups ‘economies’, that designated various chores or tasks to
different people depending on age and gender, that men hunted the larger animals, some men
were those that fished, collected honey, and carried out the practice of burning country,
whereas women and children collected smaller edibles, ground grain and worked at tasks
associated with basket making and other activities. Allan also spoke of economies and gender
issues.

Allan: “Though some people were artists…some healers…some were tool makers. It didn’t
matter who you were or what you did…taught for the good of all. Things were given and
received. It kind of promoted lifestyles, goals and ambitions…but was for the good of
all…you could say collectively used all for all. All went without or none went without. We
were responsible for each other...no discrimination. That was our law. Women were very strong. First teachers, yeah, the women were our first teachers...they were very vital. Then when it was time, fathers took a distant role, then when it was time, uncles took over the education through initiation...There was men’s and women’s business, places relevant to gender such as health needs, and physical wants.”

Ward (1965); Tucker (1985); Grassby & Hill (1988); and Read (1994) suggested that Wiradjuri comprised family groups which may have contained approximately 20 people, comprising men, their wives, sons and daughters, and those that made up the immediate family including sons wives, and daughters’ husbands; the next larger group (the clan) with approximately 150 people; with the largest of these groups, being referred to by the above authors as ‘tribes’, having approximately 500-1000 members.

In line with Wiradjuri creation beliefs is the way of ‘doing’ things. According to the participants, the creator put in place certain rules and regulations that controlled who did what and with whom; a kinship system. Radcliffe-Brown (1965, p. 53)commented that “A kinship system is in the first place, a system of dyadic relations between person and person in a community, the behaviour of any two persons in any of these relations being regulated in some way, and to a greater or less extent, by social usage.”

Service (1966) suggested that Indigenous communities were fully dependant on their respective kinship systems. Plog et al. (1976, p. 355) stated that “Kinship is an organising principle of every human group; it is simply more important in some than in others.” The prescriptions that are handed down in traditions as suggested by Deakin (1982) indicate that
cultural beliefs and practices were something learned or taught, and is inherent in Wiradjuri kinship systems.

Kinship systems provided a means whereby Wiradjuri knew who they could or could not have relations with. Howitt (1904); Berndt (1947); and Read (1983) state that Wiradjuri had a two moiety matrilineal system, where descent came through the female line. Tucker (1985 p.3) also informs that “family could be traced through the mother, as descent in Wiradgery came from the women; simply, the community was divided into two halves or moieties with each being divided in half, making them two distinct sections of each moiety.” Howitt (1904, p. 106) makes specific mention of the fact that descent and marriage systems of the upper area of Wiradjuri were vastly different to the southern Wiradjuri; indicating diversity.

Some of the participant’s spoke of the kinship system and how this system controlled what one could do and with whom one could do it. It goes without saying then, that kinship played a major role in the lives of Wiradjuri peoples. Brian: “Kinship systems have been the same all the time. Your brothers and your sisters and your aunts and y’ uncles is an extended family and that kinship family shows the pureness of the Aboriginal people, of the Wiradjuri people. They weren’t allowed to marry within family or within family’s family, which is within the system itself.” Karen: “Kinship allowed Wiradjuri to extend our families…make them bigger. But kinship stopped people from doing wrong things…going the wrong way. People had to make sure that they were doing the right way…trouble if not.”

Having kinship laws that governed who one was connected to, or who one could be connected to, is one thing, but who had the power to enforce these kinship laws? McCarthy (1952, p. 327) has commented that “There are of course, no hereditary chiefs in aboriginal
(sic) society, nor does an aristocracy or a kingship exist among them…the position of individual leaders is not inherited generation after generation.”

All the participants were of the view that the Elders were, as the main educators, responsible for enforcing all the rules and regulations that people had to live by, that survival depended on; the ‘law’. The participants, Chelsey, Christopher, Wayne and Benjamin highlight this in their respective interviews. They agreed that a political system was in place at the time of invasion and that this political system was destroyed because non-Indigenous peoples did not ‘see’ it in place. Chelsey: “[and] we had our own political system and though it was not the same as white people’s, it was still a political system.” Christopher said that, “[and] if we didn’t have a political system of some sort, then surely we would not have survived for so long. Those who suggested that we didn’t, had no idea and that Yal was the beginning eh? No political system so let’s take the land.” Wayne said, “Our political system was where and how the Elders governed us, not as bosses or Chiefs or Kings and Queens, but as part of everything and everyone,” with Benjamin adding that, “Our Elders were our politicians, they directed us, taught us, helped us in our survival and they educated us to the point that when they passed into the spirit world, we were prepared to take over and that always happened…at least it did until they came and disrupted everything.”

As the main educators, the Elders passed knowledge on, but this education was not given to just anyone however and it didn’t happen overnight; the time had to be right and the correct procedure had to be followed.

Colin: “The elders were our politicians and our educators. And, when you think about it, it was the most successful one in the world because it was all based on survival… the tutors
and the professors were the elders that were passing on all that information, teaching’, the rest of them how to survive. It was based on survival.” Mary: “All knowledge came from the holders of knowledge…our Elders taught us everything when the time was right for us to learn. This didn’t happen overnight as you know, but came from ceremony…men’s and women’s stuff too…we had to have that knowledge so we didn’t break laws…also needed to know how to survive.”

The views of the participants are reflected in the literature of Hoebel & Frost (1976, p. 148) who stated that “Australian social organisation is dubbed gerontocracy, the rule of the Elders”, where power is allocated so that decisions are made for all. Quintan agreed and said that “Everything was given if you were ready for it…depending on what the Elders decided you would do…what your contribution to family and community would be. Some would be tool-makers and some would be medicine people, or healers, and so they would get the knowledge for that. The knowledge was for our own good…for survival.”

Indigenous groups throughout Australia have any number of ceremonies that take a person from one level of knowledge to another (see for example Lockwood, 1962). Gail and Ian said that the education process was conducted according to different ceremonial practices. This also played a part in how specific roles were designated throughout the family or clan group. Gail: “Passed down at ceremony…knowledge of country and surrounding areas was given at ceremony.” Ian: “Our ways of doing were mostly oral ways…slowly and deliberately taught. Definitely through initiation ceremony.”

Tawney (1947, p. 27) stated that “Society, like the human body, is an organism composed of different members…each member has its own function.” This could also suggest that the rule
of Wiradjuri Elders also extend to the education of the young individuals connected to either clan group or community. Neville Perkins in his contribution to the edited book of Irene Moores (1995) suggested that knowledge was provided to ensure that it would be passed down through the generations. Nellie and Sarah agree that all knowledge was given and then passed on to others. Nellie: “Everything was taught, passed down and taught again” and Sarah: “Everything that mattered to make sure you survived...everything that the Elders taught was to ensure our survival.”

The role of individuals within the family or community group was strictly adhered to. As one advanced through ceremonies, their individual responsibilities would change and so the breaking of roles breached specific rules (law) and would not have been tolerated to a great extent (for an excellent example see Lockwood, 1962).

Wiradjuri country, the kinship systems, and the peoples themselves contribute to being Wiradjuri. But according to many in the world of research, and some outside of it, language was the mainstay of everyday lives. But how did these peoples communicate with each other when Wiradjuri country, described by many as being very large, contained very diverse groups of peoples as noted by the participants? Did they use sign language? Was it because they had kin affiliations in other parts of country? Perhaps the language groups were so different that communicating became a burden on those who attempted it?

4.5 Wiradjuri Languages

Whilst Levi-Strauss (1966, p. 39) wrote of American Indians when stating that “The Navaho Indians divide living creatures into two categories on the basis of whether they are or are not endowed with speech.” By implication the participants are at odds with the scientific theory
of evolution. Frank and Harry for example: Frank: “Our language came from the
Creator...we always spoke Wiradjuri.” Harry: “We had our own languages...unique
languages.”

Wiradjuri languages have been documented from the early stages of invasion and contact.
The likes of Hale (1846); Ridley (1875); Gribble (1882); Threlkeld (1892); Hill & Thornton (1892); (Mathews 1897; 1900); Mitchell (1900); Illustrated Australian Encyclopedia (1925); See (1965); Ramson (1966); Nash (1974); Ellis (1982); Read (1983); White (1986); Hosking & McNicol (1993); Henderson & Nash (2002); and Holmer (n.d.) are just a few examples of researchers from various disciplines that have included in their respective works, whole sections, or have made at least, passing mention of Wiradjuri language, or languages.

Some of the participants in responding to the issues of languages mention a ‘core’ language. From this core, according to the participants, different dialects emanated and by some means, spread throughout Wiradjuri country. Brian: “Wiradjuri people had one core language, and 60-odd dialects. But it’s not the core of culture.” Allan: “Because of the separation of, the core in the first place. Aboriginal people- or Wiradjuri, people had a core. They would be able to communicate fairly well because of the core language itself. All the dialects are made up of that core language. But one word used in one area may be different than used in another area. I’ll give you an example. Warki meaning ghost or spirit. In another area, Warki, meaning water. Both Wiradjuri ... and the core language, Warki used also means spirit. As in Biyaami, our creator spirit. So you had that, and it means the same thing, and water, being flowing, ever flowing, is part of the spirit. So it all interlinks, y’know, so ... Yes, people would, from the north, understand the south.”
Wolcott (1991) reasoned that each human action or reaction regarding language is different from another, that whilst humans change their way of speaking to fit the circumstances, they can be proficient in a number of dialects. Jackson-Nakano (2001) commented that it wasn’t out of the ordinary for Indigenous people to have a number of identities, and that they arose out of believed links to different communities.

Ah See (2003) informs readers that languages belonged to individual groups or communities of people who were considered the custodians for that language, and that different dialects existed in relation to the north and south of Wiradjuri country as a result of ‘acquiring’ words from other groups, or communities.

The responses of the participants did not specifically refer to the issue regarding the acquisition of words from others. One could however ‘read between the lines’ and see that there is an implication or a connection between the core language as suggested and the different and various dialects that the participants imply were in place within Wiradjuri country. Frank speaks Wiradjuri languages as highlighted in the section on ‘Cultures’. However Frank’s response indicates that he has read historical writings on the subject of languages. He appears to put the writings and the information from the Elders into a sort of mixing bowl, stirs it up and then decides what he wants to believe and what he does not.

Frank: “Yeah, again there’s information that I’ll have will definitely be influenced by stuff that I’ve read, which is gunna sort of link back to the archaeologists and those that’ve done the studies and written the literature. And then you’ve got stories and stuff that you hear. That’s been sort of passed on from people, elders. So somewhere within those two you gotta make a common ground, a decision. But with- even with the language book that we’ve got
now, the recent sort of release with Wiradjuri labels which is quite extensive, we see the dialectical differences.”

The ability to communicate effectively facilitated the movement of Wiradjuri through their own respective areas of Wiradjuri country. In contributing to the examination of Wiradjuri communication was Curr (1886 cited in White, 1986, p. 102) who wrote: “The Wiiratheri language…is remarkable for the number of tribes by which it is spoken and the large areas of country throughout which it prevails. Though there are differences in the vocabulary of every [Wiradjuri] tribe, we know that they are not so great as to interrupt or even impede conversation…communication was easy…” If as Curr (1886) suggested that ‘communication was easy’, then it stands to reason that each and every clan group of Wiradjuri had their own distinct dialect as pointed out by Hill & Thornton (1892, p. 5) and Frazer (1910, p. 405).

Mathews (1900, p. 88) stated that “throughout the immense territory the language spoken is substantially the same; in the northern half of the nation the name is pronounced Wiradthuri, and in the southern Wiradjuri.” In his personal diary, the Rev J. B. Gribble writes: January) 2nd Holiday. Wrote several letters. And a little Waradjery (Gribble, 1882) but does not mention from what part of Wiradjuri country he was in at the time.

Whilst the historical record indicates that documentation of Wiradjuri languages came from many sources, it also highlights that documentation of languages was undertaken for any number of reasons. Heaton (1879) commented that Gunther’s compilation of Wiradjuri languages had been sent to the Imperial Government Hill. Fraser (1892) acknowledged the existence of Wiradjuri languages by stating that in 1837, Gunther began working amongst Wiradhari in the area known as Wellington Valley, while a’Beckett (1925), in looking at the
issue of Wiradjuri languages, mentions that sections of Christian writings such as St Luke’s Gospel, and part of the Church of England Liturgy were translated into Wiradhuri by Gunther.

Ross (1912) commented that a Mr John Francis Huon Mitchell had undertaken a compilation of Woradgery language in the 1840’s, so he could communicate with them and whilst it was noted by Ross that Mitchell was a person deemed to be trusting and experienced in relation to Indigenous languages, Mitchell had sent a letter to Ross in which he wrote that he wasn’t happy with his work on languages and therefore his compilation of words related to Woradgery, or Weri- Weri dialect, he did not think was good enough to be published.

Grant & Rudder (2000, p. 5) in their work on Wiradjuri languages also highlight that there were various reasons for some to examine Wiradjuri languages. In utilising some historical writings, they comment that “work by Richards was published in 1902; Gunther’s work recorded in 1837 remained as hand-written notebooks until 1892 when it was published by a John Fraser as an appendix to a volume by Threkeld on the Awabakal language; and Hale’s work was published in 1846 as part of his work on analysing the languages of the Pacific, and which included a comparison between Gamilaraay and Wiradjuri.”

Grant and Rudder’s 2005 work on Wiradjuri languages is one of the dictionaries that Frank had spoken about earlier. It would appear that those researching Wiradjuri and by association Wiradjuri languages, would have had a tough time of it however.

According to an approximation given by Coe (1989) and McDonald (n.d.) when they looked at local histories of Wiradjuri, around 12,000 people spoke Wiradjuri at the time of contact.
between Wiradjuri and Europeans. But there seemed to be a problem in the examination of Wiradjuri languages. MacDonald (1983) implied that not all researchers agreed as to who spoke, or didn’t speak Wiradjuri, or even where the language or languages were spoken, geographically speaking. According to MacDonald (1983, p. 5) “writers do not necessarily indicate whether they know the traits they describe to be generalizable or even where in this vast area the group of whom they speak is located.”

The art of communication therefore must have been of the utmost importance amongst groups and communities that differed in a number of cultural characteristics. However with such a large tract of land occupied by Wiradjuri, and keeping in mind the comments of Coe (1989) and McDonald (n.d.) above, it would appear according to many of the participants, that there would have been a number of similarities between groups and communities, but at the same time separate cultures would have existed side by side.

**4.6 Wiradjuri Cultures**

With so many different perspectives on where Wiradjuri came from; who Wiradjuri are; and the various differences and similarities between clan groups; and in the context of this section of this chapter, it is important that a discussion of cultures in relation to Wiradjuri be included.

Many early settlers, anthropologists, archaeologists, and other researchers have indicated in their respective works, that they had undertaken research on cultures that could only be gathered after spending years in the field. In examining cultures, John Oxley (1820), Surveyor General and Lieutenant of the Royal Navy, kept journals of two expeditions into the interior of NSW undertaken in the years 1817-1818; John Fraser (1892 cited in Threlkeld
1892) researched numerous traditional activities of Indigenous peoples of NSW; R H Mathews (1897; 1900), a licensed surveyor researched the traditional initiation ceremonies of Wiradjuri; J F H Mitchell (1900) spent many years compiling information in relation to Wiradjuri languages, customs and ceremonies; R Berndt (1947) examined Wiradjuri magic and clever men; J B Birdsell (1957) examined the influence of environmental and cultural factors on the structure of Indigenous societies; Lindsay Black (1944), a member of the Anthropological Society of NSW began his research on the customs of Wiradjuri peoples by looking at the issue of burial trees; and A P Elkin (1938), Professor of Anthropology, conducted research that examined, amongst other issues, Wiradjuri ‘journeys’ designed around the attainment of knowledge.

Some Wiradjuri peoples interviewed for this paper held similar views to each other on what cultures were pre-invasion times. Brian’s response indicated that the family was culture; family was everything. Brian: “To me, and what I believe culture to be, is the teaching of ... our ways and means of life, how and why we hunt. How and why we gather. How and why we live. That’s what culture is. It encompasses the whole life expectancy. That includes food processing, medicines and the teaching of it to the young ones, teach it again as they get older, and to carry on with the traditions...mainly a family thing.”

Whilst many groups of people went to make up the Wiradjuri nation, with many differences and many similarities, not all researchers agreed in their opinions about Wiradjuri cultures. Brennan (1981, p. 4) named specific areas when suggesting that inside Wiradjuri boundaries “there were important differences between people from different areas. The people of the Lachlan valley, for instance, may have seen themselves as distinct from the people of the Macquarie, ‘Kuta-mundra’ separate from the ‘Narrandera’.” Masman & Johnstone (2000)
suggested that similarities could have included the way initiation ceremonies were conducted, descent systems, and burial activities. Tindale and George (1979, p. 16) comment that “The daily lives, the customs and beliefs of each of the tribes were different, but there were similarities.”

Charlesworth (1998) cited R. M. Berndt’s comment that “It is well to remember that, traditionally, Aboriginal culture was not the same throughout the continent” (p. 26). Gail suggested that cultures in the ‘old days’ would have had some similarities and some difference with other groups both within Wiradjuri country and with other Indigenous peoples. She also suggested that lifestyles were not always easy or simple; it would have been a hard life. Gail: “Our culture was determined by a number of factors...different things to different people. Our ways of doing were the same in some parts...[but] not in others. This was because of the environment...different in one part of our land from another part of our land...[our] upbringing was very difficult to say the least.”

McDermott & Varenne (1995, p. 326) add that “The coherence of any culture is not given by members being the same, nor by members knowing the same things...instead, the coherence of a culture is crafted from the partial and mutually dependant knowledge of each person...on the work they do together.” Colin reckoned that culture was based on survival through the process of education, but also suggested that employment was connected to culture. Colin: “But I often look back to pre-invasion days and think about how it was. We had the most successful education system in the world. Because it was based on survival. If our mob didn’t learn they perished. So, I think, because it was based on survival, that’s one of the most successful education systems in the world. The other thing is with employment, pre-invasion, everybody in the community was employed. Again, if they didn’t do their tasks, y’know we’d
perish. Everybody had a job to do. Right down to the kids. So everybody was employed. But employed based on survival.”

Whilst Williams (1981) may have produced the understatement of that year in commenting that culture is a term that could be considered very complex, some participants thought otherwise. Ian and Jack considered cultures to be very simple and responded accordingly. Ian: “People together…brought up through time. Passed on through generations…who you are.” Jack: “Your part in life. How you interact with the environment, ceremonies…your part of the jigsaw puzzle...place in the world. It’s a European term, label...just life to us!”

Then there are other research participants who could not provide any examples of what Wiradjuri cultures may have been like pre-invasion. They suggested that this was because they had not been taught this and certainly had not experienced them. Some however have taken steps to rectify the issue. William: “Have never been taught about Wiradjuri cultures…not passed down to me. Circumstances stopped me getting all the knowledge...I was brought up white, not knowing Wiradjuri even existed...found out from my brothers later in life. My knowledge was stunted in this regard. I lived in a white house...brought up white. But I am learning all the time.” Karen: “No!...never been taught...wished I had been! The Elders are slowly teaching me now so that I can learn and then speak about such things.”

The responses of participants such as William and Karen raise some important points. Should those who are not Wiradjuri talk to William and Karen, for example, and ask questions on Wiradjuri cultures and be given the same information as noted here, then one could assume that Wiradjuri cultures were either lost or fading away. The repercussions of this can be located in the issue of Native Title for example as examined in later pages.
Regardless of whether or not the participants knew a lot or a little of Wiradjuri cultures, they agreed that culture could not have remained unchanging because according to the responses of the participants, if Wiradjuri cultures did not change, then the cultures would have died.

4.7 Cultural Adaptation and Change

According to the research participants, Wiradjuri cultures were not static. They were dynamic and changed and adapted whenever the need arose. Changes were sometimes forced upon the peoples and at other times, change occurred because the peoples needed change. Wiradjuri, according to the participants, adapted to a number of things, over the entire course of their being and this happened according to the changes around them at the time. In the opinion of Ferraro et al (1994) though, it matters not how fast a culture changes, it goes without saying that they do. It was suggested by Ember & Ember (1973, p. 332) that “it is only when society accepts an invention and uses it regularly that we can begin to speak of cultural change.”

Oswalt (1970) suggested that the isolation of Indigenous peoples, geographically speaking, helped in the survival of their respective cultures, their cultures stayed at a level that was fairly constant. But perhaps there were times and instances where Wiradjuri, or other Indigenous peoples rejected change outright; it didn’t fit into their way of being (Sharp, 1974).

The participants were asked a number of questions related to the issue of cultural change and adaptation. Their responses were very similar; they saw cultural change and adaptation as being central to the survival of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures. According to the participants, had Wiradjuri remained static and not changed or adapted to the demands that are placed on everyday life, then Wiradjuri would have perished many years ago.
Allan: “Definitely…yeah of course. We had to be Yal. We manipulated Mother Earth for our own survival. The country changes, nothing is static Yalmambirra…there is movement everywhere. Those who say we did not change or adapt…so called educated people are the opposite-uneducated.” Brian’s perspective is the same as Allan’s, but Brian added further thoughts and brought traditional lore and law into his response.

Brian: “Even pre-invasion, we have an adaptive culture; adapted to everything that’s come along. Adapted from the huge tools and weapons to the smaller tools and weapons out of necessity. We adapted to the land, and the land actually adapted to the land itself – as in the bushes and trees and things like that. Adapted to the change of climate. We’re an adaptive people. Now, we didn’t borrow, we traded for things that would assist us. The commodity was the stone, the boomerang, in one instance you might say that the didgeridoo…it never belonged to us – we traded for that. And it became part of our culture and part of our law. And, again, being adaptive to what’s around us, and what other people have and how we used it, and why we used it, to better ourselves. We weren’t stagnant. We were always on the move, and always looking for new things to do.”

When Gail was interviewed and asked the questions related to change and adaptation, her response took into account a number of issues. Gail: “Our traditional cultures evolved and changed when they had to. Changes were different in different areas though. We are not an homogenous peoples, we had different beliefs, outlooks and attitudes, environments etc…changes were different depending on those factors. With a semi-nomadic way of life …movement through country, we had to adapt.” Harry saw change and adaptation as playing a major role in Wiradjuri culture. Harry: “Definitely! A big part of our culture came from
change and adaptation. Of course they did! We lived in different landscapes, environments…different flora and fauna…Yes; definitely…we were experts at it.”

The ‘isolation’ that Oswalt (1970) mentioned was broken down by invasion, with Wiradjuri peoples and cultures then exposed to colonialism. With colonisation came representation and the stealing of identity as highlighted by the Wiradjuri research participants. Subsequently the subjugation of peoples and cultures (both physical and political) followed, and with it the ongoing belief held by many that if cultures changed then cultures were no longer authentic, or valid, in contemporary Australia as highlighted by Smith (1999) and Denzin and Lincoln (2008).

This chapter has highlighted through the different responses that peoples and cultures have adapted, and therefore still exist. This is contradictory to the arguments of some who are engaged in the contemporary public discourse in order to push their respective political barrows as highlighted in later chapters.

Cultural ways of being, pre-invasion, were lifestyles that had emanated from creators and were continuous, generation upon generation as highlighted by the research participants. Though lifestyles were continuous, the changes and/or adaptations happened according to environmental and technological requirements of the times. Adjusting to these changes and/or adaptations ensured the longevity of Wiradjuri peoples. But changes were about to happen that would impact on Wiradjuri peoples lifestyles that would take many, if not all of them, to the very edge of existence; to the brink of cultural obscurity.
CHAPTER FIVE: IMPACTS OF INVASION

5. Introduction

“The maintenance of family and group cohesion, especially in the conditions of most of the simpler societies, is of basic importance to everybody…threatening the cohesiveness threatens the very social order itself, and with it the security and even the survival of the members of the society” Beattie (1966, p. 127).

In the year 1768, Lieutenant James Cook left England with orders to find friendly ground with Indigenous people with the intention of setting up trade links (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000). He was directed to do so without taking possession of any land if the Indigenous peoples did not agree to be a consenting party to it (NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 2005), or as the Australian Museum (2004) had earlier stated, if Cook was to find that the land was uninhabited, then he was to take possession of it for the King. Only two years later, Cook took possession of Indigenous lands on the east coast of Australia; Australia was to become known as “terra nullius” (empty land) (NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 2005, p. 1) or as defined by the NSW Department of Education and Training (n.d.) “land belonging to no one.”

The line of thought taken by the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs (2005) differs from that of Garton (1989). In discussing ‘Aboriginal history’ Garton (1989, p. 189) stated in his first sentence that “In 1788 Arthur Phillip claimed the continent of Australia as a British possession” (emphasis added). Abdul (1996) and the Commonwealth of Australia (2000) both confirm the statement by Elkin (1951, p. 62) who stated that “Governor Phillip, who directed the first settlement in Australia from 1788-92, was instructed to conciliate the
affections of the Aborigines, to enjoin all the settlers (“our subjects”) “to live in amity and kindness with them.” Whilst good intentions may have been the aim of the instructions given to either Phillip or Cook, the literature, and history, shows that eventually, instructions were ignored.

Phillip’s (according to Garton 1989), or Cook’s (according to the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 2005) action of taking ‘possession’ under the guise of ‘terra nullius’ and later, the successful (though not recognised as legal) attempt by a settler called Batman to acquire land through a ‘treaty’, instigated a reaction many years later by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Richard Bourke that effectively made Indigenous peoples, trespassers on their own lands (Attwood, 2009).

Colonisation meant that eventually the very lives of Indigenous peoples would be controlled by a more ‘dominant’ people, however in the early years, colonisation would come to mean the “summary liquidation of Indigenous peoples” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). Wolfe stated further that the elimination of Indigenous peoples was not just an event, it was ‘structural’, and was not a one off occurrence. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to provide some insight into the reasons behind the different colonial mentalities of that time that witnessed Wiradjuri peoples and cultures brought to the edge of extinction. According to Hinkson (2012, p. 1) “Settler colonialism as a practice is a subset of colonial history, one where the colonial relationship converts into a very specific cultural practice. It is where the ‘settler culture’ seeks a permanent place in the colonial setting and, as such, enters an unrelenting cultural logic of misrecognition and blindness towards the cultural other, issuing in acts of objective cruelty and cultural destruction.”
Macdonald (1983) and Gammage (1983; 1986) have written that since that day in 1788, the impacts in numbers cannot be counted, simply because the acts of invasion were far too many. Far too many to include the details of every act or every instance where Wiradjuri peoples were impacted upon. Dispossession of land and the devastating effects of introduced diseases (Pilger, 1989; Reynolds, 1982); loss of traditional food resources (Elder, 1988); destruction of secret and sacred sites (Webber, 2000); the ability to undertake spiritually connected ceremony, to speak language and the forced removal of children from parents and family (Edwards and Read, 1989); the forced habitation of missions and reserves and the specific activities that were inherent in trying to convert Wiradjuri peoples to Christianity (Maddison, 2009), are just a few examples of the effects that invasion had upon Wiradjuri peoples and their respective parts of country.

What should also be taken into consideration are the words of Mercer (1975, p. 313) who wrote that “During the era which began with the arrival of the very first boat-load of convicts from England, the white man shot down the black, took his land, poisoned him, set down steel traps to ensnare him so that he might more easily be clubbed to death, wiped out his source of food and water, and mounted raids upon his tribes-and of course, took his women.”

The impacts of invasion didn’t happen at the same time though. Some people were at the coalface for many years before others were impacted upon. Wiradjuri were an example of this. They never had to deal, in an outright manner, with invasion until around the early 1800s (Elder, 1988).

This chapter, as the one before it, brings the historical published narratives and the contemporary decolonising narrative of the research participants together. It is envisaged that
by doing so, one may get a better understanding of what occurred during the invasion of this country, what happened and when and how the events of the past impacted upon Indigenous peoples and cultures.

5.1 Impacts of Invasion

On 18 January 1788, the First Fleet of British convicts and settlers arrived in Botany Bay. This occurrence marked the day that Indigenous Australia was invaded (NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, 2004). This act of invasion would impact on Indigenous peoples not long after, and all that Indigenous peoples had enjoyed would be destroyed (Lloyd, 1990). Kelton (n.d.) wrote that according to many narratives, there were viewpoints that showed the mentality of the times, where Indigenous peoples were not regarded as human, that they were treated as ‘noxious animals,’ and that this occurred soon after settlement.

Spencer & Gillen (1927, p. 3) stated that “Australia is the present home and refuge of creatures, often crude and quaint, that have elsewhere passed away and given place to higher forms…this applies equally to the aborigine as to the platypus and kangaroo.” Oliver (1964, p. 64) wrote that “Indigenous Australians were considered to be living fossils” with McKern & McKern (1969) adding that some Australian groups, were still living culturally in the Palaeolithic simply because of their association with stone tool technology, whilst Fagan (1983, p. 162) in a narrative of human history, informs that “The Australian aborigines (sic) encountered by Captain Cook and other early explorers were still living in the Stone Age.” According to Pelto (1965, pp. 19-20) “L H Morgan (1818-1881), considered to be the founding father of American anthropology, developed a table of ‘Stages of Evolution’ in which the Australian aborigines, defined as ‘Middle Savagery’ were placed second from
the bottom, in front of only those of the ‘Lower Savagery’ for which Morgan has no known examples.” Gillen (1899, p. 100) had much earlier provided the opinion that “of all the races of mankind the Australian black was the lowest in human intelligence.”

In the opinion of Pearson (1974, p. 312) “The nineteenth and early twentieth-century evolutionists like Tylor, Morgan, and Spencer tended to represent all societies as climbing the same evolutionary ladder, some having achieved a higher rung on this ladder than others…European society was conceived as being the highest on this ladder, and other societies were portrayed as representing lower levels of social and cultural progress.”

The NSW Department of Education (1985, p. 3) commented that: “much of the early documentation on Aborigines and attitudes towards them was based on evolutionary theory in its unilineal formulation…development was seen as a straight upward climb from savagery to civilisation…European civilisation stood at the summit of this development, Aborigines at the bottom…from this viewpoint aborigines (sic) appear as culturally and technologically inferior, incapable of innovation, culturally static and defective in political and social organisation…Indications of their attitudes may be found in the use of such terms as ‘primitive’ ‘heathens’ ‘savages’ ‘stone age people’ ‘Palaeolithic survivals’ ‘pagans’ etc.”

The activities that non-Indigenous people undertook in relation to how they interacted, or not, with Indigenous peoples, brought about by invasion, have been defined as ‘genocide’. Colin Tatz (1999) stated that genocide is linked to the ‘physical and social decimation of Indigenous peoples, can be undertaken via introduced disease/s, the killing of peoples, the forced assimilation, and the forcible removal of children from one group/place to another’.

The Speak soft, Speak sure website (2005a) defines genocide as ‘ethnic cleansing’ and
informs readers that killing of a peoples and forced removal of peoples, and the placement of them in an alien area, are forms of genocide. Ann Curthoys (2006, p. 9) contends that there is a “debate over whether the dispossession and large scale loss of life of indigenous (sic) peoples in the course of settlement could accurately be described as genocide.”

Whilst Curthoys does not take a stand either way she has however provided a look at who argues for and against the term genocide and whether it is applicable to the Australian situation. As Curthoys explains, the likes of people such as historians Henry Reynolds and Lyndall Ryan use the term genocide in situations that occurred on the Australian mainland, but do not apply the same term to what had occurred in Tasmania. There are those as Curthoys further explains that do not agree with the term genocide being applied either on the mainland or Tasmania. Bain Attwood and Keith Windschuttle are opponents of the term genocide with both stating that the term is completely inappropriate to what has occurred in Australia. Wolfe (2006) argues that whilst settler colonialism is founded on elimination, it is not really genocidal. The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2002) stated that the removal of Indigenous children was a ploy to eliminate Indigenous peoples and cultures, thus it was genocidal. It should be noted here that following a 1915 Amendment to child removal processes, one third of the state’s removals were Wiradjuri children (Read, 1996).

The majority of research participants made mention of Cook when providing perspectives on the impacts of invasion. The participants, Jason, William and Laura clearly think that Cook was the cause of all the impacts that would befall Wiradjuri peoples, simple because he was the ‘boss’. Jason took the view that “When Captain Cook landed here and took our lands away, then everything that followed...well he should take the blame, because he was the one
with the power, the power to stop everything at that moment.” William’s thoughts were also of the same vein, but he added that “If Cook had done everything the correct way...followed his leader (the King) and done everything right...well, everything would have been much different and our people and cultures would not have suffered.” Laura expressed her thoughts by suggesting ... “and he (Cook) took everything away when he came here...I know he was wrong because look what has happened to us, so why didn’t he leave us to be, to stay like we were...my ancestors are still angry and so am I and so are my peoples, Wiradjuri peoples.”

Samantha stated during her interview that the impacts of invasion on “Wiradjuri people was...disbandment of culture, disbandment of people, disbandment of spiritual nature through genocide”, with Louise and Jacob adding that “Everything that happened to Wiradjuri happened because they took our lands away from us...we were friendly with them (Louise)... but greed came into their minds and they didn’t see us and that was nearly the beginning of the end of us as peoples and cultures” (Jacob).

However, invasion cannot be determined by looking at any one specific event or conflict, it was carried out over decades as settlement moved in ever increasing distances across Indigenous countries (NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, 2004). Salisbury & Gresser (1971) and McNicol & Hosking (1994) give the year of first contact between Europeans and Wiradjuri as being 1813. Jessica, whilst mirroring the thoughts of Louise stated that “Early days, there was a peace between Wiradjuri and the others” also offered more. “As many of my people believe [and] my Elders have told me so, that when the settlers came into our country they stole everything we had...land taken away, good food taken away, sites where we women would conduct business was destroyed [and] raped and murdered
simply because they didn’t see or hear us...we were animals to do with what they wanted...shot us and hurt us like nobody has been before.”

According to Ellis (1994) however, the arrival of Europeans into Wiradjuri country was in the 1830s, and within fifty years, only around one-third the number of Wiradjuri were still alive. Moore & Williams (2001) state that settler after settler killed Wiradjuri peoples even though no offences had been committed. This ‘wave’ of people came into Wiradjuri country and destroyed nearly all that was Wiradjuri (McDonald, n.d.).

The genocidal practices undertaken on Wiradjuri emanated from the thoughts of early settlers and the like. Genocide was not a one-off event however. Genocide was gradual and came in the form of different mentalities, different orders, different levels of reason, different sizes, different ways of undertaking, and different results (Tatz, 1999). Wiradjuri and other Indigenous peoples were not considered human and therefore the taking of land from them for example, was not seen as a crime. However in the early period of invasion, only a small amount of Indigenous peoples had been dispossessed from their lands.

5.2 Land-Theft and Resistance

Reynolds (1992, p. 12) informs readers that according to the viewpoint of European powers, a country such as Australia could be annexed if it were “without political organisation, recognisable systems of authority or legal codes”, therefore “The doctrine underlying the traditional view of settlement was that before 1788 Australia was terra nullius, a land belonging to no-one.” Roberts (1981, pp. 4-5) includes information on housing and fishing industries developed by Indigenous peoples, therefore in the opinion of Reynolds (1992, p. 19), the commonly held view by settlers and government officials that Indigenous peoples did
not have any rights to their lands because they did not farm their lands, could not be justified ‘by law or by common sense’.

But what was the mentality behind this dispossession of peoples from their lands? In the opinion of Elder (1998, p. 2) “These were people driven by profit and loss. For them the land was nothing more than a commodity to be bought, exploited and sold. Land was the basis of wealth. Wealth was measured in terms of property. And property was sacrosanct.” Broome (2002, p. 40) also stated that “Europeans saw it economically, as a commodity to be taken, exploited, bought and sold.” Fox (1978, p. 44) though had earlier suggested that expansion of the wool industry, developing rapidly, saw a need for more and more Indigenous lands; “by 1821 wool was being exported to England; by the 1830s there was a large scale British investment in Australian wool.”

The comments by Fox (1978) point to the fact that Wiradjuri country was more important to the invader than were Wiradjuri peoples; the impacts to peoples therefore were never a consideration. Bell & Ditton (1980) in also suggesting that the land was more important than people, stated that the Europeans had no understanding of the land and that cattle for example caused huge impacts to it (the land).

When it came to people however, a problem arose that had to be dealt with if the cattle and sheep industries were to expand even further. Cowlishaw (1988, p. 5) suggested that “the success of dispossession depended on the removal, by one means or another, of the contenders for ownership of the land.” The mentality behind dispossession could be located in the comments by Windeyer (c. 1842) who suggested that ‘setting up various colonies
would bring to the island (now called Australia) civilisation along with Christianity where now it was just a track over which a few savages wandered’.

In John’s opinion the taking of lands meant more than just the loss of traditional country. The loss of traditional country also meant that certain activities could not be undertaken and certain rules and regulations given by the Elders could not be provided, nor followed. John suggested that...[the] “beginning of the end of our learning system, our education system and loss of identity, y’know loss of bloody traditional practices, coming under their control and with that y’know, loss of dignity, loss of pride I suppose...[with] a lot of Elderly males, because, y’know, they went from being leaders of their own communities to being told what they can or can’t do in a white run society, so you lose a hell of a lot more, y’know. I think that’s one of the things that I often think about, was, our men in those days were powerful. Providers of our education...but, then with the arrival of the white man, the loss of all that, y’know. And that’s probably the comment that I wanted to make is the loss of identity and the loss of control of our own destiny, that...yeah.” John raises the issue of ‘autonomy’; the loss of identity and the right to make their own decisions and draw their own conclusion had been taken away from them.

Throughout the interview process Madeliene and Evelyn would always draw on personal experiences to illustrate their responses. Here too they remembered some of the Elders that told stories about the past in regards to the loss of land. Madeliene said that “It was very, very hard and there was a very big meeting of all the men where they decided they would hold no more ceremonies because they felt the land had been contaminated and not theirs any more...[very old] Wiradjuri man told me that long time ago!” Evelyn remembered the last big meeting on country took place as “down around the Lachlan River area and that’s
where all the men travelled to, at that time. I think that [name deleted] would have been one of the last, wasn’t he?” Madeliene continued with “yeah, from Narrandera, the old fella, he’s gone now, but he was the last... he was the last man that remembered all this, y’know. And he went to that meeting.” Evelyn mentioned that this man was a scarred man “…and wasn’t he a scarred man too...yeah, yeah, he was a high man, very scarred, well respected... lots of knowledge that one.” Madeliene and Evelyn’s reflections imply that some knowledge of peoples, country and cultures may have been lost with the passing of this most knowledgeable Wiradjuri man.

According to Curr (1886, pp. 100-6) Europeans, in the main, did not consider the possession of land by Indigenous peoples as being a ‘proper occupation’. But what of the government laws of the time? Were they stringent enough to prevent ‘removal’ of Indigenous peoples from their lands? Or did the governments of the time sanction dispossession? According to Lippmann (1981, p. 17), “As the settlers spread out from the centres of administration, government control lessened and law and order was impossible to maintain.”

It would appear then that there was no hard and fast rule that had to be followed. Each settler or squatter had their own way of dealing with the issue of ‘removal’. Each settler or squatter had their own way of dealing with the issue of removal as pointed out by Lang (1865) who stated when white men move forward and settle into new surroundings, every white person in his own area, deals with Indigenous peoples in his own way.

West (1852) suggested that the rights of Indigenous peoples to have so much land when only a few of them exist, should not be allowed to continue as there are now many, many people
ever reliant on the land...the Indigenous peoples must be controlled because they cannot understand our laws.

Wiradjuri reactions to ‘removal’ were not of those from the sidelines however. They fought for what was theirs by rights of birth, their traditional secret and sacred places, and fought for their lives (Willmot, 1987; Elder, 1998). They did not meekly surrender their cultures, nor did they give away their lands as could be perceived when reading the comments of Greir & Cobbs (1972, pp. 1-2) that “Blacks have found it often prudent and lifesaving to assume a completely passive posture in the face of overwhelming odds…passivity was thus an adaptive device of lifesaving importance.”

Multicultural Life (1998), Patterson & Hennessy (1999), the Australian Museum (2004), the NSWALC (2004), and the NSW Department of Education and Training (n.d.), provide different perspectives that vary in detail, years covered, and resources used, in relation to the history of contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Whilst they may have different points to make, what they do have in common however is that they all discuss the issues of resistance and conflict.

Multicultural Life (1998) informs readers that there were armed conflicts over land issues between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people over a period of many years. Patterson & Hennessy (1999) state that there is strong evidence that a long and hard-fought type of warfare existed in Australia that included tactics that were devised to ‘humiliate and demoralise’ the enemy. The Australian Museum (2004) examined the period 1800 – 1900 and in so doing, opined that resistance and conflict between Indigenous people and the invaders began very quickly.
The NSWALC (2004) viewpoint is that the first Indigenous resistance fighter was named Pemulwuy, and it was he that led armed groups of Indigenous people against the Europeans in 1797 even though he and his son Tedbury had been conducting an ongoing guerrilla campaign since 1790. The NSW Department of Education and Training (n.d.) suggest that the Wiradjuri resistance fighter, Windradyne, became the most prominent catalyst for the declaration of martial law in the Blue Mountains area of NSW.

When Joseph was asked to provide some thought on land theft and resistance to such, he commented in a very powerful way that it was obvious that both happened and that both had different impacts on Wiradjuri peoples and cultures. Joseph said “[and] when they seen our country they decided that it was very good land and then they simply decided to take it away...what they didn’t realise however was that we would not let go of country without one hell of a fight! We are very strong and determined peoples and they didn’t take that into account and thought they would just get rid of us and the country would be theirs...Ha! You see, we had some very great men, great warriors that the people would listen to and the best one was Windradyne, he was the best of them all and he caused a lot of trouble for the white people, but sadly it all went wrong because we didn’t have enough warriors and didn’t have weapons that could match the white ones...or else we would have won!”

The thoughts of Joseph and Georgina were alike, but whilst the latter told her story in a much softer voice than that of Joseph, one could ‘feel’ the strength behind her words. Georgina stated that “despite the history that had been written by white men, we did fight for our country and our way of life. Our Elders told our men that people would take our country away from us and that this could not be allowed to happen...The Elders knew because they
knew what was happening in Sydney and what had happened to that Pemulwuy fella’ and so they were prepared to fight with all they had.”

In his interview, when asked for his perspective on land and resistance, Shaun was very straight to the point in commenting that “the taking of our lands came down to one thing, greed! They were greedy bastards, simple as that...[they] wanted land and greed was their motivation...the land is our mother, our source of life and our sanctuary...the land is ours and when we looked after it, it looked after us...see, a healthy land meant healthy people but in they came and destroyed our mother by raping and pillaging and giving nothing in return...bad time then, very bad times.”

van der Berghe (1983, p. 242) looked to the earlier years of invasion in suggesting that “Indigenous peoples were principally competitors for land; best removed, pushed back, deported, or even exterminated” however, where this proved advantageous for the invaders it was simply disastrous for Wiradjuri.

5.3 Murder and Massacre

As pointed out by many of the participants, Windradyne, a Wiradjuri resistance fighter has become famous for his resistance to invasion of his peoples country which was Bathurst in NSW. Glessos (n.d.) stated that Windradyne was captured in 1822, then when he was released, led a group of his people in an act of revenge. This resulted in seven non-Indigenous men being killed; the catalyst for martial law in the Bathurst area. The local constabulary, along with army personnel and settlers now had the solid support of government to kill every Wiradjuri or other Indigenous person they could locate. Glessos (n.d.) added that James Morisset, the commandant at Bathurst directed soldiers to undertake ‘search and kill’
activities where without warning and without taking prisoners, men, women and children were killed. Grassby & Hill (1998) inform readers of the following:

“On the 18th September soldiers left from Bathurst after activities that ended in the decimation of Wiradjuri people; an ‘exterminating war’ had finished. For ten days the Wiradjuri people were murdered and massacred and driven from their secret and sacred campsites. The soldiers surrounded Wiradjuri and time after time shot whole groups of them, forcing them in some instances, into ravines and gorges, there to be cut down. On the 28th of September the soldiers returned to the Bathurst area, where Morisset toasted their victory. The next day began a two month campaign of murder and massacre of Wiradjuri. The end result of these atrocities was that Wiradjuri lost approximately ‘1000’ men, women and children. Windradyne saw the futility of war and took his people to Parramatta in his gesture of peace in December of the year 1824” (Grassby & Hill, 1998).

The war that had taken place in the Bathurst area of Wiradjuri country was recorded by The Sydney Gazette (1824). They wrote that “While Bathurst with its surrounding vicinity is engaged in an exterminating war, peace reigns around the ever verdant valley of Wellington.” The choice of the words “an exterminating war” in this article is worth noting here as it implies that the government of the day had endorsed the use of murder and massacre as a way of getting rid of Wiradjuri in the Bathurst area.

Shaun, Tess, Trent and Sharron each commented during this period of their interviews, that the political powers of the day did nothing to stop the murders and massacres from happening and in fact sanctioned these methods as a way to open the country up. In providing their respective viewpoints on this issue, each participant did so with long pauses between some words. The enormity of past actions by non-Indigenous peoples is still with them.
Shaun: “The genocide was very sudden when it did happen...the murder, rape, dispossession all happened because the government wanted us out of the way so they could have everything”...Tess: “They wanted to completely wipe us out...all cultures out except their own...didn’t care...tame or kill the savages”...Trent: “All bad things happened under white law, that law saw soldiers and settlers allowed to do anything to us they wanted and that law was kept going for a long time...had a lot to answer for that government”...Sharron: “The bad things like clearing of lands, killing of the people, massacres, poisoning of the people, disease, that sort of thing...terrible sad business all of that, but what gets to me is the fact that government let it happen and even told them they could do it! What were they thinking when they said this? Why did they let these thing happen when in the beginning, we got along ok didn’t we?”

Evelyn and Madeleine related this aspect of their interview to Evelyn’s grandmother.

Madeleine: “What happened was this. See a man told me, what was his name? Yeah, [name deleted] well he told me this story. The farmer up there they were all away and this group of people come down and there were Wiradjuri men, and they had spears, they wanted food for their tribe, and the farmer lady came to the door, she saw these men approaching with spears, so she shot ‘em...in retaliation they speared her. And when the farmer man comes home he saw his wife dead so they all got together and they poisoned the water where, the, the tribe were...and killed, killed off everybody.” Evelyn: “My mum’s grandmother heard the squeal of the people dying...she was only a little girl at the time and it was her mother that got...yeah, that just wiped them out.”

Colin mentioned a specific area, an area that was his family’s traditional land in responding to questions related to the impacts of invasion. Colin: “Then there was the Bogan River, for
example where the massacre is out there, they have kept that pretty quiet. Not too many people know about that. But yet, it’s known about along the Bogan River. Anyhow the massacre was...bit hard to talk about because it was family there...the massacre was because a boy learning to hunt, killed a cow. It cost...95% of a...of the clan, the family, because of one cow. This wasn’t written that way when it comes to anthropology. It was written in such a way that ‘the Black Fellas come up and took all the meat, so the farmers killed em’.

Y’know, didn’t explain that these people were starvin’ on the river. Because they’d blocked the river off and wouldn’t let any fish through, and things like that. Didn’t tell ‘em that. Didn’t tell ‘em they stopped the kangaroos and emus from running alongside the rivers. So they couldn’t hunt and gather.”

Jack was of the opinion that whilst the process of being removed from traditional lands was a slow process, he stressed that Wiradjuri would have never been beaten had they the same weapons and equipments as non-Indigenous peoples. Jack: “That the technology...guns and rifles caused such huge loss of numbers of peoples that fast, our people died so quickly that in a number of months, most had been killed...they just wanted to get rid of us mob Yal...but you know what Yal? We would have won except that they had guns and rifles and we didn’t. What kind of playing field was that when one side has spears and rocks and the other has guns and rifles?...genocide, that was the name of the playing field for sure.”

Sarah acknowledged that there were “very bad things that happened, like murder and rape and massacres and stuff like that”, but she didn’t want to talk too much about it as it was “painful for me to speak of as it is very, very personal for me and my family and it hurts us to talk about them things.”
The impacts of genocidal practices such as murders, rapes and massacres that occurred in the name of expansion are located in the memories and hearts of the participants. But more was to come. Whilst Sarah was upset talking about atrocities, she appeared more at ease when she moved quickly to talking about internment in “those buildings that they built to separate us from our families and friends, those places that they called missions and reserves where more bad things happened.”

5.4 Dispossession-Missions and Reserves

Missions and reserves came about in a period where Wiradjuri and other Indigenous peoples had been impacted upon by ever increasing expansion by pastoralists, rampant disease and open conflict that never seemed to cease. According to Kidd (2000), missions and reserves were developed with the intention of institutionalising Indigenous peoples, as wards of the state, under the Aborigines Protection Act 1909.

They were a state responsibility (Burke & Lay, 1998), with some managers coming from the Churches (Koorie Heritage Trust, n.d.), with other missions and reserves having superintendants chosen by a chief protector. According to Thinee & Bradford (1998) and AIATSIS (2004) missions were structures developed by Christian interests in the movement of protectionism in relation to Indigenous peoples, (with control being the responsibility of the Aborigines Protection Board). They were set up to ‘protect’ Indigenous peoples from the mistreatment perpetuated by non-Indigenous people (Lippmann, 1981).

Connelley (2000, p. 185) stated that “For a democratic civilisation to flourish, two fundamental accords must be burned into the instincts of the territorial people. First, they must concur instinctively on the fundaments of Christianity and its role as authoritative
source of public morality. Second, they must till the soil agriculturally rather than roam over its surface like ‘nomads’.” Connelley may have been alluding to America, but the words resonate with the mentality of the times of attempted Christianisation here in Australia.

Whist ‘protection’ appeared to be the reason missions were set up, behind this veneer, other forms of genocide were occurring; that of Christianising Indigenous peoples and forced removal for example. It was thought, that because Indigenous peoples were considered pagans or heathens, then in order for them to fit into the broader society, they should be converted from their pagan and heathen ways to Christianity (Partington 1998). In the process of Christianising Indigenous peoples, especially children, the process of forced removal was again undertaken. According to MacDonald (1995, p. 43) children in the Northern Territory for example were “divided by religion: those baptised as Roman Catholics would be sent to Melville Island, Methodists to Croker Island, and Church of England children to other locations...far from their kin and country...some were never to return home.”

Wiradjuri peoples were also removed and sent to various areas such as Darlington Point, Warangesda, and Cootamundra (Read, 1994), where ‘homes’or institutions were set up to ‘house’ them. When Harry and Jacob were asked to respond to what they thought of attempts to Christianise peoples they believed that Christianising Wiradjuri meant that their belief system was again under challenge and under threat. Harry: “They tried everything to make us get rid of our beliefs but we didn’t let them because if we did then Wiradjuri would have been lost a long time ago.” Jacob: “I mean, how many times did they take the kids away? How many times did they try to get rid of us? Well, they tried many, many times and ways but for me and my family, they didn’t do too well did they?”
Regardless of what was actually going on behind closed doors, there were some Indigenous peoples that took to Christianity with some degree of passion as highlighted by Maddison (2009). Some of the participant’s relatives were Christianised through the process of missions and reserves and Christian beliefs have been passed on to them.

Georgina stated that “My father was Christianised when he was in the mission and he thought that we should also think the same way...and he taught us about Christian stuff and so we followed him.” Frank: “I am a Christian and I believe that there are ways in which Wiradjuri beliefs mirror some of what is in Christian teachings such as some of the laws for Wiradjuri are really the same as in the Bible is what I am trying to get across.” Pauline: “My Wiradjuri beliefs are centred on a Creator and what he gave us, and my Christian beliefs are centred on a Creator and what he did for us, so in the end, some things are similar, but there are also some things that are a little different so I weigh each one up and do what I think is best for my family and me and that is how I feel.”

The participants were asked how they felt about some Wiradjuri peoples being Wiradjuri and Christian. John and Albert appear to sum up the general feelings of the participants. John: “I think that those people should be allowed to believe in what they want as long as they say they are Wiradjuri and work for us then so what? Let them be who they want and that’s ok with me.” Albert thought along the same lines as John but added “I believe that Wiradjuri will survive despite the fact that some are more assimilated than others. If others want to believe in something other than the Wiradjuri Creator then they should. I know some of these people and they work endlessly to keep Wiradjuri alive so does it really matter? No I don’t think it does Yal.”
The Board of Studies (2005) states that in 1883 the NSW Aborigines Protection Board was developed with the central aim of having complete control (in a legal sense) over the lives of approximately ‘9,000’ Indigenous peoples. AIATSIS (2004) list ten missions in NSW as: Lake Macquarie (Ebenezer) Aboriginal Mission; Wellington Valley Aboriginal Mission; Warangesda Aboriginal Mission; Maloga Aboriginal Mission Station; La Perouse Aboriginal Mission; Bomaderry Aboriginal Mission; Bowraville Aboriginal Mission and School; Goulburn Island Mission Station; Parramatta Aboriginal Mission; Sydney Aboriginal Mission; and Yelta Aboriginal Mission. In the period that witnessed the taking of traditional Wiradjuri lands, “Peoples were displaced and relocated in some instances, outside of Wiradjuri country” stated Colin.

Thinee & Bradford (1998) state that reserves were different to missions in that they were developed by Government, although they too had the same intent as missions in so far as they also had infrastructure such as churches and other places of learning that would influence the day to day lives of their inhabitants. All of the participants had a story to tell in regards to missions or reserves and each story told of abuse by those who were supposed to ‘protect’ peoples. Each participant knew of what went on behind the wire fences and locked doors. The comments here are from four of the participants; Albert, Emily, Madeleine and Sarah.

Albert: “My father’s father and my father were on a mission and I was told stories about that place that would make your hair stand on end! The people had no control over what was going on in their lives, they wouldn’t let anyone speak language, do ceremony or even dance for fun…my father’s father was beaten every day and night…I saw the marks on my father too…his back and legs and arms…beaten because he wet the bed or because he wouldn’t eat filthy food full of weevils and other bugs…beaten because he was a strong boy and they
wanted to break his spirit...[he] never gave in my grandfather, never and even when he passed he was still Wiradjuri and still strong in spirit.”

Emily stated that “the missions and reserves were set up in such a way to stop Wiradjuri people from carrying out their cultural practices...physical practices and spiritual beliefs...stop them from hunting and gathering, collecting foods and medicines, making medicines...[and] the acts...that is A-C-T-S, were set in place so that we couldn’t carry out our cultural needs, and we couldn’t have custodianship of our own lands...[couldn’t] have custodianship of our culture...but why oh why did they have to resort to doing bad things to us...[I] cannot understand why.”

Madeleine: “My mother was the last person to be born at the proper birthing place, that was the women’s birthing place in [name deleted]...well mum was the last person there to be born because everyone was taken away to missions and reserves, beaten for nothing, forbidden to do traditional culture as well.” Sarah likened missions to jails where everything one did was monitored and controlled. “Decisions were forced on us...there are many stories from Elders that speak of the horrific enforced indoctrinisation...forced to learn other languages, forced to learn white culture, not allowed to maintain Wiradjuri culture, bashed and raped...[we] were dispossessed of our own cultures peoples and lands...like being in jail where the controller took all your spirit away just by being there and telling you what you could or could not do etc.”

Most missions and reserves did not operate for very long however. Many closed their doors because of lack of funding or because the land on which they were built was needed for expansion of settlement or pastoralists. There were also other places known as ‘homes’ which
were established in order to replace missions and reserves. The intention however was still the same; control over Indigenous peoples. Rowse (1993) contends that the Aborigines Protection Act 1909 empowered New South Wales authorities to implement two methods of dispersing Aborigines: the closing of reserves and the taking away of children from their parents in order to bring them up in institutions such as the Cootamundra Girls’ Home and Kinchela Boys’ Home.

In NSW, as the Board of Studies (2005) highlights, as early as 1890, the Aborigines Protection Board was developing a combined policy of ‘segregation’ and ‘assimilation’, which meant that the Board can now forcibly take the children off the reserves and ‘resocialise’ them ‘for their own good’ and in so saying give the following example: On Warangesda station, between 1893 and 1909, around 300 female Indigenous children are removed from their families and placed in a girl’s dormitory for ‘resocialisation’.

Thinee & Bradford (1998) and Board of Studies (2005) concluded that in 1915 Indigenous Australians’ movement between missions and reserves is strictly controlled and families are threatened with the removal of their children if they do not comply with the Board’s orders. Not all Indigenous peoples lived in these places though. Finlayson & Anderson (2002, p. 50) suggested that “Some individuals were able to live in non-institutional settings through Exemption Certificates issued between 1940 and the 1960s.”

It appears that the implementation of removals from missions and reserves was not an easy task, as the Aborigines Protection Board had to enlist the services of the police in order to ensure complete removal. Police had a number of powers under the Act. Jennett (1999, p. 3) in stating that the police had a major part in the daily lives of Indigenous peoples with powers
coming from the *NSW Aborigines Protection Act* provides examples of twelve specific duties that were asked of the police over a twenty year period:

1. Issue rations to Aborigines;
2. Reduce the ration lists by investigating all applicants and issuing rations only to ‘deserving cases’;
3. Force children to attend school by withholding rations if they did not comply;
4. Refuse rations to Aborigines in order to ‘persuade’ them to go to another locality or to move to an Aboriginal reserve or station;
5. Decide whether or not an Aborigine was sick enough to see a doctor;
6. Patrol and maintain order on unsupervised Aboriginal reserves;
7. Recommend on the disposal of reserve land;
8. Expel ‘trouble makers’ from Aboriginal reserves;
9. Remove children from their parents and send them to the Board’s ‘training homes’, on the grounds that they were ‘neglected’ or that they were 14 years of age;
10. Institute proceedings against Aboriginal parents who took their children away from Aboriginal reserves or from school in an attempt to escape the Board’s decision that their children be removed from them and ‘trained’;
11. Expel light-coloured people from Aboriginal reserves and stop them from returning to their families still living on reserves; and
12. Institute proceedings to remove whole Aboriginal communities from certain localities, under section 14 of the *Act*. 
The literature quoted above highlights how Wiradjuri peoples, were treated by non-Indigenous people. The very fact that the governments of the day enlisted the assistance of land-holders, missionaries and the police to undertake genocidal practices on Wiradjuri was testimony to a way of thinking that led to a hoped for extermination by eradication of all Indigenous peoples. But it did not stop there. If one could put the impacts in some kind of order from the very worst to the less worse, possibly at or near the top of the list, would have been the stealing of children from their families; the stolen generations. There has been much research on the removal of Indigenous children from their families by non- Indigenous people at all levels of society. Many Indigenous children were taken from family and community regardless of age or gender.

5.5 The Stolen Generations

“They just come down and say, ‘We taking these kids.’ They just take you out of your mother’s arms. That’s what they done to me. I was still at my mother’s breast when they took me” (Kruger, cited in MacDonald, 1995, p. 15).

It would be near impossible to determine how many children were taken as records were not kept in many cases and in some instances children were just taken away from families a few days after they were born, with many of the children taken becoming wards of the state as described earlier. Children were adopted, institutionalised, or fostered out. The Reconciliation and Social Justice Library (2001, p. 3) cites a Royal Commission in South Australia in 1913 where the issue became one of not who should be taken but, ‘at what age should removal of children take place’, with their age ranges being from when they were born to a few years of age. With Wiradjuri peoples being forced to live on missions and reserves, the Protectors had easier access to children and would remove them from their families and place them in very
large ‘dormitories’ or ‘training institutions’. Families never had a chance, with most being told that if they did not consent to having children removed, then the children would be taken in any case, stated the RSJL (2001).

Jessica’s story of the stolen generations came from her relationship with a person who had her two children taken away. “I didn’t have any children of my own but I do know someone who had little ones taken. See…this lady lived in a nice house, her husband [name deleted] had a job and they were just a happy normal family. One day one of the neighbours told the welfare people that the little ones weren’t being looked after…never wore shoes…and when the welfare came they said to hand over the little ones so they could be looked after better. You can imagine but when [name deleted] wouldn’t do it, they just took them…can you imagine how she must have felt? Well, she died a few months later and I will always believe that she died from having her heart broken so badly…makes me sad too.”

Karen’s reaction to the issue of the stolen generations was one of frustration, despair and sadness. It was very hard for Karen to speak of what had happened but she was adamant that she should do so because it helped her deal with having her family torn apart. Karen: “My first baby and then my third baby…I think…were stolen…born in a house…hospital they called it. My first baby, well they told me that he died when they took him away to clean him up. My third baby, they said died when it was born…see I don’t and never have, believed that story because I heard the baby cry…don’t know whether that baby was a boy or a girl. I don’t know who he or she is now or where he or she is…upsetting talking about this but that’s the truth of what happened. What would I at 80 years of age, stand to get from telling lies and not the truth? It’s the truth…all of what I am telling you…..no more now.”
The policy of removal was based on commonly held beliefs that those children who were of ‘mixed blood’ would be able to be assimilated into ‘white society’, whereas those who were classed as ‘full-blood’ were seen by Europeans to be unworthy of saving (MacDonald, 1995). Colour coding of Indigenous peoples also led to theories that those with some white blood in them would be able to be employed as cheap labour. According to Neville (1937 cited in RSJL, 2001) those with no white blood in them would be segregated from the rest of the community and the light coloured children would be absorbed into the white community and in this way, they would lose any cultural identity or attachment. A Chief Protector of Aboriginals, J.W. Bleakley (1928), appointed to examine the conditions of Indigenous peoples wrote that half-caste children should be ‘rescued’ from their camps, for to leave them there would mean that they would become a ‘menace’ and that they would breed with the result being an increase in ‘quadroon’ people.

Bleakely (1928) stated that policy of removal of ‘half-castes’ be continued so that they could be absorbed by white society. So began the practice (official) of removing ‘part-descent’ children from their families. Government policy of removal had numerous impacts on peoples and cultures. In Wiradjuri country, culture was forbidden to be taught or undertaken in missions and reserves and later “homes”; languages were not allowed to be spoken; ceremonies not allowed to be practiced; stories not told and songs not sung. Wiradjuri country became the first place in which the Aborigines Protection Board would take some kind of action following the 1915 amendment to the original Aborigines Protection Act. In the two months following the amendment, one-third of all the state’s removed children were Wiradjuri…The amendment had provided the Board with more powers in their efforts to remove children (Read, 1996).
Harry said that those who were taken were ‘disconnected’ from not only land but from everything else. “How does the heart feel for those disconnected, floating around in society, no mob, no language, no culture? Too many of our people have no mob, no place to go…see what I mean? The stolen generations did happen; it still affects our people today.”

Families fought against removal. Many families saw the police or the Protectors coming and hid their children, whilst others took other precautions as highlighted by the following quote:

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“Every morning our people would crush charcoal and mix that with animal fat and smother that all over us, so that when the police came they could only see black children in the distance. We were told always to be on the alert and, if white people came, to run into the bush or run and stand behind the trees as stiff as a poker, or else hide behind logs or run into culverts and hide. Often the white people – we didn’t know who they were – would come into our camps. And if the Aboriginal group was taken unawares, they would stuff us into flour bags and pretend we weren’t there. We were told not to sneeze. We knew if we sneezed and they knew that we were in there bundled up, we’d be taken off and away from the area….”


Madeleine and Evelyn also had a personal story to tell. They told this story together, one following the other and one could assume that this was because they felt more comfortable in doing so; each had the support of the other. Madeleine: “...the impact of ‘especially like that stolen generations stuff, it’s still with everybody still today. Yeah. It’s generational because of the effect it has, even like, well Nana... pretend to be who she wasn’t allowed to be. Yeah. She couldn’t be what she was in her own place. So therefore never told us the stories. So we never had that. And I wasn’t allowed to say anything because we might all have been taken away.”
Evelyn: “See the story of my Nana…well she was a lady that lived a pretend life for a long time. Once she moved off the sand hills, she was very isolated…never talked about her Aboriginality, no, never talked about even being Aboriginal. Mum even saw her burning a lot of papers, which, you know Yal, they have to carry, to say they were Aboriginal, and I think her whole later life was pretence.” Madeleine: “Yeah. She had to do what she had to do, to protect her family.” Evelyn: “So, if she could get away with being white, she’d have to do it. And she would powder her face, always had white powder over her face…we use to always go over there and wash ourselves off but Nan always had this, y’know, she made sure she put it on all over her face but not her arms and other parts…good old…she’d be havin’ a photo taken and she’d have some of the kids sittin’ up there, and here she would be with a white face with black arms…that’s my Nan.” “My mother” said Madeleine.

The RSJL (2001) stated that forced removal of children (Indigenous) from their familiar (family and community) areas had been occurring since the early parts of occupation and that this practice continued into the twentieth century. ‘Protectionist legislation’ gave enormous powers of control over all Indigenous peoples including children, to Chief Protectors, and in so doing these Chief Protectors could become the legal guardians of every Indigenous child: parental rights were ignored. These ‘legal guardians’ failed in ‘protecting’ their wards however.

There is ample evidence that children taken from family and community were mistreated, almost on a daily basis, as highlighted by both the historical published documents and the stories from some of the participants. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission looked at how stolen peoples were treated and at the conditions in which they were forced to live. “Most of the children were continually beaten (Confidential Evidence 8; Confidential
Evidence 139; Confidential Evidence 251; Confidential Evidence 531), continually sexually abused (Confidential Evidence 10; Confidential Evidence 214; Confidential Evidence 340; Confidential Evidence 679), forced to exist in dormitories (Confidential Evidence 109); forced to look for food in garbage dumps (Confidential Evidence 549), told that black people were bad (Confidential Evidence 139), dirty drunks (Confidential Submission 483), forbidden to speak their language (Confidential Submission 110; Confidential Evidence 170), told that their families never loved them/didn’t want them/had given them away (Confidential Evidence 139), or that they were dead (Confidential Evidence 421; Confidential Evidence 544)” (HREOC, 2001).

Rebecca likened the stolen generations period as the end of everything simply because everyone has been affected. Rebecca: “I do believe that every [Indigenous] person has been impacted by the stealing of our children. Look at it this way. Each child had a mother and father…they had a mother and father. They had other children and those children had aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters and other family members…see. It’s like turning rocks over looking for lizards…when you turn each rock over there you find someone who has been subjected to what they call the stolen generations…I don’t call it that myself. I call that dreadful time…the end of the world and we have all been infected.”

5.6 Assimilation

In 1937 the initial Commonwealth-State conference on the welfare of the ‘natives’ decided to adopt assimilation as the national policy (Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, 1997), where the so-called ‘Aboriginal problem’ would eventually disappear with Indigenous peoples becoming so assimilated that their respective cultures would be absorbed within the broader community and their Indigenous self would be lost (ATSIC,
2005; Zeldenryk and Yalmambirra, 2006). The Assimilation Policy, officially adopted in 
1951 in Canberra, intended that over time it would be expected that any person that had 
Indigenous blood, or even ‘mixed’ blood, would live like all other Australians (Human 
Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, 1997).

According to the NSW Department of Education and Training (n.d.) the Third 
Commonwealth-State Native Welfare Conference restated the policy of assimilation with the 
objective that all people should be equal in attaining the same rights, that all Indigenous 
peoples should be able to acquire the same standard of living as non-Indigenous people, 
along with having the same obligations and the same customs, and desires as them, that they 
live as part of the same community.

Under the assimilation umbrella, Wiradjuri peoples were sometimes allowed to do certain 
things and attain certain status as seen by the comments of Hollingworth (1998) that in 1943 
the granting of ‘Exemption Certificates, or ‘dog tags’ which were meant to free Indigenous 
Australians ‘from the relentless surveillance and control’ of the NSW Aborigines Protection 
Act, were introduced. When asked about assimilation Karen told this story. Karen: “My 
grandfather was a little whiter than a lot of others...see; he was put on a reserve. When he 
grew to be able to be old enough to get some work, they let him out...gave him the 
certificate...[but] this is where it all went wrong you see. He signed the certificate saying he 
was an islander person and not Wiradjuri, sorry, or rather Aboriginal. Well that’s when it 
got worse for him. The missions and reserves were for blackfellas not anyone else so when he 
tried to get back in, they wouldn’t let him because the certificate said he was islander...they 
knew who he was but didn’t give a care...this made him very, very sad and he had to go away 
from his family who were still behind the wires of the reserve. He was with them again when
the reserve closed but that was a very important part of his life.” Karen asked that she be
excused for a moment and when she returned, with tears in her eyes, had a piece of paper in
her hand…the original certificate.

The Board of Studies (2005) in examining the issue of assimilation informs readers that there
were specific conditions attached to the ‘Exemption Certificates’ or ‘dog tags’; that they
could be classed as providing ‘limited citizenship’; that they did not allow Indigenous
peoples the right to undertake traditional cultural practices; and that the peoples were
excluded from visiting those who were not deemed to have been ‘exempted’. It is, as The
Board of Studies further explains, only after this complete separation from family, culture,
language, and loss of rights, that Indigenous peoples are then able to hold the same basic
human rights as non-Indigenous people such as housing, education and health. Alford (1999)
suggested that Government policies such as this, directed at Indigenous peoples, have been
judged as ‘genocidal’.

Changes to how non-Indigenous peoples viewed relationships with Indigenous peoples, were
beginning however. In 1962, the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1962 (Cwlth) entitled all
Indigenous peoples the right to enrol and vote in elections (Board of Studies, 2005), and in
1965, the Commonwealth introduced a policy on integration, that in effect gave permission
for Indigenous peoples to express their ‘Aboriginality’ (Board of Studies, 2005). Since the
early days of invasion however, non-Indigenous people had made laws and decisions for
Indigenous people, but in the year 1967 the Government decided that enacting laws and
making decisions for Indigenous peoples should be legalised and the Constitution Alteration
(Aboriginals) Act (Cwlth) referendum was passed. This Act gave the Commonwealth the
power to make special laws for all Indigenous peoples (Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, 1997).

According to Tripcony (2001, pp. 2-3) the 1967 referendum asked Australian people (those eligible to vote) to indicate whether they agreed or not, on two proposed changes to sections of The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1990, which in their original form read as follows:

“Section 51: The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have the power to make laws for the peace, order, and good Government of the Commonwealth with respect to….. (xxvi) The people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws:…And…Section 127: In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of the State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted. Changes proposed were the amendment of Section 51 (xxvi) by removing the words…other than the aboriginal race in any State…; and the repeal of Section 127…90.77% of Australian voters supported the changes” (Tripcony, 2001, pp. 2-3).

Armed with the results from the referendum five years earlier, members of separate Indigenous communities began moves to give ‘voice’ to their peoples and bring to the attention of the broader community, the plight of their respective peoples. In 1972, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was set up outside Parliament House in Canberra to demonstrate for those rights and in the same year, the White Australia Policy was officially disbanded with Indigenous children being able to attend NSW state schools (Board of Studies, 2005), and in 1975 the Liberal Country Party Coalition decided to officially shelve assimilation as party policy (NSW Department of Education and Training, n.d.).
Whilst invasion had impacted upon Wiradjuri and other Indigenous peoples and with assimilation becoming a way of life, there were moves by many people to better the conditions of Indigenous peoples, and to foster a process of ‘reconciliation’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. But the road ahead was not an easy one. For Wiradjuri, according to the participants, the light at the end of the tunnel in regards to having control over their own lives looked like it was growing larger and much brighter. The participants realised however that this was all an illusion as there are those who would still stifle Wiradjuri attempts to be Wiradjuri; oppose self-determination and social justice and oppose cultural continuity, as examined in chapter six.
CHAPTER SIX: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

6. Introduction

The trend in popular thinking of the past (and in some instances the present), was that Wiradjuri peoples, along with all other Indigenous peoples and cultures, would eventually become extinct (see for example Rintoul, 1993). This could happen in a number of ways as highlighted by James Tully (2000, p. 40). Tully writes that extinction could happen via ‘intermarriage and urbanisation, lack of will and ability, and the more common strategy of the attempt to extinguish the rights of Indigenous peoples to their traditional lands and their right to self-government.’

Gibson (2008) however contends that “Some anthropologists...among others, have begun to recognise that it may have been a little hasty to cast ‘urban’ and more ‘settled’ Aborigines as having lost their culture and their Dreaming” (p. 309). This chapter shows that Wiradjuri are not ‘extinct’, that they still exist, they still have cultures.

The chapter identifies some of the issues faced by Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia which include the contemporary popular discourses and issues related to health, employment, politics and the right to have a voice in their own affairs (self-determination). Maddison (2009, p. xxxix) notes: “There really is no acceptable explanation for the life circumstances endured by many Aboriginal people in Australia...it is our greatest shame that the first inhabitants, who should by rights hold a special place in contemporary society, instead are subject to outcomes including shorter life expectancy (by seventeen years), higher death rates, higher rates of infant mortality, higher rates of incarceration, higher rates of substance abuse, poor educational attainment, and high levels of individual and community poverty.”
For the most part, the participants see the major issues facing them today as being one of identity; the right to be Wiradjuri, the right to be recognised as Wiradjuri and the right to social justice and self-determination. The roots of where Wiradjuri are placed in contemporary Australia are located, in the political sense, in “shared identity” (Myers, 1997, p. 54). This shared identity is the framework from which all social, and cultural issues are confronted, dealt with, and built on. According to the research participants, construction of identity is how they perceive themselves in relation to their cultural background and how construction of identity provides them with a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging not only means belonging to a group of people but also has meaning in relation to country. The participants however have also highlighted that belonging to country does not depend on living on country. The Wiradjuri participants state that belonging to country means that one identifies as a person from that specific area and this in turn means that they are recognised by other Wiradjuri peoples as belonging to the Nation of Wiradjuri.

Read (2000) suggests that there are new and emotional relationships with the land and that this has occurred because of colonisation. Read further suggested that following the impacts of colonisation, Indigenous peoples in forging new relationships between people, created different layers of meaning that overlaid the old layers. It would appear then that whilst colonisation has impacted on peoples and cultures, the ‘old’ way of being Wiradjuri is now supplemented by constructing identity and a sense of belonging in ‘new’ ways; but ways that are compatible with the old.

The participants may have used different words to describe how they construct their identity, but all are adamant that however they do it; they are and always will be Wiradjuri. Acquiring knowledge from outside sources for example does not present a problem for either the Elders
or the young Wiradjuri. The acquisition of knowledge is seen as a form of contribution by the young, rather than being detrimental.

Attwood (1996) stated that it was thought by some (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) that the 1967 Referendum would see a change in the lives of Indigenous peoples for the better. Forty years later it appeared that this might be the case. In September 2007, after 20 years of negotiation by governments and Indigenous peoples from around the world, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration). At this point in time “Australia was one of four countries to vote against it...“but in the year 2009 “the Australian government reversed its position” (Australian Human Rights Commission, (AHRC) 2010, p. 1). Simply put, the Declaration states that Indigenous peoples, hence Wiradjuri, have the right to:

- Self-determination and to determine our political status and our development paths. Self determination means that as a collective: We should have a choice in determining how our lives are governed, we should be able to participate in decisions that affect us, and we should have control over our lives and development...to live according to our values and beliefs;
- Have our own institutions and to have self-government;
- The right to practice and revitalise our cultures;
- The right to our spiritual traditions and;
- The right to our languages, histories and ways of thinking about the world (AHRC, pp. 2-3).
Whilst the Declaration, now supported by Australia, is not law, it is however a set of standards those Governments agreed to abide by. Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that “free, prior and informed consent” must be given “before adopting and implementing legislation or administrative measures that may affect them” (United Nations 2008, p. 8). However, Governments in Australia appear not to have taken notice of Articles 18 – 24 and this is especially the case in light of the Northern Territory Intervention (see for example Maddison, 2009). The Declaration has not been adhered to as agreed and so, colonisation has not ended.

This chapter highlights how Wiradjuri peoples and cultures are still controlled by colonial mentalities. Wiradjuri are continually controlled by laws and policies not of their own making, in the majority of instances, without consent and consultation with and due recognition of who they are. Wiradjuri are still limited in what they can do in cultural terms, hence, they are continually subjected to colonial processes. Whilst not specifically referring to decolonisation, the perspectives of the research participants allude to what it is that their voices can bring to the broader Australian community: alternative viewpoints.

The contemporary public discourses are examined in this chapter and they provide some indication of the nature of the ongoing political dialogue that has become part and parcel of the daily lives of Wiradjuri peoples. The impacts and implications for Wiradjuri peoples emanating from the contemporary public discourses will be examined in more detail in chapter seven.

The opinions, viewpoints and perspectives of the research participants also highlighted however, that all, in their own way have what Gilbert (1977, p. 3) notes, “...a sense of
This sense of purpose is highlighted in the opinions, viewpoints and perspectives of the participants where purpose implies the recognition that peoples and cultures are still valid in contemporary Australia, which in turn means the long-term survival of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures. Fraser (2000, p. 2) contends that recognition “aims to repair internal self-dislocation by contesting the dominant culture’s demeaning picture of the group. It proposes that members of the misrecognised groups reject such images in favour of new self-representations of their own making, jettisoning internalized, negative identities and joining collectively to produce a self-affirming culture of their own—which, publicly asserted, will gain the respect and esteem of society at large. The result as Fraser suggests “is ‘recognition’: an undistorted relation to oneself.”

In looking at Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia, it must be highlighted that some of the research participants can remember the days when children were taken, when their grandmothers and grandfathers told them of the ‘bad’ things that they witnessed, the days when they themselves (research participants) were subjected to ‘the underlying racist intentions of people and policy’. But the past (genocide) is inextricably linked to the present (the battle for self-determination and social justice), and the present directs the future (survival). Cruikshank (1991) suggested that the telling of events, in relation to time, do not just cover events of long ago, they are just as applicable today as they were generations ago, with Yalmambirra writing that time was defined as “a space in which something happened or did not happen, a space in which something continues but a space in which something has stopped” (2000, p. 133). In looking at Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia many of the participants do not differentiate between the past, the present and the future in terms of who they are. Lilly, Orson, Terry and Samantha’s contribution to this seem to sum up the feelings of the majority of participants. Lilly: “The past influenced the present which in turn
influences the future.” Orson: “Mate, what happened yesterday impacts on today and impacts on tomorrow.” Terry: “There is no difference.” Samantha: “The past tells one what the present is and the present tells one what the future will be.” Or in the words of Taylor (1996, p. 12), “Life is not timetabled in quite the same way it is in written cultures. Past events are related to one another and to the here and now, rather than being placed in decades and centuries.”

Samantha felt that whilst the past influenced the future, “It is important that Wiradjuri were given the opportunity to show how the past leads to what people believe in the present and how what people believe in the present, tells them how they should believe in the future. We Wiradjuri believe the past, the present and the future are all in the one…the events are so tightly connected that there is no difference…there can never be a difference and this is very important to us that people understand that and look back and see how the past has put us where we are now, under a dominant people, under a dominant legal system and a dominant line of thought. This dominance sadly, will always be here but at least let us tell our own story and maybe, just maybe, we can plant some seeds of doubt.” The ‘seeds of doubt’ that Samantha spoke of relates to how she believes “that the broader Australian community would look at the history of this country in a whole new light if they would only listen to us.”

6.1 Wiradjuri in Contemporary Australia

Sarah Maddison (2009, pp. 103-104) contended that “The idea of ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Indigenous’ identity is a distinctly postcolonial construct invented to both name and contain the ‘natives’ of terra australis.” Maddison also contended that people identified through their “nation and language groups, for many non-Indigenous people however, the ‘real’ or ‘tribal’ Indigenous person lives a traditional lifestyle in a northern desert.”
When it comes to identity and recognition of such, Colin Tatz (1978, p. 14) had the foresight to write that “The blacks want to know, and must know, who they were and who they are if they are seriously concerned about who they intend to become…he must build up his own value systems, perceive himself as self-defined, as feeling pride and praise for what self involves.” Here it would seem that the thoughts of Tatz, made so long ago, are alluding to the fact that he thinks that Indigenous peoples must be allowed to control their everyday lives. In doing so, Tatz himself, in 1978, was pushing for the process of decolonisation by Indigenous peoples.

The thoughts of Tatz may have been written with good intentions in mind, but in contemporary Australia, according to the participants, the road to the recognition of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures by non-Indigenous Australians is a hard one. The pathway is a hard one, according to Lilly because “It has its base in the stereotyping and misconceptions that surround Wiradjuri, coming from the past they influence who we are now...most people don’t have a clue...not their fault though because they have been brainwashed by what they have been told and by what they have read about us.”

Orson told in his interview “that people [white] have never been told the truth and the stories from the past kind of painted a picture that they were comfortable with and that’s what they want to believe...they don’t see how history has placed us within their own minds now.”

Terry: “My feeling is this. Most white people don’t understand that the way we were portrayed in the past directed how white people think about us today. I’m not going to go over what was said before but people should know that we are not what people said about us, and what was written and said, in most cases was wrong and people should take a step back and allow us to tell our own story about ourselves...that would be fair eh?”
David Cahill in his ‘Preface’ to Minnerup and Solberg (2011, p. x) states that the “cultures, histories, and present-day social conditions” of First Nations peoples was interpreted by the likes of “scholars, politicians, journalists and activists.” This according to Cahill is “highly contested ground, with contested questions of national, collective and even individual identity.”

6.2 Identity in Contemporary Australia

In order to contextualise the perspectives of the participants, the thoughts of some researchers on the identity of Wiradjuri, and by association, other Indigenous peoples should be included here. Wiradjuri sense of identity ‘is in practice an entirely different kind of phenomenon than that of non-Indigenous Australians because the former has been conducted under duress’ according to Cowlishaw (2004, p. 6). Cowlishaw (2004) also contends that “while not all Aborigines suffered directly degrading and painful conditions, all experienced changing laws and regimes...in governance...leading to an historical instability of Aboriginal identity.” Sarah Maddison (2009, p. 104), however suggested that “Aboriginal identities are neither essential nor fixed...Aboriginality evolves, adapts and changes, not least in response to the assault on traditional society and culture since colonisation...[but] Many Aboriginal people (in contemporary Australia) find in their cultural identity a sense of belonging and acceptance that they do not experience in the wider community.”

In 1977 Berndt had suggested that whilst some Wiradjuri peoples in 1977 were still traditionally oriented, many others were very far indeed from that kind of perspective (p. 7). Taylor (1977) commented that Wiradjuri gender roles changed as men and women became more involved in what could be termed non-traditional activities, such as shopping from local stores and eating different foods, which relegated the traditional activities associated with
hunting and gathering to becoming a pastime, something to do on weekends. Read has also suggested that these new and old relationships, united through adversity now belong to cultures that are no longer traditional, but are in reality, just as valid. Perhaps Berndt and Taylor were reflecting on the dynamic nature of cultures following on from the term ‘Syncretism’. This term is used where adaptation is looked at as cultural borrowing, where old and borrowed elements come together either by choice or for other reasons (Keesing & Strathern, 1998). Syncretism in the context of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures means that “when a people are pressed by the forces of change, a hearkening back to the past may be a crucial-sometimes desperate-way of trying to survive as a people: of preserving identity and integrity in the face of powerlessness, decimation, and degradation” (Keesing & Strathern, 1998, p. 371).

O’Connell (1980, p. 26) provides an example of syncretism. A water bag, made from kangaroo skin would have been made utilising “sharp stone but is now made with steel implements and cotton string and cloth…not many kangaroo water bags are made in the traditional manner; plastic, metal and canvas have replaced them.” This may be true, but the purpose is still the same; to carry water; an indication of a dynamic interaction between the old and the new order, and a further indication of culture that is dynamic, not static.

Baker (1999) commented that ‘the land is still alive with meaning, it still tells the stories of creation, the spirits still reside in the land’ even though the land has new names now, given to it by those who are not Indigenous. The new names came from ‘the British’ stated Willmot (1987). Folds (1993) commented that it was time that all peoples, black and white, look at what Indigenous peoples have, rather than what they have not, and appreciate contemporary Indigenous peoples and cultures including their belief systems.
Keesing & Strathern (1998) suggested that the Dreamtime may have been a long time ago, but it still exists through the present, via the things that are experienced by peoples. Benterrak et al (1984, p. 14) had earlier stated that "The 'Dreaming' is not a set of beliefs which is being lost because it is no longer valid, it is rather a way of talking, of seeing, of knowing, and a set of practices, which is as obtuse, as mysterious and as beautiful as any poetry…Reading its present and public forms as religious, as apolitical, and as the relics of past customs is to deliver it a death-blow.” Keesing & Strathern (1998) and Benterrak (1984) could be implying that Wiradjuri belief systems are still alive in the minds and hearts of Wiradjuri peoples.

Whilst many of the participants are still influenced by their belief in the ‘Dreaming’ to the extent they still follow some traditional course and still identify as Wiradjuri, in contemporary Australia, Craven and Rigney (1999) suggest that identifying and being recognised and accepted as Wiradjuri often depends on how Indigenous peoples are perceived by non-Indigenous people especially from those in positions of judicial and political power. This is noticeable and can be seen in for example, the most often used definition of ‘Aboriginality’ developed, not by Indigenous peoples, but by the Commonwealth Government. “An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is a person of Aboriginal descent who identifies with and is accepted by the Aboriginal community in which he or she lives” (Newlin & Moran, 1999, p. 28). This puts all Indigenous peoples into the one category; that of ‘Aboriginal’ and therefore does not allow for the definition of separate clan groups that together, make up Indigenous Australia (Craven and Rigney, 1999). According to Tatz (1992, p. 77) “colour-rather than race-was and still is the major criterion for Aboriginality.” Indigenous peoples were and still are, or can be defined based on percentages of ‘blood’ according to Bolt (2009).
Throughout the last 200 plus years, many different literature: (The Sydney Gazette, 1824; Jackson-Nakano, 2001; McDonald, n.d.) for example, have indicated that Wiradjuri were a dying race of peoples; languages were lost; cultures lost; that Wiradjuri were doomed to extinction. These thoughts of the past are brought into the present by the opinions, viewpoints and perspectives of some of the participants who believed that those in positions of power such as governments, government representatives and High Court judges take the historical record as ‘fact’, and that the historical published narratives are then used when the issues of land rights and Native Title rear their heads in courts of law. Colin for example stated that “The knowledge of who Wiradjuri were and are, was and still is taken out of the hands of Wiradjuri and suddenly Wiradjuri peoples, cultures and knowledge are not considered as being as valid in the year 2011 as opposed to 250, 10,000 or even 120,000 years ago.”

In relation to ‘lost’ languages, and contrary to the views of The Sydney Gazette (1824), Jackson-Nakano (2001), and McDonald (n.d.), not all languages have been lost. Debra Jopson (2002b) writing for The Sydney Morning Herald informs readers that although most languages in NSW have been lost, there is a course in Wiradjuri for students which includes six songs for children and a grammar book. According to ATSIC News (2004), Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of all ages, from all over regional New South Wales are learning Wiradjuri language. Stan Grant Senior, a Wiradjuri Elder, along with language specialist Dr John Rudder have written two Editions of the Wiradjuri languages and have produced two Dictionaries that are being utilised in many schools in order to teach Wiradjuri languages to all students, black or white (see Grant and Rudder, 2005).

Jack sees language as being an important aspect of cultural identity. Jack: “Wiradjuri language defines us too. We...Wiradjuri...have with us an Elder that is bringing language
back to us...through the written word, the oral side of it. The words themselves in culture, and what comes from that is a spiritual belief that, yes, I know the language, yes I know how to say the words, yes, I know how to do this. So, other parts of culture will come into play.”

The viewpoints of most of the participants highlight how little language they know or even speak. This, in some cases, is cause for some distress, but the viewpoints also highlight that despite not knowing or speaking language they still perceive themselves as being Wiradjuri and they still identify as Wiradjuri. In the end, whilst language is an important aspect of cultural identity, it is not the be-all and end-all of identity according to most participants.

Wiradjuri peoples have been asked, increasingly and especially in relation to Native Title, to “recall their traditions in relation to land claims, heritage sites, and historical and ecological research” (Cowlishaw, 2004, p. 201). However according to Cowlishaw (2004, p. 202) there may be problems associated with this and she poses the question: “Which traditions are to be celebrated and which muted…[and] how are particular experiences, memories, and local knowledge to be reformulated in the light of a wider, national narrative of dispossession and culture loss?” Had Cowlishaw asked this question in 1999, then she may have noticed Newlin and Moran’s (1999, p. 28) statement that whilst “It is often said that there are no strictly ‘traditional’ communities left in Australia, what many people fail to recognise is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have maintained their world view....”

According to Jason there are some aspects of culture that are still being undertaken, from the more remote areas, to those of rural and urban settings. Jason: “I am not traditional because white people own the country and made laws for us, but I practice culture because I can...not all mind you because I don’t have the knowledge, but even if I did, I would have to do it
behind closed doors because white laws stop me from doing stuff...different in other areas where they weren’t impacted on as much as Wiradjuri.”

Governments however have a tendency to more willingly recognise those Indigenous communities that they consider ‘traditional’; those who live in the more remote areas, of this continent, with Governments perceiving these peoples and their respective cultures as ‘living’ cultures and it is this very presumption that reduces the identity and recognition of Wiradjuri cultures and further erodes the ‘authenticity’ of Wiradjuri peoples because they do not live in desert areas, but prefer to live in more regional areas (see for example the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Native Title Report 2009, p. 84), but according to the viewpoints of Tess, Sharron and Laura, the cultures of Wiradjuri peoples are no less valid than those of Cape York, Arnhem Land or of those in the Kimberleys.

Tess: “When I say I’m Wiradjuri I’m practicing culture...not been given a lot of knowledge about other cultural practices but that’s ok because I believe that Wiradjuri can still be Wiradjuri anyhow.” Sharron: “In my mind I am just as cultural as those in other areas. Just because I live in a town or city doesn’t mean anything...I am Wiradjuri and I can do some cultural things, so that’s what I think anyhow.” Laura: “I try to do some cultural stuff as often as I can. This is important to me because it’s important for the young ones and Wiradjuri...sure they still have lots of culture in the remote areas, but we still do stuff too so that should count for something.”

Identifying as Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia is, for some of the participants, harder for them than it is for others. When questioned about this, these participants told of how “I am a Christian person now and follow the words of God.” The participants were asked how they
could believe in God and Wiradjuri spiritual beliefs at the same time. “I guess I find some similarities in both of those beliefs, but if you were to ask me to take a stand on either one, I guess I would choose Wiradjuri, because at the real end of the day, that’s who I am” stated one participant. Another told of how he became a Christian Minister (this story is not related here due to privacy issues) many years ago. “I am a Christian Minister because that is what I want to be and where that decision turned my life around...but Yal, I am also Wiradjuri and I will fight for Wiradjuri ‘till I drop.” Another participant told of how one belief could stand beside another belief. “Being both, Wiradjuri and Christian, is not that hard when one takes the time to look at both. There are some things in my Christian beliefs that I find hard to actually believe but then again too, in my belief as a Wiradjuri person, there are some things that I find difficult...it doesn’t matter though because whatever belief a person has, as long as they fight for justice, and in my case I do for Wiradjuri, then all is good eh?”

“Aboriginal people were first counted as citizens in the 1971 Census. Since then, censuses have shown a significant increase in people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002, p. 283). This however does not take into account that many Indigenous peoples in contemporary Australia identify as belonging to a specific group for example. In looking at the present, Kevin Gilbert, an Indigenous writer suggested that “There is no Aboriginal cultural identity as such and the only things linking Aboriginal people are their black skin, their poverty and their shared experiences of persecution and horror” (Gilbert, 2002, p. 179). Gilbert may be implying that rather than an ‘Aboriginal’ cultural identity, people experience identity according to their own cultural expression. For example, rather than Wiradjuri having an Aboriginal identity, they have a Wiradjuri cultural identity. The participants, without exception, identify as Wiradjuri every day of their lives.
Ian said in his interview that Wiradjuri still exist and always would. Ian: “Wiradjuri will never go away and there is a good reason for that. I identify as Wiradjuri and I will always identify as Wiradjuri...proud to be Wiradjuri and so are my family, especially my young ones.” Lilly echoed the thoughts of Ian: Lilly: “Wiradjuri was defined by a number of things such as community and knowledge and family. My father was born in 1893 and he identified as Wiradjuri...His family were Wiradjuri right through... I’m Wiradjuri because of my family being Wiradjuri so that makes me Wiradjuri too. I say I am so I must be.”

Trent was adamant that Wiradjuri is just as valid now as 200 years ago despite what others may think. Trent: “Our culture...and yours Yalmambirra, are just as valid now...don’t care what people say. We have fought a very hard fight, and still fight...stayed strong and changed when we had to. We had strong minds and hearts and stayed Wiradjuri. They think they beat us but we changed when we had to and when it suited us and we are still here...we are not traditional in the true sense anymore but Wiradjuri doesn’t just mean physical but means in the heart and mind...don’t need that other stuff so much now.” The comments by Trent raise an important issue here. Cultural revival is not just about the physical aspects of it, but is also about belief.

The New South Wales Department of Community Services (NSWDCS) (2007, p. 2) informs readers that the use of the term ‘traditional’ implies to many non-Indigenous people that “either the pre-contact Aboriginal societies were unchanging or that only those Aborigines who retain to a large extent their ‘traditional’ culture, language and lifestyles are to be considered ‘real’ Aborigines.” Bain Attwood (1992, p. i) suggested that “European scholars...claim that the indigenous (sic) peoples cannot represent themselves and must therefore be represented by experts who know more about Aborigines than they know about
themselves.” The inference made here is that ‘expert’ representation of Indigenous peoples should take precedence over the contemporary Indigenous person who is perceived as not having knowledge, or as being an expert on his or her own peoples and or cultures. Thus the colonial attitudes of the past still linger in the minds of people in the academic world; that Indigenous peoples cannot speak for themselves. It is here that the process of decolonisation must be felt and the methodologies employed by those that research Indigenous peoples must be challenged as highlighted in earlier chapters.

However, whilst most of the participants looked at the spiritual and oral aspects of culture rather than on the physical aspects, they were adamant that they still retained enough knowledge about Wiradjuri and still retained connections to country and peoples to ensure that Wiradjuri could speak for Wiradjuri. William included in his response the spiritual aspects of knowledge, whereas Christopher’s response looked more at the loss of knowledge through the loss of Elders.

William: “Regardless of what some may say, I am cultural! I follow protocols…men’s and women’s business. Regardless of being raised to be white, I have learnt. I learnt from uncles. I paint and this is a form of Wiradjuri culture and identity…practice totemic relationships and language…been involved in smoking ceremonies to do with smoking and welcome to country…all knowledge comes from uncles, brothers, fathers…Wiradjuri knowledge holders, but that’s all the physical. There is also the other stuff that white fella’s can’t see or understand…that’s the inside of us, the part that tells us and leads us.”

Christopher: “We have lots of little bits and pieces of culture that we hang onto regardless of what’s happening around us but it’s the Elders that we need to look after. This is very, very
important. A lot of the Elders have passed without letting us know what it was they knew and this is very sad and we must talk to our remaining Elders and get their stories from them before they pass too. Every time we lose an Elder we lose knowledge, every time we lose knowledge, we get closer to losing everything, our culture and our spirits…must hang in there and hope that the Elders will let us record them…not to do so [well] the impacts are obvious.”

When it came to the issue of identity, Paul Behrendt (1995, pp. 147-154) stated that “We Aboriginal people know who we are [and] the best way to ascertain a person’s identity is to ask them who they are...” Pauline, Benjamin and Olivia agree: Pauline: “Look, cultural practices are great...we always had them, but it’s just as important to know who you are than do a smoking ceremony...[that] doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t do them, but firstly it’s important to be Wiradjuri so others will know.” Benjamin: “Being Wiradjuri is still being Wiradjuri...just as valid, perhaps even more so now. We changed to many things and then white people came and we changed and changed and changed, but our culture is still there and we are still Wiradjuri even through these changes...I always say I am Wiradjuri and that takes me away from the other law and makes me feel good about who I am.” Olivia: “It is important to us that we identify as Wiradjuri because we are Wiradjuri...Wiradjuri is Wiradjuri...valid to us and other blackfellas too, and it was valid for our ancestors so why wouldn’t it be valid for me? My heart and spirit tell me who I am, my spirit guides me like a light in the wilderness.”

Henry Reynolds (1996) suggested that “Indigenous people may never want to be absorbed in the Australia nation” (p. 178). Mary and Sharron have different views on ‘absorption’. Mary sees absorption as assimilation and stated that whilst she may be assimilated to a certain
degree she has never wanted that (assimilation), and is of the opinion that when she identifies as Wiradjuri she is still not fully absorbed. Mary in stating that identity in contemporary Australia is important, also stated that working ‘behind the scenes’ may mean a better life for Wiradjuri.

Mary: “In some ways I am assimilated and we live with people that have different ways of thinking don’t we? I mean they have their views and we have our own views...don’t always see eye to eye on everything. We need to get inside and play their own game and help culture...maybe we need someone who can help us but how do we do that?”

The response of Sharon suggests that she would prefer to practice culture than be absorbed into the Australia nation. Sharron: “I practice my culture...through songs and dance, poems, art and bush tucker. I take the young ones out on cultural camps but not as much as I’d like to though...strengthens families in the spiritual way and keeps Wiradjuri connections alive...going...keeps us together as Wiradjuri and not with the other law.”

Glazer and Moynihan (1975, p. 4) in writing of ethnic groups stated that...“we now have a growing sense that they may be forms of social life that are capable of reviving and transforming themselves.” Jack had a little word of warning when it came to identifying as Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia. Jack: “Those who say they belong to the Nation of Wiradjuri must know they are...can’t be one person one day and someone else the next day...tell everyone who you are and stand up and be counted.”

An English sociologist, Anthony Smith (1981, pp. 66-85) suggested that ethnic groups have the potential to form Nations and wrote: “An ethnic group, then, is distinguished by four
features: the sense of unique group origins, the knowledge of a unique group history and belief in its destiny, one or more dimensions of collective cultural individuality, and finally a sense of unique collective solidarity...Nations are closely related to ethnic communities, often ‘growing out’ of the latter, or being ‘constructed’ from ethnic materials” (p. 177). According to Levin (1993, p. 6), “Ethnic groups may be defined by others, but it is only when members become aware of their own uniqueness that a group moves from being an ethnic group to becoming a nation.” For the majority of participants, the words of Anthony Smith and Levin are correct in every sense; the participants recognise themselves as belonging to one Nation of peoples; Wiradjuri.

The road to identifying as Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia though is not made any easier when one reads of the opinions of people such as Andrew Bolt, located in “The Advertiser” (2009). Bolt steadfastly insisted that identifying as Indigenous (Wiradjuri by association)...“strikes me as self-obsessed and driven more by politics...that we harp on about differences and rights based on such trivial inflections of race.” Bolt appears to be from the ‘old school’ and still defines Wiradjuri by colour and features rather than take the word of peoples. Maddison (2009, p. 118) writes that “many Aboriginal people experience their Aboriginality as being under constant challenge from non-Aboriginal people.”

The participants all agree with Maddison that it is hard, but as Louise points out: “It doesn’t matter that I have white blood in me somewhere, because I am Wiradjuri. Let’s say that my father was white and my mother Wiradjuri. I get my Wiradjuri from my mother and this has always been that way....[so], it will always be important that we identify...important to say who you are first, then cultural practices will follow. Doing stuff like dance and ceremony are ok too and we need that so people can see how we are and who we are from our own place...it defines us like identity.” Jason sees the continuation of cultures as a day to day
struggle. Jason: “It’s a constant struggle to maintain Wiradjuri…different ways, different reasons, but we have adapted to the political system…need to understand them in order to see how they worked and thought.” Benjamin was more outspoken when it came to identity in contemporary Australia. Benjamin: “There is one good thing that will come of all the bullshit that people write about us…Wiradjuri will be here long after the racists have gone!”

The significance of identifying as Wiradjuri and being recognised as such can be found in the social lives of Wiradjuri. Informing one of who belongs to whom (in terms of kinship) is also central in where one sits in the overall scheme of things at for example, funerals or reunions and events where the elder members meet new, younger members of Wiradjuri peoples, grandchildren meet grandparents, uncles and aunts meet new ‘kin’ and knowledge is exchanged in regards to who married whom and whose children belong to whom (Cowlishaw 2004). Some of the participants recognised that it may well be very confusing for many non-Indigenous peoples to understand the diversity of Indigenous peoples and cultures when it came to the issues of identity and recognition of identity. John: “It seems that many white people fail to see us as different, from the hunter-gatherer, to the person who has a university education, from the light to the very dark, from the speaker of traditional languages to the person on the radio who speaks English.” Finlayson and Anderson (2002, p. 47) wrote that “A new social identity was constructed for them through the categorisation of people by colour…colour was equated with descent and was used to determine social distance from the source of contamination, identified as traditional culture” (p. 47). William: “They class us as the same...one big mob. They still look at us with colour blindness...class us by colour; ½ caste, ¼ caste; full blood.”
Cowlishaw (2004, p. 13) also looked at the issue of colour and wrote that “Skin colour hovers as a companion of identification, but darkness is neither a necessary nor a sufficient criterion for belonging to the category of Aboriginal.” William continued: “Tell them this for me. Look at the person sitting next to you: are they blackfella? How can you tell? Are there any special signs that give them away? What are the signs? You don’t look at all Australians as being the same, so why look at us any differently? Black is not about colour, it’s about what’s inside, identifying with that and living that for the benefit of everyone...tell them that for me please.”

According to Quintan, recognition by non-Indigenous peoples is tokenistic. Quintan: “I think people have to look at what the message is that I am saying here. How come that in most instances the newspapers and television and radio only tell the bad? Think about this. Why is it that at times of special pomp and ceremony in this country, Indigenous peoples are brought to the front of the line so that the rest of the world can bear witness to how well the Australian governments etc, are looking after ‘their’ Indigenous peoples. When all is said and done, it’s blatantly tokenistic, convenient rhetoric, pulled out when it suits!”

The necessity of having to identify as Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia though is a direct result of colonisation and the colonial attitudes of early invaders. Their attitudes were and to a certain extent are still reflected in the actions of those in positions of power such as academics, those of the many forms of media, and from the mindset of those in positions of political authority. The resultant actions and legislation enacted by non-Indigenous peoples reduced, or took away completely, the rule of gerontocracy and had enormous political repercussions for Wiradjuri peoples and cultures as discussed in an earlier chapter.
6.3 Knowledge Holders and Knowledge Transference in Contemporary Australia

As highlighted earlier, the young learnt from the Elders, became Elders themselves and passed their knowledge on to other young people. There exists a gap between the old and the young and this causes the same people to reach a point in time where they cannot continue. It is here that the younger generation should continue their fight to be included and acknowledged as worthy of leadership material (Maddison, 2009).

There are according to Maddison (2009), many young people emerging as ‘leaders’ within their respective communities and this poses problems for not only them, but for the rule of gerontocracy. Even though they ‘like’ and ‘respect’ their Elders, some of the Wiradjuri participants have stated that they have faced some problems in relation to their transition from a young Wiradjuri person to being considered as an important component of an Elders group. The research participants, especially the younger ones do want to obtain knowledge. Some however are a little impatient, whilst some are willing to wait until the Elders tell them that the time to be given knowledge is right. The younger participants however (Sarah, Olivia, Harry, Jacob, and Lilly), expressed the desire or inclination to be recognised as being Wiradjuri and in order to have this happen, they are willing to belong to different organisations and attend meetings with the Wiradjuri Council of Elders which in turn provides avenues for younger Wiradjuri to act as conduits for the older Wiradjuri and in this sense, assists the young in negotiating their sense of authenticity as Wiradjuri. Sarah said that her going on to get an academic education did pose some problems with some Elders. Sarah: “It looked like... well, to them, that I was trying to take over. I wasn’t... but I needed my voice there so they knew what I felt and thought about things that they were talking about... I like all the Elders, so why would I want to take over?”
Olivia: “I belong to the local Elders group. I was very upfront when I was asked to join them as a junior Elder. I said that if they wanted me to help them, then they must give me a chance to say what I need to say about all of the issues...you see Yal, I take back to the younger ones and I tell them what is going on about different things...I teach them and the Elders let me do that and I respect them for taking that decision because they see the need too.”

Johnson (1982, p. 214) writes, “In all societies education fulfils some of the same basic functions. It transmits culture, trains people for specialized roles, and is simultaneously a force of continuity and change.” Harry sees the role of the Wiradjuri Council of Elders in the same light. Harry: “Wiradjuri have a lot of people that belong to different organisations. These organisations are set up so we can exchange cultural information and look at how Wiradjuri sit in today what with all the laws that still control us...Wiradjuri Council of Elders are a great example of what I am talking about...they teach us, guide us, keep an eye on country and lead us through the battlefield You see Yal, it’s all about education eh?. These groups are everywhere in country and look after anything that is Wiradjuri and anything that impacts on culture and people.”

Lowie (1928) suggested that in traditional society there were certain holders of knowledge, that these holders of knowledge held certain rights over the transference of that knowledge. Congalton and Daniel (1976, p. 239) have suggested that “The older members may wish for less change while the younger may be impatient in their desire for more change.” Jacob agrees with Lowie. “Yeah...We ask why we must wait to speak and that’s why we have problems with us young people...we are impatient to take on the world...hullo world, I am Wiradjuri! Come and get me! To be something like we were, we need to begin at the beginning and listen to our old people. If we can show respect and trust in what they tell and
teach us, then maybe more knowledge can be passed on to help us in this two law country we now live in...Yeah.”

In 2004, the local Wiradjuri community of Narrandera, a town in NSW, participated in what is now known as ‘The Narrandera Koori Community Gathering.” Here, at this gathering, stories were told, songs sung, dance performed and knowledge transferred. This gathering highlighted that Wiradjuri cultures and peoples were alive and well, or as Madeleine suggested; “Despite everything that has happened to us as peoples and cultures, we are still here and we will not be pushed away even when things are tough because we have family and we have culture and we are strong in the Australia of today, and what’s just as important is that we all got on with the Elders and they interacted with the young ones, took them aside, told some stuff to them and everyone was happy and respectful for the Elders doing that.”

Lilly lamented on the loss of knowledge through passing of Elders. Lilly: “Too many of us are dying now. Without the Elders Wiradjuri would find it hard to survive...must put faces out there so our little ones can see that we are still here and still culturally alive. In these times all Wiradjuri must be one nation as before...must adapt to now times but must still be one nation of Wiradjuri. Young people need to come to the Elders so we can exist...that’s why we are here...bring back the pool of knowledge like before too...came together with knowledge and shared when the time was right to get the sharing.”

The participants seek to protect knowledge for knowledge is part of culture and identity and is considered to be more important than the physical expressions of culture. However they also highlight that whilst some knowledge and some aspects of culture have been lost, as long as identity remains, then Wiradjuri will continue to exist. According to Wayne and
Christopher the reason that Wiradjuri are still around today is through the fact that they adapted and changed with the times, regardless of the political circumstances under which they have to live. Wayne: “There is movement everywhere. One has to bend even if we don’t want to because if we don’t bend...[then] we would be broken. Let me just say this Yalmambirra. Those who say we didn’t or cannot change...so called educated people, are the opposite...un-educated!”

Christopher: “We can’t change back and so we need to learn and keep on learning about white ways...need to learn to have cultural survival. Some have been able to do this, but some can’t change or adapt and they need to so they can survive in today’s environment...need to be better equipped in order to survive.”

William, while suggesting that change obviously happened, also suggested that ‘new’ and ‘old’ could work alongside each other. William: “It’s very important that everybody takes notice that Wiradjuri still have culture...a core element is still there, but the contemporary culture is still part of it. See, this was done, and still is being done so we don’t lose the old culture, we just adapted to the new one. And we keep the old one safe there to fall back on if we need to...[the] two cultures can run together.” William made this additional comment: “Culture’s part of us...is us...we are the culture. Yeah, it’s hard for some people to get their heads around, the culture’s inside, it’s there, it belongs there. To take it away or to lose it would be like taking your spirit away.”

6.4 Politics in Contemporary Australia

Whilst the issue of identity appears to be the main concern for the participants, land rights is an issue that sits in the wings, waiting its turn to enter the battle. On June 2 1992, the High
Court overturned the concept that Australia was a land belonging to no-one (*terra nullius*) (Manne, 2002). The *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) emanated from the decision of the High Court (Tehan, 2003) and became a process whereby Indigenous people’s cultures would be recognised according to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner (ATSISJC) in his Native Title Report of 2000.

High Court Judge, Brennan stated that “Native Title has its origin in and is given its content by the traditional laws acknowledged and the traditional customs observed by the indigenous inhabitants of a territory” (cited in Tehan, 2002, p. 534). Tehan quotes Brennan further: “…continued to acknowledged the laws and (so far as practicable) to observe the customs based on the traditions of that clan or group, whereby their traditional connection with the land has been substantially maintained, the traditional community title of that clan or group can be said to remain in existence” (p. 534).

Justice Brennan’s statements highlighted how, in the initial stages of a Native Title claim, High Courts will only consider those which can prove that there has been an “ongoing connection between the claimants and the land… [in] recent developments High Courts have not recognised Indigenous laws and governance structures” ATSISJC (2000, pp. 28-30). This ‘reluctance’ to recognise Indigenous laws and governance by High Courts, is detrimental to the recognition of Wiradjuri cultures, customs, and laws in contemporary Australia. The Yorta Yorta case for example did not only affect the Yorta Yorta; it drew into question the “authenticity” of cultural continuity and places Native Title claims by Wiradjuri in jeopardy (Behrendt and Kelly, 2008, p. 23).
Not all the participants were as one when commenting on Native Title. Some of the participants agreed that undertaking physical cultural activities was important in light of the requirements of applying for Native Title, whilst for some, Native Title was perceived as being divisive and there was less of a concern, or need for Native Title. Some of the participants, for example Jack, Ian and Nellie all consider that Native Title is a major issue that has to be dealt with in one way or another by all the Elders Councils that exist in Wiradjuri country, regardless of the controversy, hostility and fear (see Baker, Davies and Young, 2001) that can still be located within the boundaries of Wiradjuri country.

Jack: “I may not practice a lot of culture but I am aware that I should because this is important for the issue of Native Title...I mean, how can we show who we are and what we do if we don’t do everything? Problem is that we are not allowed to do everything so how can we show the Judges? All the groups (Elders) must take a united stand on this and either let Native Title go or fight for our rights for country.”

Ian: “Native Title changes a lot. One minute you think there’s a chance and the next, there’s no chance. Look, don’t get me wrong Yal, but I really can’t see how we can claim land rights when we can’t even practice our cultures the way they should be done? We can’t do culture because some of the knowledge has gone and white laws act against us too. Why can’t the Judges see that and take that into account? I really feel for Yorta Yorta and I really feel for Wiradjuri, but we must fight for country and fight hard.”

Nellie: “How can we claim our country? You tell me! How can we claim country when we can’t do the cultural things anymore? You tell me! My grandfather cries when he sees other groups not getting land rights and I know why. He sees other groups fighting for country and
not getting it and the more others miss out, the less chance we have...Why must we fight every
day of our lives? I get so tired and many of the other Elders get tired too, but we can’t give
up because if we do then we are letting down our ancestors and those who died fighting to
hold on.” These participants may be highlighting how Native Title is or can be a ‘driver’ or
motivation in the pursuit of cultural practices hence cultural continuity. The participants also
express here, their frustration that the law requires Wiradjuri to show a continuous traditional
connection to country, yet also prevents Wiradjuri from maintaining such traditional
connections.

There were other participants that thought there were more important things to be done than
worry over land rights. These participants were adamant that Native Title had done nothing
for Wiradjuri and would probably never benefit them and with this they have a disregard for
the problems associated with claiming Native Title. Native Title is seen as being full of
uncertainty and the following narratives from Emily, Samantha and Orson in reality follow
the same thoughts as Cowlishaw (2004) who stated that...“uncertainty” existed because the
broader Australian public did not have any idea of what Native Title meant nor any idea of
what was contained/included within the pages of the Native Title Act.

Emily: “I don’t like Native Title. You don’t know where you are with it. This thing has seen
my peoples divided over land and money and the result is that some families don’t speak to
each other...just ignore each other and that’s sad and makes me unhappy. Native Title hasn’t
done anything but see us fight each other, so I don’t care for it, so if I don’t practice much
culture then from me, that still doesn’t matter in my eyes...more important that we stick with
each other and be family again.” Samantha: “Bugger Native Title! My parents have signed
papers for a claim in Wiradjuri country, but when the lawyers told them how long it would
take and how much money it would cost, it kind of stopped them going ahead. There were other Elders that also signed and they stopped too. It was heart-breaking to see them so unhappy and for what? Courts don’t understand us no matter how hard we try...look at others, they don’t get Native Title and they went through all that for years and years, for what...nothing!”

Orson: “To be honest Yal, we Wiradjuri need to focus on more important things don’t we? The issues of health, housing, education and having jobs with good pay are more important to lots of us...more important than Native Title. They are the most certain things in our lives. I want our country back too, but we must look at the bigger picture first, get things done there and then maybe Native Title, but for lots of us, there are things that need doing first.”

Whilst Emily, Samantha and Orson are stating here that survival and development as Wiradjuri is more important than Native Title, they may have missed one crucial element of Native Title and that is that Native Title is a ‘legal’ recognition of cultural identity.

6.5 Closing the Gaps in Contemporary Australia

In contemporary Australia there are still ‘gaps’ (opportunity and quality of life) between Indigenous (Wiradjuri) and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia. This has been borne out by the 2010 Close the Gap Steering Committee for Indigenous Health Equality Report. The Report states that the gaps “include literacy, numeracy, education and employment, infant mortality and a 17 year gap in the life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The recent ‘closing the gap’ commitments by Australian governments, through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), represent, for the first time, a coordinated, multi-sector approach to addressing the substantial health and other disadvantages experienced by Indigenous people” (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, 2010, p. 2).
However, many of the participants see these gaps as evidence that past governments and policies have not undertaken a duty of care in regards to Wiradjuri and other Indigenous peoples and hence are a little dubious that current and future governments can really help. They are seen as a direct link and reminder of past government policies. Most of the women participants though saw employment as being central to good health in contemporary Australia.

The participants who commented most about this issue were mainly women but as Trent put it: “Men know there is a problem with everything and we support our women and kids in this, but we (men) need to get out and work, get money, provide better meals and get our kids into schools and keep them there...sometimes have to leave the other worrying for women because they are at the front more than we are...they see the kids more than us, they look after them more than us, not because we don’t want to, but simply because we are working all the time, that’s how we help.”

In its Social Justice Report (2005), Tom Calma the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner took Australian Governments to task and called for an end to inequality in regards to Indigenous health and life issues. Tom Calma wrote: “It is not credible to suggest that one of the wealthiest nations of the world cannot solve a health crisis affecting less than 3% of it citizens” (p. 3).

All the issues described by the Report are of great concern to the participants. Louise, Karen, Sharron and Laura each in their own way, represent the thoughts of the other participants here. Louise: “It looks like from the ‘outside’ that my fella doesn’t care, but in the rooms of our home, he is a great father and I have seen him in tears when the little ones get sick or
hurt themselves. I have seen him worry about whether he will live long enough to see them
grow up. I hear all the time about how long black men will live and I reckon it’s because the
laws don’t let us be cultural the way we should. We are strong, but we can only take so much
before all the pain and worry takes their toll of us, especially our men. Our little ones need to
be strong and healthy like others but it looks like to me that governments only say they will do
this and that…but why are we so damn unhealthy? Jobs for our men, good food on our tables
and proper cultural teaching for our little ones, that’s what I think can fix us up.”

Karen: “Since I was married, I was beaten, had two children taken from me and raised many
more. My husband was the worst when he drank, but let me tell you, he was the hardest
worker that I have ever met. But sometimes that wasn’t enough because the bills would come
in and no money left for good food and the kids would get sick a lot. When he gave up
drinking, the beatings stopped and our children grew up relatively healthy...that is until they
got older. I lost my husband through that disease you get when you smoke (emphysema)...he
got too early. I have two daughters with cancer and I have had cancer too. But through all
this I only lay blame at the laws that saw my little ones taken away...You see, I think that’s
what started the beatings and the drunkenness, so how can I blame my husband...he just
couldn’t handle it and I guess I was the stronger of the both of us. Today nothing much has
changed for blackfellas. We still die younger don’t we? I read that and heard it from some
Elders that the government gives blacks money for health but I have never seen any and it
makes you wonder eh? I can’t read properly and write the way others do but I have survived
and my children, bless them, have stood by me all this time...they did their father too, all
through the bad. I wish he was here still so he could see what a great job he did with the
kids...he should be very proud.”
Sharron: “The government should take a good look at how they treat us. They should also take a look at the laws they have for us, not for whites...that’s discrimination! Let me ask this. Why after all these years, when government throw lots of money at blackfellas, that we die quicker than they do? Where does all the money go? Why don’t our kids like going to school and if we get them there, why don’t they stay? I know why. The money gets lost in the system, white people...and black people...don’t use the money to buy kidney machines...use the money to pay themselves first! Our kids don’t like what is taught to them, that’s why they don’t go or stay at school. Why go when a teacher just rubbishes your family, tells you the wrong way and confuses the heck out of you? Would you stay if someone told you that your mother was an animal or something else...We die because of everything that happens to us. Many of our men can’t get decent jobs because they are not qualified and that means less money than whites and more health issues for us. We need our men to work so we can get better and we need them to live longer than they do.”

Laura: “I learnt a lot watching my husband. He was a good man and he always did what he could. But worry killed him Yal, he worried too much. He was only 52 when he went from us a few years ago... ‘98 it was. He didn’t deserve to go so early and he didn’t deserve the worry he had. I will always believe that he would still be with me and the kids if he didn’t worry so much. He worried about getting money and food because he knew how important that was. He always said that good dinner would mean good children. But he wasn’t always in work clothes and the dole wasn’t a lot so he worried and he died. Who is to blame for all this Yal? Who do I blame? My husband was...always thought that the money government gave out never really got there, where it was supposed to be, some yes, but most, no. I know we live in a white world with white laws and that, but government should let us be us and I reckon we would all be great again. We didn’t die early in the old days, we could all speak language,
we were all educated and we all lived for each other...can’t go back but at least we can get some of that spirit back and that would help wouldn’t it?”

The stories of these participants suggest that in order for families to have better outcomes in relation to health issues, long-term employment is critical. Not having a certain future plays on the minds of these participants and raises a lot of questions that go unanswered and in turn causes a lot of anger and distress.

6.6 Social Justice and Self-Determination in Contemporary Australia

Reynolds (1996, p. 138) stated that in his report of 1993, as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner, Mick Dodson stated that...“the crucial importance of self-determination to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was little appreciated by non-indigenous Australians but that ‘correctly understood’, every issue concerning the historical and present status, entitlements, treatment and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is implicit in the concept of self-determination.”

Dodson “rested his claims on the grounds that Indigenous Australians had always possessed distinct identities and could, consequently, freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development” (Reynolds, 1996, p. 138).

The majority of participants saw current legislation along with imposed government organisations as barriers to self-determination and hence, the rights of Wiradjuri. In 2003 the National Parks and Wildlife Service for example, refused permission for a large amount of cultural material to be saved from excavation in an area of NSW (O’Brien, 2003).
Wayne: “I come from a town where a lot of sites were found and National Parks is going to bulldoze the lot so they can build a dam...won’t even let us get in there and get the stuff out! How can we get our message across when these so called organisations fight us every step of the way? You know what? This is the protection time all over again, think they know what’s best for us and our culture, well they bloody well don’t!” Wayne implies that current policy can be likened to past policy whereby the ‘protection’ of Wiradjuri saw Wiradjuri ruled by a more dominant society. Self-determination also means looking after country in regards to site management and preservation as sites are linked to creation time and ancestors. The New South Wales Aboriginal Lands Council recognises that sites are being destroyed without the intervention of someone like Wayne. Self-determination also means looking after country in regards to site management and preservation as sites are linked to creation time and ancestors. The current situation is that every week, there are three permits given out that will see the destruction of three sites (NSWALC, 2012).

In the year 2007, the Northern Territory report on child abuse, (Little Children are Sacred) (see Anderson and Wild, 2007) under the Howard Government, saw troops sent to some areas of the Northern Territory, for example Maningrida and Finke, in response to the issue of child sexual abuse and along with the banning of alcohol and pornography, welfare payments were quarantined and lands seized (Carney, 2007). This became known as ‘The Intervention’ and was still implemented under the Rudd Government and is still in force under the Gillard Government. The Intervention was according to Minnerup and Solberg (2011, p. 10), a “disturbing historical regression.” The Intervention in the Northern Territory happened without consulting the local communities “[And] there is also little agreement about what the intervention has achieved…with support or condemnation split across communities in the territory” (Murdoch, 2011, p. 18).
The Intervention goes against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In an information sheet provided by the United Nations, readers are informed that ...

“free, prior and informed consent must be given before any major decision is taken that affects us differently to others, where;

- Free means without force or bullying.
- Prior means that we should be consulted before the activity or project begins.
- Informed means that we should be given all the information in a manner we understand.
- Consent means we should be consulted and able to participate in an honest and open process to achieve an outcome all parties are happy with (2008, p. 3).

Whilst Wiradjuri and the communities of Maningrida and Finke are separated by many, many miles of country, the repercussions of the Intervention are felt in Wiradjuri country by some of the participants.

Both Chelsey and Rebecca either have friends or family who live in the areas noted above. Chelsey: “I know people who live in the place where the intervention is happening...family and friends live there. No-one told them what was happening. They are out of work now and their land has been taken away from them because of this lease thing. (The intervention saw the compulsory acquisition of townships through five-year leases (Sutton, 2009). They don’t ask me for anything but I send them something to help out. They tell me stories and it’s hard for me to make judgements because I’m so far away, but the children who they say are abused should be the first to be cared for...that’s what I think.” Rebecca: “I know people who live in Maningrida who are under the law, the new law. This intervention thing is ok for the
children now, but what happens when the men lose their jobs? I’ll tell you what happens…the abuse will happen again. Howard should have spoken with people and asked how he could protect the children and protect the men too. This is just like the old days when governments just came in and did what they wanted, how they wanted, where they wanted and to hell with anyone!”

There are areas where some local Shire Councils for example, have recognised Wiradjuri peoples and country and have consulted with them. The Nationals Member for Riverina Kay Hull (2003) brings to the attention of readers that signage on traditional Wiradjuri land between Wagga Wagga and Narrandera acknowledges the history of Wiradjuri.

All of the participants have noticed the signage along some of the roads and major routes within Wiradjuri country that either acknowledges Wiradjuri country, or provides some information of people and cultures to local residents and visitors alike. Rather than single out any one or two, Alan seemed to put the thoughts of all the participants together more than adequately.

Allan thought the signage was ‘great’. Allan: “I know those signs. I watched those signs put up and I talked to people who were doing that. They told me that the signs will show people about us and would help in creating an awareness of our culture and people in the area...that was a great thing to happen because in the now time, I have met lots of people who have seen them and they say that they know more about us now. The signs are also a way of defining country to our neighbours. This is very important because some are trying to move us out and them in!”
Then there are organisations, mining companies for example, that also recognise peoples and cultures. Northparkes Mines operates 27 kilometres north-west of Parkes in the Central West of New South Wales (Northparkes Mines, 2009). This organisation employs Wiradjuri peoples and consults with the Wiradjuri Council of Elders on a regular basis in order that cultural material is not impacted upon. One of the participants: “I think that Northparkes is very good in that they talk to me all the time and then I can tell them what is ok and what is not. It is really great that an organisation like this talks to Wiradjuri because it shows that they recognise us as being the traditional owners of country. And let’s make this clear...governments should take a leaf out of Northparkes and see that working together minimises conflict. See, we can all work together for the good of all.”

It can be seen as highlighted in the above two paragraphs that there are some non-Indigenous peoples in positions of power, politically speaking, that do recognise Wiradjuri peoples and cultures; a far cry from the perspective offered by Maddison (2009, pp. xxxviii –xxxix); “From the earliest encounters, Aboriginal people have been met with a range of simplistic responses, which have variously attempted to obliterate or assimilate them. When it at last became clear that Aboriginal people were not going anywhere...the damage had been done.” Terry understands fully well that damage has been done, but does see a way out; the need to become involved with the political systems that govern cultures and peoples.

Terry: “I firmly believe that we cannot go back...let me clarify that Yal. We cannot go back entirely, but we can practise everything we know so that others can learn and practise and pass knowledge on but...and this is a big but...we need to get inside the political system and change laws that don’t let us practise cultures the way we used to and should do now. Governments have always defined us and they have always told us what we could and could
not do...time for change now. I know, and peoples, both black and white need to understand that we are not the peoples of the boomerang and spears anymore because we are not allowed to be...governments won’t let us.”

Terry’s words “governments won’t let us” are often repeated by other participants. Terry is supporting the views of other participants when stating that Wiradjuri cultures cannot be undertaken in contemporary times simply because current legislation and policy prohibits specific aspects of culture being undertaken. This, according to the views of some of the participants is not conducive to self-determination.

But self-determination is also about being able to ‘tell’ stories of the past without being hindered by those who have political agendas that would still seek to stifle the voices of Wiradjuri in ensuring that only the ‘good’ aspects of history are told.

In 1996 the then Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard stated publicly that “The black armband view of our past reflects a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism, and other intellectual forms of discrimination” (Mark, 2009, p. 1). But decolonisation is all about Wiradjuri peoples telling their own stories, providing their own versions of the history of this country (Smith, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008), however, how the broader Australian community react to alternative versions of events is up to them. The following perspectives from some of the research participants highlights how important it is that the ‘black’ viewpoints are provided and recorded for all to read.
The perspective of Tess in regards to Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia centred mainly on how Wiradjuri have survived due to Wiradjuri peoples writing their own version of history, peoples and cultures; a way of self-determination. The published narratives of Stan Grant, Tara June Winch, Sally Riley, Isobel Coe, Anita Heiss, Kerry Reed-Gilbert, Kevin Gilbert and Elizabeth Hodgson are prime examples of what Tess is speaking of. Tess: “It is very, very important that those Wiradjuri peoples that are writing or have written about us, keep doing it…writing. How else can we get our message out there?” Olivia sees that the writings of Wiradjuri peoples are a great thing. Olivia: “A lot of stuff that was written about us was wrong…simple as that, but now in the last years we have written about ourselves and that has helped some Wiradjuri people and how some non-Indigenous people have come to understand us a little better… I hope they have anyhow! But I also think that the message is not getting through to the right people when it should.” Olivia implies here that Wiradjuri peoples should contribute to the contemporary discourse and provide Wiradjuri perspectives on peoples, cultures and country and that in understanding more about the wishes and desires, thoughts and ideas of Wiradjuri peoples, the broader community may come to consider that Wiradjuri struggles for self-determination and social justice are necessary in recognising the uniqueness of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures.

In his interview Albert said that the ‘white’ literature he had read had some good bits to them but some were just not ‘right’. Albert: “Must tell the truth as we know it to be so people know who we are. Look, the kiddies read and then believe sometimes too. Some come to me and say what is the truth…they worry that when they say something they will be laughed at because of what is written is different…ahh…they feel shame…so I say, let our voices be heard, let people see us for who we are and what we can give and what we can do.” The ‘truth’ that Albert is referring to is based on the knowledge that he has, that has been passed down to him.
that he has heard in visits to family and friends. The ‘truth’ also comes from some of the literature that Albert has read. If the literature agrees with Albert then that becomes the ‘truth’, for Albert at least.

The differing perspectives and the conflict sometimes caused by them according to Mark (2009) contributed to the debate destined to become known as the ‘history wars’. The history wars follow on from Howard’s interpretation of history where he would dismiss Indigenous voices and perspectives of history in order to keep history ‘pure’. In the year 2009 the then current Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, called for an end to the history wars that he saw as dividing a nation (Grattan, 2009). Both Howard and Rudd have their own political ‘barrows’, but Howard’s view and Rudd’s call for an end to the debate found no supporters among Karen and John.

Karen: “We need to have another look at what’s been written about us...look at it with no discrimination. Much of what has been written about Wiradjuri is lies...full of untruths. Wiradjuri need to be able to control what is written about them...write our own history...Wiradjuri by Wiradjuri for Wiradjuri! Don’t you feel that this is all ridiculous, Yal? I mean, how can we get our stories out there when the Prime Minister of the country says that we shouldn’t do it? How stupid are these people...[and] they run the country thinking like this!”

John: “If you look at Howard’s comments about the black armband version of history then any reasonable person would realise that the man is a racist. All he wants is his white version of events and all others have no place in the history of this country. I have never understood how he could have become the so called leader of this country. Some say he will
be noted in history as the best but let me tell you Australia, he will go down in black history as the worst, as a racist man who in his years in office, divided black and white even further...we will never meet again!”

Most Governments though have a long history of failing Indigenous peoples with many having shown some kind of promise, but in the end the promises somehow slipped away (Maddison, 2009). “There is an entrenched but inaccurate popular belief that Aborigines gained full citizenship rights as a result of the 1967 Referendum” (see Attwood and Marcus, 1997), but according to Chesterman and Galligan (1998), there are constraints on the “right to share to the full in the social heritage.” The promise of Mabo in 1992 failed to provide a clear and unambiguous pathway for Indigenous peoples in their efforts to claim Native Title (Baker, et. al 2001). The Hawke government accepted the Barunga Statement in which Hawke “signed a statement in which he undertook to negotiate a treaty with Aboriginal people...Hawke reneged and the treaty did not come to pass” (Maddison, 2009, p. 220). Paul Keating’s Redfern Park speech provided a chance for all Australian’s to engage and understand Indigenous peoples, but according to Maddison (2009, p. 230), this was also a “false dawn."

Minnerup and Solberg (2011, p. 13) state that “the two main institutional pillars” of self-determination, Aboriginal Land Councils (ALCs) and ATSIC, remained firmly strapped into the legal and budgetary shackles controlled by white majority politics, and Indigenous people were not even consulted before ATSIC itself was abolished by government fiat and the powers of the ALCs curtailed by the Northern Territory emergency intervention.” But there were two other ‘pillars’ of self-determination that were thought by some to aid in self-determination: the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NACC) and the National
Aboriginal Conference (NAC). Jane Robbins (2011, pp. 49-55) quoted among others, Hanks (1984), E. J. Robbins (1994) Tickner (2001) and Beherndt (2005) in looking at the issues surrounding how Indigenous peoples were represented in both Northern Europe and Australia. The NACC, established in 1973 and disbanded in 1977, “had weak legal status; it was created by simple ministerial directive and had no legislative basis and, hence, no financial independence” (Hanks, 1984, p. 50); that the NACC was replaced in 1977 by the NAC which survived until 1985 even though “its powers were restricted, had limited independence, with few resources and no statutory basis” (Robbins, 1994, p. 50).

Following the disbandment of NAC the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was established in 1989. ATSIC’s “independence however was bounded and on a number of occasions this was demonstrated by government intervention; for example, the removal of ATSIC’s health program responsibilities” (Tickner, 2001, p. 53). Added to this was the fact that it was “never responsible for all Commonwealth Indigenous programs; Indigenous policy areas such as education and training were controlled by other government bodies” (Beherndt, 2005, p. 54). The peak Indigenous organisation, the voice of so many Indigenous peoples, was to be silenced; the Howard government disbanded ATSIC in 2004.

On the 13th February, 2008, Kevin Rudd made a formal apology to Indigenous peoples, more specifically to the Stolen Generations (Gray, 2011). But whilst the apology was well received by the participants, there are still issues that have to be dealt with in the daily lives of Wiradjuri according to the viewpoints of Trent and Joseph who both stated that Wiradjuri must move beyond the apology now and look to resolve other business. Trent: “The apology was great. I think he (Rudd) did really well, but we must move forward to fix other things. The apology won’t fix them, we must do that ourselves.” Caring for country as the data has
shown, also allows knowledge to be continuous and passed on to future generations for the
benefit of not only Wiradjuri, but for the broader Australian public as well. The participant
Joseph alluded to this in his opinion on Prime Minister Rudd’s apology to the Stolen
generations, that Wiradjuri want to be able to work and live on country and manage country
for the future generations of not only Wiradjuri, but for all people.

Joseph: “For too long we have suffered. For too long Wiradjuri have endured all sorts of
pain...now Wiradjuri must take a stand and continue the fight for recognition of not only
what has happened, but we must take a stand in the fight to be recongised for who we are and
how we can contribute to other people and the caring for this wonderful land, now called
Australia.”

Whilst “The desire for self-determination is motivated by the wish to extend human rights”
(Boldt, 1981, p. 545), some participants such as Terry, Rebecca, Christopher, Sharron and
Jason took into account the past failures of people and government and stated that they were
working for a new and fresh start for Wiradjuri which, as they explained, begins with
recognition and ends with self-determination.

Terry: “My view is this. All the talking from those government people and all the laws have
not done us any favours have they? Well, it’s about time we made ourselves known to the rest
of the world in one, united, strong voice and when we do, we must be allowed to lead our own
Wiradjuri peoples and give them the right to have their own pathways.” But is this possible
when Wiradjuri peoples and cultures according to Chalmers (2005, p. 160), are still “subject
to internal constrictions...that is, Australian law.”
Rebecca: “Oh dear, they did mess things up didn’t they? Those governments had their chances and messed it up all the time. What we need Yal is to have our own lives back, let people know who we are and then we can get on with it...like, well not like those government people, but us, Wiradjuri.” Sharon: “There are some Elders that were around when all the bad things happened...they are still alive, some of them. The government people have really only wanted to sound like they were going to help but they didn’t really want to. All those times that they could have done good, well...turned out not good.”

In 1978 F. Hardy wrote “...to stand on his own feet, to ask for and to demand his rights-there lies his only chance of survival” (p.40). In contemporary Australia, Sharon stated “It’s time now for Wiradjuri to stand tall and proud and take the first steps ourselves, win or lose.” Jason: “Well, is there any chance for us when governments say this, that and the other and don’t do anything? Is there any hope when the media publish only the bad and the media is written sometimes by people that are racist? Is there any hope for us as the nation of Wiradjuri when everything seems to be against us? Bloody hell yes! We must gather once again in all our clans and meet and tell everyone who we are and tell them that we must be allowed to be Wiradjuri in every sense of the word. We must be allowed to be who we are politically, socially and culturally, and our old ones must be allowed to tell their stories to the world without racists like Howard saying we are wrong...stuff him!”

Beneath the surfaces of identity and self-determination is another issue; that of the right to use Wiradjuri country in order to have cultural and spiritual fulfilment. Maddison (2009) suggested that relationships to land are central to culture and identity and further suggested that these relationships are not fully understood by non-Indigenous people. It is important to note that undertaking cultural activity on country, according to the responses of the
participants, is perceived as ‘working on country, where identifying as Wiradjuri is ‘working for country’. Both of these are described by participants as contributing to their identity as Wiradjuri. Many of the participants participate in some form of working on country whereby they undertake cultural activity. All seek to work for country, as all identify as Wiradjuri. In this light, working on or for country are forms of connection to creation and ancestral spirits. Except for the participant Tess, whilst the participants have not actually related what they want to do on country in relation to hunting, gathering and the economic benefits derived from those activities, they do have a very strong sense of responsibility for country. Not being able to fulfil their responsibilities in working for country is cause for much frustration, because current legislation only makes it more difficult for the participants to express this aspect of their culture.

Tess commented that her relationship to the land meant that she could have a say in the development of some areas. Tess: “I do lots of things on country...weed, fish, plant, make things like baskets, but I only take what I really only need...see, not like white fella’s because they just come along and take everything. To be really honest, they don’t understand my connection to my country and after all this time you would think they would eh? Some people knock on my door and ask for my help and that, and I do help them try to do things right, but what chance is there when others don’t talk, don’t tell what’s planned and bugger things up? I tell you Yalmambirra, I need country to provide things, but I need country for healing too.”

Then there are the issues with economic gain from the land by those who are not Wiradjuri. Many of the participants see the utilisation of resources on Wiradjuri country as just another form of genocide and of stifling Wiradjuri when it comes to economic development and self-determination. Wayne and Jack’s responses provide some insight into the issue of resource
use by those who are not Wiradjuri. Wayne: “Listen, there are huge amounts of people that use our country...without us, without our permission and without us benefiting. This to me is wrong! My peoples did not rape and pillage the country...our earth mother. If we did then we would have died. We used the resources to live...didn’t exploit them and we did all of this in such a way that all benefitted...not just one...all.”

Jack: “I have worked with some development companies that just didn’t do the right thing...took everything. Of course I was paid, but that’s not what we mean when we talk about benefitting from country. We look at it this way...country keeps us alive and we keep country alive, but now she looks like she is dying. We could look after country much better if organisations like development came to us and asked us and then took our advice on what to do and what not to do. Then they should allow us to benefit by putting money into an environmental account of sorts so we can care for country after they have gone...things like that would mean a lot to my peoples.”

Self-determination goes hand in hand with social justice and social justice cannot happen without full recognition that Wiradjuri peoples and cultures are alive and well in contemporary Australia (see Ivison, Patton and Sanders 2000). The participants see the fight for social justice as just another battle that has to be fought; another day, another battle.

Orson, Harry, Olivia, Jack and Terry’s viewpoints provide some food for thought on the issue of social justice. Orson: “Who would believe that in a country like Australia, we are still not treated as equals...no recognition of identity, no recognition of culture and no recognition of country. We are not treated the same as others...I mean, well again, white people say they are Australian and no one questions that...[but] if we say we are Wiradjuri, well the shit hits the
fan then eh!” Harry: “All we want is to be able to determine who we are, the right to practice culture if we want, and the right to lead our own lives...not that hard. I think that the whole thing about social justice is letting us live as Wiradjuri, recognise people, culture and country as Wiradjuri and see what happens...can’t get any worse.”

According to Miller (1976, p. 8), “A dominant group, inevitably, has the greatest influence in determining a culture’s overall outlook – its philosophy, morality, social theory, and even its science...the dominant group, thus, legitimises the unequal relationship and incorporates it into society’s guiding concepts...the social outlook, then, obscures the true nature of this relationship – that is, the very existence of inequality.” Olivia believes that with social justice will come equality. Olivia: “Social justice is all about identity...recognising us for who we are. I am not Australian, I am not Indigenous, I am not Aboriginal...Wiradjuri is who I am! That’s what it’s all about.” According to the Reconciliation and Social Justice Library (2001, p. 3), social justice is all about the inclusion of “preservation of culture, distinct identity and language, together with a power to take decisions over their own affairs.” Jack and Terry however, do not believe that social justice can be a reality whilst there are other issues on the table.

Jack: “Social justice eh? Is it possible? No, I don’t believe so...well not in my lifetime anyhow. I don’t care about having all the stuff that white people have. I don’t care about going to places where they go. All I care about is having Wiradjuri live as Wiradjuri. Look, I know there have been lots of changes, but you can’t tell me that we can’t still be Wiradjuri. Let us have our own place in this country, let us lead our own people, let us have our own way of being and doing...that’s social justice Yalmambirra...[but] not in my life time.”
Terry: “Social justice won’t happen when there are still laws and policies that are racist that we have to live under! Why is it that we are not allowed to practice cultures? Why is it that we must put cultures in cupboards and pretend that they aren’t there anymore? Why is it that the government sees us and our cultures as a threat to them? I think that the answer is an easy one...racism. What else can it be?”

Keith McConnochie (1973, pp. 44-45), wrote “The historical coincidence of exploitation, rationalism and a scientific basis for denying humanity to enslaved or exploited peoples provides the foundations for western institutional racism.” McConnochie wrote further; “It is not possible to arbitrarily define people as either ‘racist’ or ‘non-racist’. Rather, people may be placed on some dimension of ‘degree of racism’” (p. 31). To the participants however, race and racism are issues in their lives and are issues that they (participants) have to deal with every day of their lives, whether in supermarkets, in their chosen fields of employment, in educational institutions or in their broader communities.

6.7 Current Representations of Peoples and Cultures

There have been many people in positions of political power that would still adhere to the process of colonisation. They do this in various ways. Some would stifle the voices of Wiradjuri peoples (see Howard, 2006), some would simply write Wiradjuri out of history, (see Tatz, 1979), or deny them one (Birch, 1997). People in positions of political power, clinging to colonial mentalities, constitute one of the major roadblocks that Wiradjuri must struggle through on their pathway to self-determination and social justice as suggested by the research participants.
Of the forty one who agreed to participate in this research project, thirteen of them made some reference to specific people who hold or had held some position of power, politically speaking, and who can impact on what some people believe. The interviews from these thirteen participants are long on tirade and have been condensed in order to incorporate at least some of their perspectives. These thirteen participants had read, seen or heard of one, two, or all of the following:

- On Australia Day 1992, the then Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner, Irene Moss, stated that “Australia must work through its identity crisis. It is no longer a European nation which happens to be in Asia. It is an Asian nation with a European heritage” (Curthoys, 1993, pp. 19-38).


- Then the words of one aspiring far-right politician, David Oldfield (2001), who stated that “without Anglo-Celtic intervention, Indigenous people would still be living in the stone age” (Oldfield, 2001, pp. 3-5).

The perspectives of the thirteen participants differ somewhat. Some took offense and considered views such as those outlined above to be racist and some considered them as just a part of life now. Frank: “Yeah, I’ve read some of this stuff. What a load of shit is all I can say! See; see how hard it is to move forward when comments like this come from racist people in power?” Wayne: “There are still people that don’t get us, get where we are coming from and that takes away all the hard work that we and others do...how can they hold down these jobs?” Gail: “I feel so sorry for people like this...racists I mean. What must their mothers and fathers have been like? I wonder if that’s where they get their thoughts from.”
Jessica: “People like this should be sacked! What right have they to say these things, especially when we need to get more ahead...they just push us back again.” Colin: “Wonder what the white fella’s think about it being an Asian nation? Ha! Serves some of them right!”

Allan: “If I were still living in the stone age I would certainly get a magic-man to pay Oldfield a little visit...what a ratbag this man is!” Brian: “I don’t live like Oldfield says we do...I am not stone age and if I were, then I would still push for recognition for who I am.”

Rebecca: “I guess some people will take sides with the Society but who cares? I reckon there are more on our side these days and the rest, the racists, can go jump anyhow!” Emily: “Let them say these things Yal. They are racist people anyhow so we will never change their minds about anything will we?”

John: “Racist people will always try to undermine us, but shit, let’s not help them by not moving forward and getting on with the real issues of education and health and identity.” Joseph: “Ha! Yeah, I have read them but I don’t care Yal. My children’s education is more important and then the rest will fall into place...yeah.” Chelsey: “My world is Wiradjuri. I share it now with others and this includes people that are racist...that’s life I guess” and Louise: “I don’t know what to say. I don’t know how we can stop people from saying such things about us. I really don’t know, but I do know that we must not let them get in the way of our survival as Wiradjuri...must not let that happen.”

According to Wilmer (1993, p. xii), “The indigenous voice in world politics calls for their admission of indigenous peoples to the world community as equals...[and] calls on the nation-state to come to the terms with the continuing existence of indigenous nations as enduring and distinct communities with a right to self-determination.”

The politics of knowledge are still inherent in contemporary Australia. The so-called history wars have been going on since Indigenous peoples have begun asserting their own sense of
place in history. In contemporary Australia, the expression of Wiradjuri perspectives has continued the ‘war of words’ in an attempt to have their voices heard along with those that have written about them and along-side those who continue to write about them without speaking with them.

According to Taylor (1996) all peoples, whatever their cultural background or country of origin, have an inherent right to their own history. However, in contemporary Australia, Indigenous peoples, hence Wiradjuri peoples and cultures are still the pawns in an ongoing “political dialogue” (Howard, 1982, p. 2) that continually pushes Wiradjuri peoples back into the shadows once again. Some examples of these political dialogues, through the popular media, follow.

As highlighted earlier, the Herald-Sun columnist Andrew Bolt has caused distress and anger amongst many Indigenous peoples in relation to his articles on identity and privilege. Bolt was sued by nine Indigenous peoples for racial discrimination. This case according to The Koori Mail (2011), “is seen as an important one in terms of ‘identity politics’ – effectively a matter of racial protection versus free speech” (p. 1).

In contemporary Australia the debate over identifying as Wiradjuri as an example, is a debate that many non-Indigenous peoples have between themselves without Wiradjuri representation. These debates centre around most of the issues that Wiradjuri peoples are faced with every day of their lives. As Wiradjuri peoples strive to attain social justice and self-determination they are continually maligned by the likes of Gary Johns, a reactionary, who opposes anything cultural, who questions identity, and who suggests that all Indigenous peoples are corrupt in some way. There are however those who take Johns to task.
The review by Stephen Gray (2011) of the book “Aboriginal Self-Determination: The Whiteman’s Dream” written by Gary Johns is one example of how the debate on history, identity, self-determination and social justice in relation to Indigenous peoples, hence Wiradjuri, has not considered any Indigenous voices. According to Gray, in relation to today’s ‘penchant’ for Indigenous cultures, Johns has written that “[it] “is used to shield corruption and abuse of power in Aboriginal communities. It is also used to slow the necessary steps to adjustment of Aboriginal people to the modern culture and economy. All those who have played the culture game, who have striven to create a life from Aboriginal misery, are to be condemned in the most severe terms.” Gray also suggests that people should stop pretending their culture is worth preserving because he accuses pre-contact Indigenous peoples of infanticide that was rife throughout communities, looks at the use of fire as the delights of incendiarism, looked at caring for country as stripping the land of vegetation and polluting the environment, and views the apology as insulting.”

David Martin (n.d.) has entered the debate and examines and also discusses Gary Johns. Here Martin takes issue with Johns on a number of occasions. For example, Martin suggested that ‘Johns does not refer to works undertaken by relevant researchers, and because he (Johns) does not have any direct experience of Indigenous societies, he is therefore ignorant of the true nature of these societies’ (p. 208).

The current Victorian Premier (2011), Ted Baillieu’s comment that peoples shouldn’t have to make an Acknowledgement of Country has also caused a great deal of debate. The debate, whilst initially centred on Acknowledgement / Welcome to Country activities has ballooned to include issues of race and racism, recognition as Indigenous peoples, identity issues, the
difference between ‘owning’ land or being ‘custodians’ of land, cultural background and ignorance.

Keith Windschuttle (2003) in looking at the Australian Museum’s exhibition on Wiradjuri responded by stating that “The exhibit is also misleading in asserting that there was such a thing as a “Wiradjuri War” or “Wiradjuri Country” in 1823-1825. This is because there was no such group of Aborigines known as the Wiradjuri in existence in the 1820’s. The term “Wiradjuri” does not derive from Aboriginal culture. It was invented by the white anthropologist John Fraser in the 1890’s. I quote Norman Tindale’s The Aboriginal Tribes of Australia (1974) p. 156.” Whilst it appears that Windschuttle has utilised only the single resource in coming to his conclusion that Wiradjuri never existed as a named group, this thesis has shown that there were many people that had already recognised Wiradjuri as such. Indicated below are examples of people who have recognised that the name Wiradjuri did indeed exist prior to the 1890s and was used by those people when they conducted research or wrote about Wiradjuri peoples and or cultures (see for example Gunther (1837); Rolfe (1840); Ridley (1875); Gribble (1882); Howitt (1883); Bastian (1886) and Wesson (2000 who cites Robinson (1840); Barber (1841); Lane (1859); and Smyth (1878).

Read (1994, pp. 1-2) suggested that the war between Wiradjuri and white people was fought by successive generations and in that light, Read suggested that there were five cycles...“from the first settlement in Sydney to the war of extermination in the Bathurst district in 1823, from the settlement of north-east Wiradjuri country to the collapse of the Wellington Valley Mission in the 1840s, from the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board in 1883, to the collapse of voluntary assimilation in 1908, from the Aborigines Protection Act of 1909 to the collapse of dispersal in 1929, [and] from the inception of planned assimilation in 1941 to
its collapse in 1968...each generation learnt in turn that the Wiradjuri were not easily subdued.” In contemporary Australia, non-Indigenous people are still learning that Wiradjuri are not easily subdued. Wiradjuri are fighting the ‘war’ but instead of spears and boomerangs it is now fought with pen and story.
CHAPTER SEVEN: SYNTHESIS OF DATA

7. Introduction

Throughout the past two hundred or so years that people have conducted research on Wiradjuri peoples and cultures, there have been many views expressed. Many of the published works have had a tendency to portray Wiradjuri peoples and cultures in a fairly ambiguous and denigrating light. Not all published works have done this however and there are some that have presented Wiradjuri peoples and cultures to the wider audience in a more ‘balanced’ manner.

Chapter four brought together for the first time, the historical published narratives and the viewpoints (contemporary decolonising narrative) of the research participants. The historical published narratives highlight how the mentality of the times portrayed Wiradjuri to others as stone-age, prehistoric, savages and heathens. Whilst there were some who published material on various aspects of peoples and cultures, most research was conducted with Eurocentric theories in mind. The data has highlighted how these Eurocentric theories emanated from the mindset of colonists that saw Wiradjuri peoples’ lives taken over and controlled by a more so-called ‘superior’ culture. The historical published narrative reflects the colonisers’ perspectives on the superiority of their culture over Indigenous cultures, and reflects the power that the coloniser has had over Indigenous people and has contributed to the ways in which Wiradjuri have been viewed, or treated, throughout the last two hundred years or so, and as the data has shown, they still continue to do so.

The Wiradjuri peoples who consented to participate in this research provide their own perspectives. The participants were asked a number of questions in relation to the topics ‘Pre-
invasion’, ‘Impacts of Invasion’, and ‘Contemporary Australia’ (see chapters four, five and six). The answers to the questions have highlighted that recognition of knowledge, the authentication of peoples and cultures, their identity and rights are the most pressing of issues. Together with the views expressed on employment, housing and health, these combined views contribute to the research and in so doing, allow for the voices of the participants to be heard.

This chapter examines how the research contributes to current theory of Indigenous knowledge, authenticity, identity, peoples, cultures and the rights of Wiradjuri and highlights the value of the research in the context of national debate where there is contention between ‘science’ (anthropological knowledge) and ‘belief’ systems (Wiradjuri).

Three separate narratives provide the key data that form the core of the research. Firstly there is the historical published narrative of colonisation, secondly the contemporary decolonising narrative of the Wiradjuri participants which reflect the call from Indigenous peoples’ the world over for recognition of identity, autonomy which could broadly be termed a narrative of ‘decolonisation’ and thirdly the narrative appearing in the contemporary popular media and contemporary politics, which rejects the call for decolonisation, rather appears to seek to reject any separate identity for Indigenous Australians, and Wiradjuri, and retain existing power relations. The popular media ranged from newspaper reports, radio, television and the internet. These types of media can be accessed by the broader community where opinions are published without, in most cases, accountability.

This chapter also examines and discusses the importance of the research to various stakeholders. The stakeholders are contemporary and future Wiradjuri peoples, other
Indigenous Australians, Indigenous peoples in a global context, historians and academics, the media and people engaged with the ‘politics’ of Indigenous peoples.

7.1 Reflection on the Published Narrative: Research and Theories

“Centuries ago, nature ‘side-tracked’ a race in Australia. At the present time, despite some drawbacks or interference from outside, that race remains, to a large extent, in primitive conditions. It is capable of casting light on the evolution of human races in a way, and to an extent, that probably no other can equal. It gives us the key, from a study of present customs, to the origin and meaning of the mythology of the Greeks and the Romans, and of mythology generally. It supplies us with data regarding the bodily variations occurring in primitive races, and the place and value of variations in estimating the zoological stratum or horizon to which races belong. Its customs supply us with materials for a critical study of the origin and development of folk-lore, art, writing, language, mental emotions, morality, religion, marriage” (Smith, 1913, pp. 38-39).

While Blainey (1975, p. 217) suggested that Wiradjuri “appeared to have had an impressive standard of living”, there were very complex rules and regulations that peoples had to adhere to. Life for Wiradjuri prior to invasion was based on very important and distinct elements: social organisation and spiritual belief systems. These two elements provided the rules and laws by which Wiradjuri lives were governed. Social values “were a guide to orderliness, trust and all aspects of daily living,” with individuals enjoying “considerable social freedom” stated Lippmann (1981, p. 11). The spiritual belief system provided connection to the creator, connection to all living things and connection to country.
As research has indicated, Wiradjuri means of communication was an oral one. One could suggest however that art and engravings were forms of writing as suggested by Australian InFo International, 1993; Tatz, 2011), and perhaps they were, but for the most part, the historical published narratives inform readers that Wiradjuri were not prone to writing anything down. But newcomers to their lands were!

Because modern science, and the law place greater faith in the written records, than in the stories and traditions passed down generation after generation, there is an unequal balance in the interpretation of not only the history of this country, but that of the peoples that had been here for generations. This means that a European interpretation of Wiradjuri history was biased toward valuing what had been written down, (by Europeans) compared to what is believed, or what has been passed down orally through the generations (by Wiradjuri peoples themselves).

Retrieving the past has become a chosen career for many people, but a career path that has revealed many different perspectives. It is quite possible that the materials making up the ‘historical published narrative’ are more accessible to the non-Indigenous community than the contemporary decolonising narrative of Indigenous peoples. As a result, the broader public has a tendency to accept and rely more on the dominant historical published narratives than on alternative perspectives of history, peoples and cultures according to Lippmann (1979).

As data indicates (see chapters three and four) research into peoples and cultures were based on one theory or another. Enlightenment for example was based on the theory that all societies followed three stages of development: savagery, barbarism to civilisation according
to McGregor (1997). Darwin’s theory of evolution assumed that only the fittest would survive the Enlightenment theory. Ramsey Smith’s 1913 theory assumed that research into Indigenous Australians could provide data that could contribute to theories of evolution. In other words, “the study of the primitive Australian society was to promote a deeper understanding of Western civilization” stated McGregor (1997, p. 35). However McGregor (pp. 253-254) also suggested that whilst...“we cannot know with any certainty what people actually thought in the past, degrees of plausibility or implausibility may be awarded to the various possible options.”

However when it came to Wiradjuri, as the data has indicated, past research provided many theories in relation to both peoples and cultures (Stanner, 1969). Scientists and anthropologists for example, developed more complex theories that described peoples, cultures and customs of what is now known as being a part of the oldest living cultures in the world. Past research, and the theories that emanated from that research by anthropologists for example, slowly began to seep into the mentality of others and this in turn would impact on Wiradjuri peoples and cultures; their traditional ways of being and doing were to be changed and changed forever. Stanner (1969, p. 30) suggests that the mentality of the times ... “mixes truth, half-truth, and untruth into hard little concretions of faith that defy dissolution by better knowledge.”

The situation of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures in contemporary Australia is a by-product of the ways in which they were researched, written about and spoken of; “Master narratives” as depicted by Mcdonald (1998, p. 162). These historical published narratives and discourses placed Wiradjuri in unfamiliar territory; they were told they were not who they said they
were, meaning that they had no special connection to any lands, were aimless wanderers, with no semblance of political order and certainly no sense of religion.

Reynolds (1996, p. 16) stated that invasion of this place called Australia can be found in two early judicial decisions made in the years 1836 (*R v Murrell*) and 1889 (*Cooper v Stuart*). In 1836 the judicial statement from Justice Burton was that Indigenous peoples living at the time in Australia had “no law and no sovereignty [and] in 1889 the judicial statement from Lord Watson was that this country was “practically unoccupied” for example. Although these two perspectives recognised that there were indeed people living on the land, the way in which they were described was the catalyst for the position that if there were no laws, no sovereignty, or country was only sparsely occupied, then the land could become British land under British control.

Jenkin (1979, p. 31) stated that people were dispossessed of all that was theirs; lands, all the laws and ways of being and doing, and because they were considered non-existent “divested them of any rights at all as human beings.” The data as indicated in chapter five, highlights that this theory suggested that Wiradjuri were not ‘civilised’ therefore the fate of Wiradjuri was that their lands could be taken from them, ‘for without this dispossession from country, the onward march of civilisation, deemed necessary, would not occur’ as suggested by an Editorial in the Cooktown Herald in 1874 (cited in Rintoul, 1993).

For the most part, the written materials of the past appeared to follow the same specific line of thinking, adopting the same theory that Wiradjuri peoples were primitive, savages, stone-age, prehistoric, less than human (chapter 5 for example). Anthropologists amongst others, examined and discussed Wiradjuri peoples and cultures with this theory in mind, or following
research into Wiradjuri, developed their own theories which were later followed by the next generation of anthropologists or researchers. In many instances the ethnographic accounts of Wiradjuri peoples were given in order to placate the needs of the invading people simply because the more they knew about Wiradjuri, the easier it would be to control them (see Spickard, 2000, also Lowenthal, 1985).

As noted in chapter four, many aspects of Wiradjuri lives prior to invasion were studied. Whilst there is a multitude of published material forthcoming from research into Wiradjuri, what has been highlighted in this thesis is that different published works do not always agree with each other, although they may be examining the same theme, topic, or issue. This is to be expected since no two people ‘see’ the same thing, ‘hear’ the same noises, or ‘interpret’ data the same way. This is fair enough, but what are the consequences of the other side of the research coin? Is it possible that some researchers did see the same thing, did hear the same noises, and did interpret data the same way, but presented their findings intentionally differently as suggested by Kidd (1997).

Chapter five suggested that there were people that had undertaken research on Wiradjuri under instructions from those holding positions of political power; those with ‘vested interests’. Lowenthal (1985) and Barwick (1984) in chapter three both have suggested that despite the vested interests of some, much published research was either ‘biased’ (Lowenthal) or was ‘distorted or embellished’ (Barwick).

First contact between Wiradjuri and the Europeans may have been in the year 1813 (Read, 1994, see chapter one), but only nine years later the Wiradjuri in the Bathurst area were
subjected to martial law that would see a long and protracted ‘war’ take place, with the main aim of exterminating the Wiradjuri peoples of the area as highlighted in chapter five.

This research has shown that the genocidal practices were a means of ridding the state of Wiradjuri and all other Indigenous clan groups. The mentality of the times did not follow any one underpinning belief or theory however. The State used many theories to justify the impacts of invasion on peoples and cultures. Among the most prevalent of theories from the past was that of the ‘doomed race’ theory (see Rintoul, 1993) which proposed that as aimless wanderers and the fact that a superior culture had entered the picture, then the end of all Indigenous peoples, including Wiradjuri, was a given...they would all eventually disappear. But they didn’t die out as was thought, and so new measures under new legislation and policies were enacted.

Chapter five highlights the theory behind assimilation. Assimilation became the process whereby all Indigenous peoples would be taught to act, think, do and want the same things as non-Indigenous people (Ellinghaus, 2003). The theory underlying this practice was that eventually all Indigenous peoples would be assimilated into white society and no trace of Indigenous peoples would be left...cultures would cease to exist. This mentality saw many thousands of Indigenous peoples incarcerated in missions and reserves, especially children, where languages and cultural practices were forbidden. Most of the children held against their will were ‘light coloured’ children, a product of sexual relationships with the white men (see for example Rintoul, 1993). The theory became very apparent; that in taking and teaching children to forget their own cultures and adopting the Christian ways of the invader, then they would not identify as Indigenous and their ‘full-blood’ family members would die and again, no Indigenous peoples would exist (see Read, 1994).
The data has shown that there were many people who conducted research on Indigenous peoples and cultures in order to determine who they were, what they did, where they went and what they ate for example. In the early years of invasion however, most research was conducted on those in the more immediate areas of contact between Indigenous (Gamaragal for example) and non-Indigenous peoples (see Broome, 2001).

7.2 Representations

The data has shown that ethnographic accounts of Wiradjuri by most researchers, especially those from the discipline of anthropology, indicate that every aspect of Wiradjuri lives was researched (Mathews, 1900; Howitt, 1904; and Tindale and George, 1971 for example), with these accounts providing many different versions of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures. From their origins, to their spiritual beliefs, languages, whether or not their cultures were static or dynamic, or even existed at all, to the spelling of Wiradjuri, Wiradjuri have been scrutinised for nearly two hundred years; they were to become one of the most researched groups in Australia (see for example Yalmambirra and Spennemann, 2006).

The literature suggests that there were many reasons that people undertook research on Wiradjuri. Some were trained anthropologists, some were simply researching from a personal level and some were politically motivated (see Kidd, 1997). Anthropological perspectives were the ‘academic’ interpretations of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures (see Maddock, 1983). The ethnographic accounts of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures were, as this research has indicated, discourses that came from the victors over the vanquished, the colonisers over the colonised, and it was their interpretations of peoples and cultures that had enormous influence on the ways in which Wiradjuri were to be represented and defined. However the data also highlighted that the majority of ethnographic accounts for the most part did not contain
Wiradjuri input, hence there are inconsistencies and ambiguity in the literature as the data shows.

The historical published narratives have brought to the research a number of different perspectives on the same issue, topic, or theory. This is evident when one looks at these works in relation to the chapter on Pre-invasion. Many of the narratives portrayed peoples in terms that could only be classed as derogatory; non-human for example (see chapter four). These narratives eventually found their way onto the shelves of the broader community where readers could glimpse perspectives from the past happening in the now; right before their eyes.

It would be nearly impossible to ascertain the mind-sets of those who researched and wrote about Wiradjuri peoples and cultures and by association other Indigenous peoples and cultures during the first 150 years or so of European occupation. Reynolds wrote in 1982 that the written works looked more at the ‘actions’ of Indigenous peoples, but rarely did they consider the motives of non-Indigenous peoples. However, one can get a small glimpse of the mind-sets if one looks to the use of terminology within the words, the pictures, or at first glance, the title of the publication. Some prime examples are: Daisy Bates 1938 book “The passing of the Aborigines” where Bates had suggested that Indigenous peoples would die out; Tench’s 1793 account of settlement at Port Jackson where he ranked the ‘savages’; Hill and Thornton’s 1893 “Notes on the Aborigines” in which Indigenous peoples are seen as ‘uncivilised’ and ‘primitive’ with no semblance of religion; Frasers 1883 terminology “our black people” or “our native races” which have racist tones or ownership motives. Then there is the “Australian song with Aboriginal slant” by Rolfe in 1840 where the words “Wor- adgery blacks on the Murray” are sung.
Even with a larger surge of research on Wiradjuri peoples and cultures in more recent times, the terminology used continued to define, label, or represent Wiradjuri. Emblens 1927 “An Aboriginal Drama” stated that Wiradjuri peoples in the Wagga area “were not fond of hard work”; McKeown’s 1938 title “The Land of Byamee: Australian Wild Life in Legend and Fact” implies that McKeown regarded Wiradjuri not as human beings, rather as wildlife; Tindale and George’s book of 1971 “The Australian Aborigines” in which an illustration depicts how two ‘full-blood’ Indigenous ladies melt into a European image, with the narrative ranging from “full-blood” to “one-eighth Aborigine”; Reynolds (1972, p. xii) whose terminology ... “our coloured people...” implies ownership; and of course as highlighted in chapter three, Idriess’s 1963 terminology and implied ownership. Whilst the book (1998 expanded edition) by Bruce Elder has as its focus point, massacres of Indigenous peoples including a chapter on Wiradjuri, the book by default also points out the diversity of peoples, hence the use of the term “Aboriginal Australians” is contradictory in itself.

The data revealed that researchers do not always agree with each other, even when they have researched the same group of people and the same cultural aspects of that group. The literature highlighted that some anthropologists were actually forbidden from entering some areas by those who wielded strong political power and who were able to influence those around them. Many researchers had their findings ridiculed and disputed by others from the same discipline as themselves and some research findings were completely ignored (see for example Tindale, 1974). This is cause for confusion and concern. How does one go about discerning what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ in the literature? What constitutes knowledge in this area? Who is telling the ‘truth’? Is there a ‘truth’?
7.3 How Research Contributes to Stakeholders

Because many historical published narratives depicted Wiradjuri as being the same as all other Indigenous peoples, this has had enormous repercussions for all Indigenous peoples in one way, shape or form. Lippmann (1981, p. 3) suggested that “There is a danger of stereotyping Aborigines, as though, being of one race, they are all identical.” The research participants support Lippmann. It is the view of the participants that not all Indigenous peoples were, or are identical, they are not homogenous. However as highlighted in this thesis, many historical and contemporary narratives express the belief that all Indigenous peoples are the same; are identical. The ‘danger’ as Lippmann suggested lies in not recognising Wiradjuri as a separate nation of peoples, with different needs. But there is danger in also not recognising Wiradjuri as Wiradjuri, allowing others to represent them, provide identities for them, and stifling cultures that are different from other Indigenous groups.

The dangers also can be located in the writings of Cowlishaw (1986). In recognising the differences in different groups, Cowlishaw noted that the way in which Indigenous peoples were defined by anthropologists always depended on their ‘cultural integrity and homogeneity’ and in more contemporary times the narratives forthcoming from these anthropologists is playing a large part in how Indigenous peoples ways of being and doing has been understood by academics, those in positions of political power, by those in the media and by High Court Judges.

Because there are underlying similarities across many areas of Indigenous lands, in contemporary Australia the issues of identity and the authentication of such are not just confined to Wiradjuri; the issues are high on the agendas of other Indigenous peoples.
This research in reflecting on the research participants’ viewpoints, has found that in contemporary Australia, it is important to Wiradjuri peoples that they be recognised and identified as a unique group, as a ‘nation’, that Wiradjuri, as other Indigenous groups, should be recognised as having a separate identity. According to Justice Hal Wootten (1993), recognition of diversity is vitally important in contemporary Australia especially when the issue of Native Title is raised. Here Wiradjuri must prove that the area under claim is Wiradjuri country. The newcomers to this country now called Australia drew ‘lines on maps’ and in contemporary Australia this has huge repercussions for Wiradjuri as they attempt to retain their connection to what they believe are their traditional lands.

With the introduction of Native Title in 1992, lines on maps placed Wiradjuri in a position where their country is questioned by the judicial system when a claim for Native Title is lodged for example. These lines on maps are the roads and state borders that have divided Indigenous country and which in many instances have displaced peoples from traditional lands. The viewpoints of some of the research participants are in agreement; that the re-establishment/re-definition of Wiradjuri country would not only placate the judicial system, but neighbouring clan groups as well and assist those groups in their own search for traditional boundaries.

The participants are agreed that re-establishing traditional boundaries would mean that their neighbours would then be able to re-establish their own traditional boundaries, making it far easier for all when applications for Native Title are submitted for example. According to Wootten (1993), recognition of traditional boundaries is a ‘right’ that Australian law must respect, just as it does any other group of people.
The research informs that the most pressing of issues forthcoming from the participants is not one of land rights or Native Title, but lends itself to the issues of self-determination and social justice. It is here as the data shows, that the participants were most united even though some of them believed that self-determination and social justice would not happen in their lifetime, certainly not without changes in current legislation and policy.

In political terms, this research has indicated that there are some local politicians / organisations that do recognise Wiradjuri peoples and country (chapter six). While this however is seen as tokenistic by some participants, it is still seen as a step forward in the public recognition of peoples and country. This is important to the Wiradjuri research participants. They see recognition in this manner as authentication of peoples and country and whilst they do not need to validate their own existence, it is good to be recognised by some in positions of political power. This act of recognition can be built upon if greater steps are taken by higher government politicians / organisations that would encourage all local governments in Wiradjui country, to follow suit. In this way, Wiradjuri landscapes will be recognised in legislation, in law. Changes to legislation and policy are also central to the continuation of Wiradjuri cultural activities.

Indigenous peoples were excluded from any deliberations that led to the adoption of the current Australian Constitution (see for example the Foreword from the co-chairs of the Expert Panel, 2012) and they have never been recognised in it. There are now, very strong movements in contemporary Australia for a Referendum on whether Indigenous peoples should be included in the Australian Constitution, bringing further discourses into debates on Indigenous peoples. There are many that would like to see Indigenous peoples recognised in
the Constitution, but by the same token, there are many that see this as a retrograde step and one that is based on racism (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012).

But what happens if the Referendum is not successful? What would that do to relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people? According to submissions taken by the Expert Panel, “concern was frequently expressed that failure of a referendum would represent a major setback in the development of a more unified and reconciled nation” adding “that failure would result in confusion about Australia’s values, commitment to racial non-discrimination and sense of national identity...negative impacts would be profound” (pp. 224-226). It should be noted here that the proposed Referendum has now been cancelled due to the Federal Governments concerns that “it was likely to fail to achieve the necessary support” (Bagnall, 2012, p. 1).

In political terms, the data has highlighted that Wiradjuri peoples are challenging the notion of superior peoples and cultures; are challenging the academic approach to anthropological narratives where what has been written and published is what is ‘real’; are challenging the discourses that currently can be located in opposition to claims for Native Title; have challenged the theory that ‘all Indigenous peoples are the same’; and are challenging Governments finally, in full and real terms, to recognise them as Wiradjuri and in so doing pave the way for full and real self-determination and social justice. Wiradjuri though are not the only ones rising to these challenges as can be seen in Toussaint (2004); Maddison (2009); Minnerup and Solberg (2011).
7.4 Reflection on the Contemporary Reactionary Narrative

“There is a feeling of resentment among European Australians who see Aborigines as opportunists trying to gain for themselves more than their fair share. Aboriginal resentment is quickly dismissed as the whining of urban activists, who are ‘more white than black’...” (Cowan, 1989, p. 119).

Cowan’s perspective is pertinent to the contemporary circumstances under which Wiradjuri lives are lived. Chapter six presented research showing how the popular media has also provided a stage for debate on issues related to Wiradjuri and other Indigenous Australians. There have been many instances where opinions on peoples and cultures have entered the public arena via popular media and this is highlighted for example, in the instances of Andrew Bolt (journalist), the debate undertaken Online by several academics and other people of note on the Northern Territory Intervention and the way in which Stephen Gray (2011) takes offense with Gary Johns who wrote, “scornfully” about ‘infanticide, land care and the preservation of culture’.

Whilst the information is related to another group of Indigenous peoples and cultures, the writer, Ackerman (2002) in an article published in the Daily Telegraph, stated that Indigenous peoples should not be allowed to undertake specific cultural practices, that to do so, would be “bowing to one group’s cultural demands.” In relation to Bolt however, who questioned identity based on percentages of colour and genetics (chapter six), the issue of identity in an Indigenous context was brought to the broader Australian community’s attention. Through his articles for the Herald Sun, Bolt questioned the identity and authenticity of some Indigenous peoples (see also Marr, 2011) and in so doing faced Justice Mordecai Bromberg in the Federal Court (Parker, 2011). Justice Bromberg “delivered a
stinging judgment in which he found Bolt had contravened section 18 (c) of the *Racial Discrimination Act* in two articles published in the Herald Sun in 2009” (Quinn, 2011), and that the writings of Bolt “constituted highly personal, highly derogatory and highly offensive attacks” on the individuals concerned stated Justice Bromberg (cited in Bodey, 2011).

The following text highlights how social media can be utilised in the history wars. The text also highlights that there are many people opposed to comments on Wiradjuri and other Indigenous peoples by reactionaries, and how these people have entered the debates on the history of this country.

As the data has indicated, the debates on the ‘true’ history of this country became known as the ‘history wars’ and whilst not a great battle in the beginning, it grew into a fully-fledged one. Colin Tatz (2011) suggests that the history wars have a central theme; that of genocide. On one side are the denialists like politicians John Howard, John Herron, John Stone, Peter Howson, Bill Hayden, Wayne Goss and Ray Groom. Through the magazine ‘Quadrant’, reactionaries such as Keith Windschuttle, Andrew Bolt and P P McGuiness can openly express their support for the political figures that suggest that ‘nothing bad had ever happened’. On the other side of the history wars are the likes of Colin Tatz and Henry Reynolds for example, who state their case which follows that the ‘black’ history of this country should be told to all Australians.

Keith Windschuttle also led his supporters against the likes of academic historians such as Robert Manne, Neville Green and Bain Attwood (Loos, 2008) with both sides vigorously portraying history from their own place on the battlefield. However, it would be correct to point out that the debate over the history of this country has been to a large extent, located
within the discourses of non-Indigenous peoples. One can access ‘Quadrant Online’ (2011) and follow the debates on the history of this country and again, notice the omission from the debate of Wiradjuri voices, even though one, Henry Reynolds, may have Indigenous, or even Wiradjuri ancestry stated Jopson (2005).

Former Liberal Prime Minister Howard called Indigenous perspectives of history ‘a black armband view of history’ (see Tatz, 2011), and former Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd also suggested that the history wars were ‘dividing a nation’ (see chapter six). Forrest (2007) has suggested however, that if the broader Australian public fails to acknowledge, or allow for an interpretation of the history of this country from Indigenous perspectives for example, then the dominant culture’s interpretation of events and people will also prevail; the status quo will remain, Indigenous peoples will still be confined to the shadows of history.

However it should be noted, and the data has indicated as much, that until the Referendum of 1967, Wiradjuri peoples were considered as part of the Flora and Fauna Act (Australian Geographic, 2012; Haxton, 2007; Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority, 2007); not classed as human beings, therefore prior to 1967, they had no history, and so their versions of who they were, what they did, where they went and what had happened to them via legislation and policy were not considered, or because they went against current mentalities of non-Indigenous Australia, were not authentic (see for example Broome, 2001).

In many instances, Wiradjuri are still represented by those who are not Wiradjuri, whereby Wiradjuri have no control over discourses that would see them confined to the shadows of history (see Rory Medcalf’s contribution to Moores, 1995), but they are adamant that their
voices will be heard and that their peoples and cultures will survive despite the intentions of some who would rather they did not.

7.5 Reflection on the Contemporary Decolonising Narrative

In contrast to the historical published narratives, memories of the past can be clouded by time, where events, people and places are blurred visions of times gone by, and people are only too aware of how their own recollection of things can be dismissed as ‘not the real truth’ or ‘not authentic’. But the memories of many of the research participants are long and when interwoven, tell stories of the past, present and future.

During the interviews, the forty-one participants summoned up memories of the past, both to confirm and deny the historical published narratives, and more specifically, and importantly, to lend their own voices to research conducted on their own peoples and cultures. It is here, in the viewpoints of the participants, that alternative perspectives of the history of this country are given, it is here that a further process of decolonisation can be seen to be occurring, and it is here that knowledge and memory combine to provide the contemporary decolonising narrative.

But unlike the historical published narrative, memories can be and often are “altered by revision” stated Lowenthal (1985, p. 206) meaning that the memories of people are not fixed, they undergo change and reinterpretation in order to put the past into context.
7.6 Key Themes

The forty one Wiradjuri participants were asked a number of questions in relation to some of the major issues that they have to and do still, face. The answers to these questions provided a number of themes that were fairly generic; all participants had something to contribute, and their perspectives can be located throughout chapters four, five and six.

7.6.1 Knowledge

The data has shown that the level of knowledge amongst the research participants varies. While different people have always held different knowledge in Wiradjuri society, the cause of this variation, according to the participants, can be located in how invasion had impacted on them, some more so than others; stories were not told by the old peoples, cultural activity stopped, they were stolen and brought up in a white household, to live white and be white. The participants still provided an enormous contribution to the research because the stories of their lives, past and present, are just as relevant as any others.

Research through the interviews indicated that the participants know of some aspects of peoples and cultures prior to invasion simply because they have been told stories that originated in the ‘Dreamtime’ and were passed down over the generations and in due course it reached them. These participants were fortunate enough to have been regarded in some cases as being worthy of receiving some knowledge of peoples and events that have passed. They in turn pass knowledge on to those that are deemed appropriate, so the knowledge is continuous and is therefore further indication that this aspect of Wiradjuri cultures is still being undertaken. This knowledge base can and is to a certain degree, being built upon when stories and knowledge are passed down to peoples, and in time, they will have more stories to
tell their own grand children. A number of participants remembered many stories that were
told to them by their great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers and from other Wiradjuri
‘old’ peoples. These stories have been stored in memories for many years, and are only
repeated when the ‘owner’ feels that the time is right for them to be told.

The data has revealed that the oral stories of the research participants are stories that they
have either held for many years or are stories that have only been given to them in bits and
pieces, but stories are connections; connection to who they are as peoples, connections to
country; connections to the spirit world and peoples long passed (see chapters four, five and
six for examples). Stories create identity; each story is dependent on whom one is, so that the
story-teller has credibility in the eyes of others.

The data has also indicated that some participants supplement current levels of knowledge by
utilising published literature. This is not seen as being disrespectful of their peoples or
cultures; rather this is seen as building a knowledge base that will benefit all Wiradjuri. As
the data has highlighted, there are many Wiradjuri participants that belong to those very
organisations that Harry spoke of. At the end of the day, the only challenge faced by the
young Wiradjuri would be how to ‘combine’ both beliefs into a single set of cohesive beliefs.
However, many of the older participants also belong to Christian organisations and the
acquisition and transference of knowledge from both belief systems does not appear to
present any challenges to those who belong, and to those who do not belong, to these specific
organisations.

It may appear from the ‘outside’ that there are tensions between not only Christian and
traditional beliefs and belief systems, but between historical published sources (written with
particular lens), and more traditional sources of Wiradjuri knowledge delivered orally by elders. However, some of the participants believe that drawing on multiple sources of knowledge – including published works of early anthropologists – increases the richness of Wiradjuri knowledge and culture, rather than diluting it. That is, there is a place for the knowledge contained within the historical published literature, to complement the knowledge that is shared by Elders, and that these are both acceptable as contributors to an authentic contemporary Wiradjuri culture. Thus, despite the very different viewpoints expressed, there is some overlap in terms of knowledge between the historical published narrative, and the contemporary decolonising narrative of the participants.

7.6.2 Connection to Country

The participants have one voice when it comes to their connection to country. Regardless of whether or not they have less knowledge than some other Wiradjuri peoples, they still have a strong attachment to Wiradjuri country. The participants agree that their connection to country is what makes them Wiradjuri, as their ancestors are in country, their whole belief system is located in country, country tells them who they are and how they are related not only to country, but to each other.

However whilst the participants have this strong connection to country, Native Title is not a major concern for many of them. To these participants, the issues of better education, employment and health are more central issues in their lives and issues that need to be looked at first; Native Title will follow. The participants are divided in relation to Native Title however. There are also those participants that see Native Title as a way in which Wiradjuri can get country back and according to these participants Native Title is where identity, self-determination and social justice can be a reality.
7.6.3 Culture

When asked about cultures, the participants were adamant that cultures did exist and that these cultures were in fact dynamic as opposed to static. The participants informed that cultures had to be dynamic in order that peoples survived. The participants suggested that cultures changed and adapted with whatever was happening around them at any given point in time and changes could occur because of land management practices or through trade with other clan groups for example. Such a dynamic response has also allowed Wiradjuri cultures to continue, following the European invasion of their country.

As some of the participants were raised in missions and or reserves, their knowledge of cultures has been somewhat limited. This according to the participants was because of the days when cultures were forbidden to be taught and undertaken. However there are many of the participants that undertake some cultural practices. Cleansing ceremonies, dances and songs are still part of their lives and all the participants are still aware of their kinship system and in contemporary Australia, they follow this, especially that aspect of who can marry whom.

7.6.4 Identity

Sandy Toussaint (2004, p. 11) writes of identity in terms of Indigenous peoples being “surrounded by a hall of distorting mirrors...[where] Most of the images presented to them about themselves are based on the beliefs, hopes and desires of the larger and more powerful society...[where] identity is thus colonised...”

The participants have all felt the force of the genocidal practices that saw their families’ and friends’ identity as Wiradjuri taken from them. They (the participants) see this as being a
huge impact on their lives and the lives of those who had gone before them. The participants see how the past has influenced the present in that their identity is still under question and for some of them this evokes emotions such as anger, frustration and sorrow; their hall of distorting mirrors perhaps? However, the participants are united in their identity. They consider themselves as always being Wiradjuri and they believe that they will always be Wiradjuri, because as some participants state: “Identity in contemporary Australia is located in connections to the past; families, shared histories and experiences that are shared with other Wiradjuri peoples and that is one thing that they can’t ever take from us.”

The data suggests that defining Aboriginal identity has changed over the years since invasion. Clarke (2003, p. 222) wrote that “Developments in anthropological theory through the twentieth century brought about recognition of the internal diversity of Aboriginal cultures.” In contemporary Australia, there is a very large opportunity for Government to address the issue of identity. Census forms for example do not take into account the diversity of Indigenous peoples and in the example shown in chapter two of this research, there is no room for separate identities when questions like; are you Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander are asked. It is here according to some of the participants, that changes can take place. “Recognise us as being who we are, that’s all we ask, because the other things will just follow along then.”

7.6.5 Authenticity

The mindset of many Australians is the belief that the only real Indigenous person is black and wears a lap-lap and lives in the desert. As indicated by the research and the data, it is important to the participants that Wiradjuri peoples and cultures are recognised as being alive and not dead and this according to the participants means that for a lot of Wiradjuri their return to culture allows them to stand tall and proud and announce to all that they have
culture, that cultures today are just as important and just as authentic as they were 120,000 years ago (chapter six). Authenticity according to the participants means that they can live out their lives safe in the knowledge that their peoples and cultures are seen in the eyes of the broader Australian community as being the real thing. In the eyes of the participants however, it is not they who should bring the word authentic into their people’s lives, it is something that must come from others because the participants have always regarded their cultures as being the real thing; as being authentic.

7.6.6 Social Justice and Self-Determination

Social justice and self-determination according to the participants go hand in hand and can mean many things. For many of them, social justice and self-determination means that governments, now and in the future, allow them to be simply, Wiradjuri. The participants know however that unless legislation and policy is changed, the pathway to social justice and self-determination is only going to get harder. Richard Trudgen poses the question and asks, “What chance do the people have to be truly self-determining while the dominant culture continues to assault their traditional ways and no real thought is given to how you merge two very different social and legal systems?” (p. 157).

The data has shown that for some research participants, self-determination and social justice is seen as being allowed to care for country once again, whilst some see self-determination and social justice as being able to have their sites returned to them, to allow them to have full care of them. It is important to note that undertaking cultural activity on country according to the responses of the participants is ‘working on country, where’ identifying as Wiradjuri is ‘working for country’. This is what it means to be Wiradjuri. Many of the participants participate in some form of working on country whereby they undertake cultural activity. All
work for country as all identify as Wiradjuri. In this light, working on or for country are forms of connection to creation and ancestral spirits. Except for the participant Tess, whilst the participants have not actually related what they want to do on country in relation to hunting, gathering and the economic benefits derived from those activities, they do have a very strong sense of responsibility for country. Not being able to fulfil their responsibilities is cause for much frustration, because current legislation only makes it more difficult for the participants to express this aspect of their culture. For other participants, self-determination and social justice means that their peoples and cultures are respected and recognised across all facets of country. To the participants, one of the most important aspects of social justice and self-determination is the recognition of traditional country whereby they can control all activities that may have an impact on either peoples, cultures, or country.

Whilst the historical research and discourses have examined Wiradjuri peoples and cultures from pre-invasion to how invasion impacted upon peoples and cultures (chapters four and five), this research also highlights how the mentality of the past still haunts Wiradjuri in contemporary Australia. In contemporary Australia, in their efforts for self-determination and social justice, Wiradjuri feel they must continue to take a stand against those that persist in questioning identity, still cling to and have racist intentions, or publish material that is racist in content and intent, and they must stand against those who would prevent any resurrection, or continuance of cultures (chapter six). The data also highlighted that the participants thought as Veracini had done. The values and attitudes of the participants differ. They do not see exactly the same thing, nor do they experience the same sensations, but what they have in common is an overwhelming vision of the future; a future whereby they can be rid of the shackles of colonisation and be free to lead lives where they can be in control.
Chapters four, five and six have highlighted how the participants have structured the past and how the present is a direct result of the past. They do not see themselves as immigrants with no cultures. They see themselves as being members of a Nation of peoples whose cultures have been eroded somewhat, but as they state, cultures always changed and peoples adapted whenever they had to. Many of the participants place no store in the historical published narratives; believing that they do not tell of peoples and events in ways that are accurate, rather in ways that take away their cultures and their identities.

The research has shown that invasion has been extremely detrimental to Wiradjuri. From the first years after contact until the present time, Wiradjuri have felt all the forces of a more dominant society. Wiradjuri peoples and cultures have been put under the microscope, pushed, prodded, probed and dissected by white people, for white people. The participants fully understood what the term assimilation for example was, and what it meant, but are adamant that whilst they identified themselves as Wiradjuri, then ‘full’ assimilation was not possible. Some of the participants saw assimilation as ‘giving up’ on peoples and cultures.

The research informs that all of the participants identified as Wiradjuri, as belonging to the nation of Wiradjuri and of working for Wiradjuri. This mentality provides them with a sense of power, of accomplishment, simply because in identifying as Wiradjuri, they are in actual fact saying: “We are still here...we will always be here and all those who think otherwise will all be gone sooner or later.”

Research has also highlighted that the genocidal practices of the past are still in the minds of many of the participants. The taking of children under Acts and policies still haunts some participants as they themselves had children taken, or were taken as children themselves.
more recent Northern Territory Intervention as an example of ‘white control’, does not just
affect those Indigenous peoples in the Northern Territory, but has reached into the heart of
Wiradjuri country and touched the lives of some participants (chapter four). But Wiradjuri are
not the only Indigenous peoples in the world that invasion has happened to.

7.7 Global Similarities
Fox (1978, p. 37) suggested that because the Europeans had “developed industries, weapons,
navies, armies…enriched themselves by setting up colonies (colonialism)...the Europeans
penetrated vast areas of Asia, America, Africa and Australia” and believing they were
superior to others, their theory was that they could conquer any place they chose. Whenever
peoples invade another country, they become the victors, and the peoples whose country was
invaded become the vanquished (Lippmann, 1981); the subjugated, the colonised, the
powerless and the subject of legislation and policies that were to run their lives (Blackburn,
1979).

There are distinct similarities between what has happened to Wiradjuri and other Indigenous
peoples, here in Australia, and those in an international context. In relation to Native Title in
Canada, Asche (2004, p. 55) argues that there are still reflected in High Court decisions,
myths of the past where North America is seen as an empty unoccupied wilderness; land is
free for the taking...[and] Indigenous peoples are characterised as a homogenous group; either
hostile and threatening or noble savages to be patronised and protected.” Bruce Elder (1998)
was inspired by Dee Brown who wrote of the genocidal practices such as massacres against
the American Indians (Elder, 1998). Genocide occurred in many countries; “German South-
West Africa [Namibia] (1904-06); the Turkish efforts to eliminate Armenians, Pontain
Greeks and Christian Assyrians (1915-22); and Germany against the Jews (1939-45)” (Tatz, 2011, p. 11).

There are other similarities between Wiradjuri and the American Indians. In their 2002 paper, Ross and Pickering look at the comparisons between Indigenous peoples in Australia and the American Indians and have highlighted that here in Australia there were reserves, in America there are reservations, assimilation policies were introduced in Australia and America with the same intentions, and connection to country plays an integral role in identity. Fox (1978) though had much earlier pointed out that the American Indians have self-determination and treaties. Wiradjuri peoples do not. Reconciliation Australia (2008) provided similarities using the Canadian experience. In Canada, children were removed, peoples were to be assimilated and cultures and languages forbidden. The Canadian Government and the United Church of Canada, like the Rudd Government, have apologised to those who were removed.

David (2011), highlights how different Indigenous peoples in an international context have undergone the same colonial acts of genocide: “land rights, labour systems, miscegenation, evangelization, and the undermining of traditional laws...[which] have all posed immense obstacles to the social reproduction of Indigenous communities and nations across the world” (p.viii). Minnerup and Solberg discuss similarities and differences between Indigenous peoples of Australia and the Sami of Northern Europe and bring to the reader’s attention that internment, assimilation, the removal of children to be placed in boarding schools, the suppression of cultures and languages are common bonds between the two. They also point out that whilst Indigenous peoples in Australia have not signed any treaty, neither have the Sami. Minnerup and Solberg also state that there are stark contrasts between Indigenous peoples of Australia and the Sami. The Sami...“share in some of the highest living standards
and most developed welfare services in the world, and elect their own parliaments.

Governments, and especially that of Norway, take great pride in their commitment to the rights of Indigenous people” (p. 1). One can see, through the research for this thesis, that Wiradjuri are many steps behind the Sami in terms of self-determination and social justice.
CHAPTER EIGHT: RELEVANCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

8. Introduction

The research undertaken for this thesis has drawn on many early and contemporary sources. These sources have provided a strong and sound conceptual and methodological grounding that then weaves its way through the thesis. The sources utilised in this manner have highlighted that the mentality behind much of the early literature was the process of colonisation. Subsequently, much of what had been written has not favoured Wiradjuri peoples or cultures. The conceptual and methodological grounding for this thesis also provides the context under which the process of decolonisation has occurred. In efforts to be recognised for whom they are, to be allowed to undertake specific cultural practices where appropriate, and to provide alternative stories in relation to what the literature has provided the broader Australian community with, there is a process of decolonisation going on. It is here, in this process, that Wiradjuri hope will bring them out of the shadows and onto the pathway of cultural recognition and cultural survival.

This chapter looks at the relevance and the implications of the research through several central themes such as; culture, connection to country, knowledge, identity, authenticity, self-determination, and the three collective narratives that this research has identified. In contemporary Australia, these central themes are at the core of all the issues that Wiradjuri peoples, and by association, all Indigenous peoples in Australia, currently face each and every day of their lives. Each theme has a touch of the past and the present, and finishes with a look into the future.
The relevance and the implications of this research project are discussed in terms of Wiradjuri, but there are instances where references to other Indigenous peoples and cultures will be forthcoming as all Indigenous peoples have felt the forces of invasion and the subsequent legislation and policy that have changed their lives forever.

It is evident from the data that prior to contact with Europeans, Wiradjuri peoples and cultures changed and adapted to their surroundings and to new technologies as part of their daily lives. In the year 1813 Wiradjuri were invaded (see Read 1994), but this time they had to change and adapt, or die. The data highlights that these changes and adaptations were not as a result of their own doing, they were forced upon them in the course of invasion and the subsequent actions of people who studied them and wrote of them (see for example chapter five). The narratives of Cowlishaw (2004) and Maddison (2009) suggest that the past has placed Wiradjuri, in contemporary Australia, in a place not of their (Wiradjuri) choosing.

Whilst the participants are adamant that their peoples and cultures are just as valid now as at any other time (see for example chapters five, six and seven), the Bolt articles of 2009 as depicted in the Introduction to this thesis highlights how Indigenous peoples are continually asked to prove their authenticity as legitimate peoples and cultures to people that still have a colonial mentality and are driven by their own political colonial agendas. There are many reactionary discourses such as Bolt’s and these are highlighted throughout the research and examined in more detail in chapters six and seven.

However, if colonisation was politically driven, then it stands to reason that the process of decolonisation that this thesis contributes to, is also politically driven (see chapter three for example) and is a process that sits comfortably within not only a political sphere, but sits
comfortably within an academic sphere also. By the same token, there are those such as Folds (1993); Keesing and Strathern (1998); and Baker (1999) who did not question and have taken for granted that Wiradjuri have always been valid as peoples and cultures.

According to the participants Mary and William (see chapter six), it is those such as Bolt that do question, that Wiradjuri have to placate; it is those who refuse to ‘see’ and ‘hear’ that must be educated to believe; to believe that Wiradjuri are cultural, that they have a place within the social arena. But it is much more than that. The decolonisation process is also about taking power away from the powerful, undermining colonisation and undermining the status quo. The ways forward in ‘real’ terms for the participants hinge on a number of issues seen as central to their place in contemporary Australia and for the future of both peoples and cultures. Some of these issues are located in overturning current legislation, working from ‘the inside out’ in order to do so.

In their attempts to assert their rights and authenticity, some of the participants call for the Nation of Wiradjuri to come together so that all peoples know of them and what their dreams and aspirations are, and how they hope to achieve them. Terry and Albert for example believed that in order to lead lives within a self-determining and social justice framework, the political chains that bind them must be unlocked. This according to some of the participants is how the ‘war’ against colonial oppression or peoples and cultures will be fought. Decolonisation could be interpreted as a form of ‘cultural learning’. In the opinion of Hinkson (2012, p. 1), “Cultural learning is not an easy process and can only proceed if we can first engage the devastating trauma that lies at the heart of settler-colonial practices, then come to terms with why they took the form they did, and understand how such practices can re-emerge in
new circumstances.” It is the mindset of those who refuse to see or listen that must be challenged.

Before exploring the central themes, it is also important to reflect on the research process. Whilst CIP/CIM research is always political, this research has adopted such an approach whereby research will meet the needs of those being researched. This thesis should not be judged on one single paradigm or interpretive strategy, and should not be judged in terms of neo-colonial paradigms suggested Denzin and Lincoln (2008).

Indigenous researchers around the world are attacking western epistemologies and methodologies and are calling for the world of academia to decolonise their scientific practices. However, as suggested by Smith (1999), there is now a very big backlash against CIP/CIM research and new standards for reliability and validity are being projected into the world of scientific and academic research. This so-called ‘evidence based’ research presses Indigenous researchers into producing technical knowledge that conforms to western ideas of truth and validity.

As highlighted in Chapters one and two specifically, what is acceptable or not in terms of research must be determined and defined from within the community itself. CIP/CIM encourages and empowers Indigenous peoples to make colonisers confront and be accountable for the traumas of colonisation; a process of decolonisation.

This approach as highlighted in Chapter’s one and two of this thesis provides the opportunity to undertake research from an Indigenous perspective. As noted in early chapters of this thesis, this approach provides an opportunity to conduct research in such a way that
decolonises historical published narratives and the opportunity to apply that process to the contemporary reactionary narratives. The oral perspectives of the research participants form a contemporary decolonising narrative that contributes to the decolonisation process and in doing so, have provided alternative viewpoints that in most instances contradict those that emanate from the historical published narratives and those of the contemporary reactionary narratives. Smith (1999), a leader in relation to the theory of decolonisation, calls for these alternative viewpoints to be put forward especially in the halls of Academia when research methodologies are discussed. These alternative viewpoints according to Smith will challenge current research methodologies and pedagogy, but must be considered so that Indigenous ways of doing and being are taken into account.

### 8.1 Cultures

The published historical narratives highlights that there is no single definition of culture therefore no single definition has been used in this research. The data however also highlighted that there is a large difference of opinion when it came to acknowledging that cultures were either dynamic or static. The perspectives of some anthropologists and other researchers of the past have stated that cultures were static. However these perspectives do not carry over to the academic world where culture is widely understood to be dynamic. This one point differentiates the decolonising narrative as expressed by the research participants, and many others in the broader Australian community, from both the historical published and contemporary reactionary colonising narratives, where viewpoints by some media commentators and politicians are based on an understanding that culture is static, therefore changes to cultures render those cultures less valid or authentic then original cultures.

According to the participants Allan, Brian, Gail and Harry, for example, cultures were dynamic. Culture has changed because of various external pressures, through changes in
environments, through trade, or through invasion as shown in chapter four. Emily and Madeliene’s views in chapter five highlight how many aspects were forbidden to be taught and legislation and policy saw cultures hidden in cupboards; practiced out of sight. Some specific ceremonials aspects of cultures however were lost as the old people with the knowledge of essential ingredients necessary in cultural ceremonies have passed away as shown in the stories of the participants Christopher and Lilly.

In contemporary Australia, Wiradjuri cultures however do still exist; they have not been overtaken by the ‘tide of time’ as was the case in the Native Title determination of the Yorta Yorta peoples as noted by Behrendt and Kelly (2008) in chapter six. Some aspects of cultures have been retained and taught throughout the last 200 plus years. Cleansing ceremonies, dances and songs are still part of cultures and environmental practices still have traditional cultural ingredients included (see for example Jason and William’s viewpoints). In contemporary Australia, Wiradjuri cultures are just as dynamic as they were 120,000 years ago only now cultures are relevant to not only Wiradjuri peoples, but also for the broader Australian community or as Rooney (2012, pers. comm.) has suggested, “It is here that Wiradjuri can stand alongside all others and demonstrate that it is possible to continue their cultural practices whilst at the same time live their lives as members of a contemporary Australian society; the two do not have to be mutually exclusive, or to the detriment of the other.”

Non-Indigenous people would see that it is possible for Wiradjuri peoples to retain cultures, that together, Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people can actively work to ensure that Wiradjuri peoples, and by association, other Indigenous people’s cultures survive for another 120,000 years (Yalmambirra, 2012). There is a need to develop partnerships with non-
Indigenous peoples, but this would go completely against the grain with the statement by the Bennelong Society in 2001, that pursuing cultures would be disastrous (see chapter six).

If the thoughts by McKenzie were taken on board then it may be possible to inspire, motivate and encourage non-Indigenous people to join with Wiradjuri and be united in efforts to foster a greater understanding of, and celebrate Wiradjuri as part of the oldest living cultures in the world. To some extent this is already occurring in various parts of Wiradjuri country. Some Wiradjuri have approached a number of local Shire Councils in their attempts at creating an understanding that Wiradjuri peoples and cultures are alive and well in contemporary Australia and to this end, as noted in chapter six by Allan in his interview, agreements have been reached where some Council’s have agreed to erect signage that informs travellers that they are in a specific part of Wiradjuri country (see also Hull, 2003).

However, full recognition and accommodation of Wiradjuri cultures has not been forthcoming in a legal sense since invasion; the rights of Wiradjuri to their own cultural practices has not been supported, or only partially supported, by legislation and policy (Sutherland and Muir, 2001). Not recognising and accommodating Wiradjuri cultures in contemporary Australia is in direct conflict with Article 11 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Whilst not enforceable in a legal sense the Declaration states that “Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalise their cultural traditions and customs” (2008, p. 3). Recognition that cultures are still valid does not mean symbolic gestures where no benefits to Wiradjuri are forthcoming... recognition means that governments validate cultures in a legal sense by identifying Wiradjuri as Wiradjuri in any future changes to the existing Constitution for example, and in real terms such as legislative and policy changes that allow Wiradjuri to undertake cultural practices on country as shown
by the viewpoints of the participants Wayne and Terry in chapter six. Whilst the need to recognise that Wiradjuri cultures are still valid in contemporary Australia is obviously a major issue as highlighted by the participants, the recognition of the validity of Wiradjuri cultures would not only add another dimension to other cultures that exist all over the world (see chapter seven for example), but may provide avenues that would see them back on country in real terms.

8.2 Connection to Country

As shown by the participants Jacob and Allan, and by the historical published works of Howells (1962), Bohannan (1966), Elkin (1967), and Leach (1970) for example, in chapter four, country is what makes people who they are (Wiradjuri for example) as their ancestors are in country, country tells them who they are and how they in turn are related to not only country, but to each other. Prior to invasion, the social well-being of Wiradjuri could be located in their ongoing commitment to be on country. Being on country was vitally important to Wiradjuri in a social sense also as social networks brought peoples and cultures together more often than not as noted by Bell (n.d.) and by Joseph in chapter three.

The lie that was *terra nullius* (Attwood, 1996) saw Wiradjuri dispossessed from their traditional lands. The ever relentless movement of settlers and explorers alike saw country swallowed up by grazing for example, and Wiradjuri were pushed and forced out of country as described by Lippman (1981). This meant the loss of not only lands, but traditional food and medicinal resources, ceremonial areas and places that held special significance. The data shows that despite the impacts of invasion, Wiradjuri peoples and cultures adapted. The participant Shaun had stated in chapter five that the taking of country was ‘bad time then, very bad times’, but whilst the act of dispossession from country was very real (see for
example chapter five), so too is the connection to country that remains and in contemporary Australia Wiradjuri peoples still have that very strong connection to country, just as their ancestors did, which was expressed by Jack; ‘We keep country alive and she keeps us alive’ and Tess; ‘I need country to heal’ in chapter six. Despite this inherent connection to country, there is still a struggle to control what goes on in country as shown by the participant Wayne in chapter six where he speaks of the effort to protect cultural sites.

The struggle that Wayne spoke of stems from the frustration he feels at the current legislation that controls places of special significance. Cultural heritage for example, within Wiradjuri country, is determined by the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, where cultural heritage is considered the property of the Crown, which also controls which cultural heritage is damaged or destroyed according to Koori Mail (2012, p. 27).

Caring for country is all about the sovereign rights of all Indigenous peoples, not just Wiradjuri. Wharton 2012 (cited in The Koori Mail, 2012, p. 43) stated that “Sovereignty is your birthright, it’s your country, it’s where you come from and these are the rights that are inherited from before time, that’s our law, that’s where it comes from.” Caring for country as the data has shown, also allows knowledge to be continuous and passed on to future generations for the benefit of not only Wiradjuri, but for the broader Australian public as well. The participant Joseph alluded to this in his reflection on Prime Minister Rudd’s apology to the Stolen generations (chapter six), that Wiradjuri want to be able to work and live on country and manage country for the future generations of not only Wiradjuri, but for all people.
8.3 Knowledge

The knowledge of peoples, cultures and country came from those who had gone before. The Elders provided the education and country provided the classrooms (Hoebel & Frost, 1976 for example). Prior to invasion, knowledge was passed down through the generations through cultural ceremonial practises such as initiation ceremonies (Deakin, 1982). The thoughts of Lockwood (1962) and Perkins (1995) and the participants Alan, Colin and Mary run parallel to each other in suggesting that knowledge was life, knowledge of all things were the domain of the Elders and when deemed ready, knowledge was passed to the young and subsequently, generation after generation had knowledge of where they came from, who they were, how to survive, their respective kinship systems, and their place in the world according to their laws.

As the data has shown, invasion impacted on knowledge and the process of knowledge, greatly. Elder (1988) highlights how the massacres and murders that came with invasion saw many, many Wiradjuri Elders die without being able to pass specific knowledge on to others. Read (1989) depicts stories from thirteen Indigenous peoples that were taken from their families during the Stolen Generations era. Their stories show how internment within the walls, or behind the barbed wire of missions and reserves, meant that languages could not be taught, cultural ways of being and doing forbidden, and cultural knowledge was not allowed to be passed down, though some aspects of cultures were practiced and passed down away from the prying eyes of the invaders, or as the participants Jason and Terry have alluded to in chapter six; ‘behind closed doors’ or in ‘cupboards’. Some Wiradjuri peoples like those in Read’s book, were raised in ‘white’ households with none, to very little knowledge of who they were in a cultural sense; the participant William for example.
It would be a very hard task to precisely pinpoint the exact time and date when some of the participants started on their own individual journey in seeking knowledge of peoples, cultures and country. It has been only in the last few decades that many Wiradjuri peoples such as the participants Karen and William (chapter four) have become more knowledgeable of who they are and how they ‘fit’ into the Wiradjuri Nation. In Karen’s case, Karen simply was never taught anything of culture, and in William’s case, he was held back from seeking knowledge by the environment that he was brought up in; William was raised in a white household. Perhaps their own journey started somewhere between 1967 and the Apology given by the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2008. As already noted in previous chapters, there was and still is a political system in place in regards to knowledge and knowledge holders. It is quite possible that Karen had never been taught culture because of her place in Wiradjuri society, or because of the disruption to the generational transference of knowledge caused by invasion, or the passing of local knowledge holders.

Maddison (2009, p. 230) suggested that “from the 1967 Referendum, the Mabo decision in 1992, the Hawke government’s acceptance of the Barunga statement and Keating’s Redfern Park speech, ‘the broader Australian public and government’ were at last willing to understand and engage with Indigenous peoples.” Glazer and Moynihan (1975, p. 4) suggested that a ‘resurgence’ in seeking knowledge was caused by a ‘growing sense’ amongst the broader community that Indigenous peoples and cultures were capable of being ‘revived and transformed’.

Jack has some thoughts on why there is a resurgence in seeking knowledge: ... “your part of the jigsaw puzzle...place in the world.” Perhaps Samantha alluded to this resurgence in her response when stating that there is a need to ... “let us tell our own story...” with Christopher
suggesting in chapter six that “people should seek knowledge in order to pass knowledge on so it does not get lost when Elders pass away.” The challenge faced by the Wiradjuri Elders of today is how to pass on the knowledge held collectively by the Elders to ensure that specific knowledge is not lost forever and inherent in that challenge is to get non-Indigenous peoples or organisations for example to understand that the knowledge that Wiradjuri still retain is valid and as such, has something to offer as stated by participants Olivia, Albert and John in chapter six. This ‘something to offer’ is important to the participants in that the knowledge they hold in regards to peoples, cultures and country can be a key component in the challenge that faces them in relation to the validation of peoples and cultures.

Trent, Sharon and Laura (see chapter six) agree that their cultures are as valid now as ever. Trent: “Our culture...and yours Yalmambirra, are just as valid now”; Sharon: “In my mind I am just as cultural as those in other areas”; and Laura: “I try to do some cultural stuff as often as I can [because] it’s important for the young ones and Wiradjuri.” The participant Albert suggested in his response in chapter six that non-Indigenous peoples or organisations can then build or extend on their own knowledge base which could also contribute to the well-being of Wiradjuri peoples, cultures and country. Albert: “...let our voices be heard, let people see us for who we are and what we can give and what we can do.”

8.4 Identity

The reflections on pre-invasion times in chapter four of the participants Ian, Lilly and Pauline highlighted how one’s identity as Wiradjuri came from rights by birth, located where a person’s ancestors were born, in their distinctive languages, cultural practices, and where they were located geographically; a person was Wiradjuri from the day she or he was born, to the day they died; no-one questioned identity stated Joseph in chapter four.
From around 1813, Wiradjuri peoples and settlers and explorers came into contact with each other and Wiradjuri were destined to become one of the most researched groups of Indigenous peoples in Australia. The data has shown that the authoritative or ‘academic’ (Maddock, 1983) narrative on Wiradjuri peoples and cultures was derived largely from the work of anthropologists (Mathews, 1900; Howitt, 1904; and Tindale and George, 1971 for example). The historical published narratives were driven by European mentalities of the times, but as the data suggests, it was these mentalities that robbed Wiradjuri of cultures, identity and country and the consequences of this were that the voices of Wiradjuri were not heard, or listened to. That is, the work of these early anthropologists was part of the process of colonisation of both the land, and the culture and lives of Indigenous peoples.

Wiradjuri have all felt the full force of invasion, whereby identity as Wiradjuri in a legal sense was taken from them and new names were given to them; ‘Aborigine’, ‘Aboriginal’, ‘Aboriginal Australians’, ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Indigenous Australians’ (see for example Speak soft, Speak sure, 2005 and Yalmambirra, 2005). The terminology fostered on the Australian public, is by and large, still the terminology used to identify Wiradjuri and the challenge by Wiradjuri to overcome this is constant.

There is however an increase in the profile of Wiradjuri as can be witnessed by the increasing number of published works by Wiradjuri writers (see for example Wiradjuri authors and poets such as Stan Grant, Tara JuneWinch, Sally Riley, Isobel Coe, Anita Heiss, Kerry Reed-Gilbert, Kevin Gilbert and Elizabeth Hodgson) and whilst these are often at odds with the historical published narrative, they contribute to research on peoples and cultures and will bring the Wiradjuri Nation further into the debates surrounding the history of this country, thus contributing to the process of ‘decolonisation’. Wiradjuri will contribute to the history
wars and their ‘black armband’ view (see Chapter 1) of their place in the historical context will help to ensure that their voices are heard by the broader Australian community and contribute to the authenticity, hence validity, of peoples and cultures.

8.5 Authenticity

Authentication lends itself to validity according to Geddes and Grosset (1999), and it is this validity that the Wiradjuri participants are seeking in contemporary Australia. The mind-set of many Australians is the belief that the only ‘real’ Indigenous person is one that is black, wears a lap-lap, and one that lives in the desert; they are the authentic peoples and cultures (for example Baglin and Mullins 1976 and Maddison 2009 in chapter one). The Liberal leader Tony Abbott (cited in Grattan, 2012) weighed into the issue of authenticity by stating “I think it would be terrific if, as well as having an urban Aboriginal in our parliament, we had an Aboriginal person from central Australia, an authentic representative of the ancient cultures of Australia in the Parliament.” Abbott’s statement implies that his belief is that the only real Indigenous person still resides in the more remote areas of this country and that authenticity does not lend itself to the urban Indigenous person. Prime Minister Julia Gillard (cited in Grattan, 2012) took Abbott to task over his statement and suggested that he (Abbott) was “...trying to divide indigenous (sic) Australians up into neat little columns and descriptions...” Grattan (2012) however noted that “Labor has not had an Indigenous MP in Federal Parliament.”

In contemporary Australia, authentication means the recognition that cultures are ‘real’ and not ‘false’ or made-up cultures (see Lindholm, (2008) in Chapter 1); that they are just as real now as they were in the past, and according to Indigenous Coalition MP Ken Wyatt (cited in Grattan, 2012), “It’s just unfortunate that we’ve got this whole debate going around
‘authentic’ Aboriginals...because Aboriginal people - [it] doesn’t matter where they live - are authentic.”

Authentication means that for Wiradjuri, they can live their lives knowing that the broader Australian public recognise and understand that Wiradjuri cultures are just as authentic, just as real as they have ever been according to Keesing and Strathern (1998) and Folds (1993) in chapter five and the participants William, Olivia and Albert (see chapter six). Perhaps also, there could be a political authentication in the same way as the Pitjantjatara peoples of the Northern Territory have been authenticated (see Chapter 1), or perhaps more organisations such as the Murray Catchment Management Authority (see Chapter 1) could be utilised in Wiradjuri efforts to be recognised as authentic peoples and cultures in contemporary Australia. MLDRIIN (see Weir and Ross, 2007, in Chapter 1) support Wiradjuri by undertaking specific activities designed to:

- Facilitate and advocate the participation of 10 Indigenous Nations within the different levels of government decisions on natural resource management;
- Develop responses on the cultural, social and economic impacts of development on Indigenous traditional country; and
- Be a collective united voice for the rights and interests of their traditional country and its people (p. 187).

But the desire to achieve authentication can be a two-edged sword. It is a matter of historical fact that the judicial system in announcing successful Native Title determinations are actually authenticating peoples and cultures (see for example Priest, 2012). This is the problem. The judicial systems either authenticate peoples and cultures or they do not. As was also
highlighted in the Yorta Yorta example, the identity of peoples and the validity of their
cultures lies in the hands of those in high positions of judicial power and prominence (see for
example Cousins, 2005). Under the Native Title Act, the criteria for determining cultural
authenticity are very different from the criteria used and accepted by Wiradjuri and other
Indigenous peoples. The criteria adopted by the Native Title Act, and its interpretation by the
judicial system, ignore the realities of other legislations, the histories of Indigenous peoples,
and the flourishing cultures that make up the many Indigenous Nations found today in
Australia.

The judicial system was the determining factor in refusing Native Title which resulted in
rejecting the validity of Yorta Yorta culture by failing to recognise that Yorta Yorta peoples
and cultures were just as valid now as they were in the past. Whilst authenticating Indigenous
cultures may not have been the intention of the Native Title Act, it is the reality.

The Native Title Act has undergone some significant changes since it became an Act in 1993
and further changes to the Native Title Act are currently before Parliament. The most
significant issue, that of the ‘onus of proof’ will not change; it will remain there as a burden
for claimants to bear (Coyne, 2012). In the end, judicial systems will still determine which
peoples and cultures still have continuity and connection to their traditional lands and will
still act as judge and jury in the authentication of peoples and cultures. In the end, the
imbalance between the published narratives of social scientists for example and the
alternative viewpoints of Indigenous peoples will remain.
8.6 Social Justice and Self-determination

Prior to invasion Wiradjuri were always in control of who they were and how they determined their own economical benefits, derived from their own lands. Self-determination according to the participants meant continually caring for country, the ability to have free trade with neighbouring groups, and the utilisation of the environments for resources that contributed to their on-going existence.

Due to the many genocidal practises committed upon the Nation of Wiradjuri (as highlighted in chapter five), their ability to be self-determining has been lost over the last 200 or so years. The general feeling that came from the research participants is that self-determination in contemporary Australia means that governments, now and in the future, allow them to be simply, Wiradjuri; the recognition that peoples and cultures still exist in contemporary Australia, and the willingness of ‘others’ to allow cultural practices to continue.

Self-determination as Minnerup and Solberg (2011, p. 14) have highlighted, means “cultural continuity, cultural autonomy, acknowledgement of the cultural ties of traditional owners to their land and must therefore incorporate sovereign control over the natural resources of Indigenous lands.” But sovereignty cannot be recognised in Courts of Law. As suggested by Reynolds (1996), the issue of sovereignty whilst placed high on some Indigenous peoples’ agendas, is constantly dismissed by those who wield judicial powers such as High Court Judges. Reynolds also provides information on where sovereignty has been challenged: ‘Coe v the Commonwealth (1979) where an argument was presented stating that Wiradjuri were a ‘sovereign nation of people ‘and R. v Wedge (1976) where it was argued that New South Wales courts had no jurisdiction because Indigenous peoples were and still are a sovereign people’, for example.
In light of the decisions handed down on the issue of sovereignty, one could ask if self-determination can become reality when it is not possible for any Wiradjuri group to become an independent organisation, in the real sense of the word. The Wiradjuri Council of Elders for example are ever reliant on funding from ‘outside’ agencies such as mining companies in order to conduct Council business. Perhaps the Council have taken note of the comments by Coombs, et. al. (1989, p. 66) and Jones and Hill-Burnett, (1982, p. 224) in remaining aloof to the idea of becoming incorporated in order that funding can be more forthcoming; they see incorporation as meaning that they would be subject to influences such as “government agenda and timetables” (Coombs, et. al) that they have no control over, and according to the Council would have found themselves “integrated into the very structure of oppression that they are trying to combat” (Jones and Hill-Burnett).

The participants know however that unless legislation and policy is changed, the pathway to self-determination is only going to become harder. As the narrative of Minnerup and Solberg (2011) has shown, past governments have let the chance to address self-determination and social justice pass them by. The proposed 2013 Referendum (since reconsidered) as highlighted in chapter seven, could have well become the catalyst for real self-determination and social justice, but in only recognising Indigenous peoples as a ‘whole’ the chance to recognise Wiradjuri as a separate Nation of peoples from other Indigenous peoples would have been lost, and so the pathways that the Nation of Wiradjuri must tread become so much longer and another chance has gone by.

There are many ingredients that are an essential part of social justice, but for Wiradjuri, social justice is just as slippery an eel as that of self-determination. Social justice as shown by the perspectives of the participants is all about equality; of health, housing and education as some
prime examples, but according to Calma (2008, p. 3) behind equality of services such as health, housing and education, there is ‘unfinished business’; “the stalled efforts to reconciliation, the on-going uncertainty surrounding the issues of land, control of resources, cultural security, the rights of self-determination and sovereignty”, are all issues that must be dealt with should social justice become reality, rather than a dream.

8.7 The Published Narrative

It would be incorrect to think that the published materials that contribute to the ‘historical published narrative’ have not had an impact on Wiradjuri peoples and culture. From the outset, these works have recorded nearly every aspect of peoples and cultures (Mathews, 1900; Holmer, n.d.; Gribble, 1882; and Heaton, 1879 for example in chapter four), but for the most part have done so in ways that are founded in a coloniser’s mentality, and thus have denied natural justice to them. The impacts were many as noted in chapter five and these impacts are still felt in contemporary Australia. The historical published narratives have suggested many things about Wiradjuri peoples and cultures and as suggested by Stanner (1969) and Reynolds (1996 in chapter seven of this thesis, they were based on many theories in relation to Indigenous peoples or cultures and were forthcoming from a colonist ways of thinking and ways of viewing Wiradjuri. The mentality behind these theories have entered the mind-sets of many in the broader Australian community and as such contributes to the continual domination of Wiradjuri where the dominant ways of looking at Wiradjuri still come from the colonialist perspectives. It is these colonist narratives that people look to in order to justify the genocidal practices that occurred during the very early days of invasion (Lowenthal, 1985 and Spickard, 2002), and to justify the racist overtones that come from some that hold positions of high public profile stated Wilson-Miller (1999).
One of the challenges that Wiradjuri face in light of what has been published about them, is to demonstrate to the broader Australian community that in the majority of instances, these works are not true depictions of peoples and cultures (Service, 1968) and that these narratives were based on theories from people that were not themselves educated in the ways of Wiradjuri, that the narratives were biased, inconsistent and ambiguous for example as noted by Birckhead (1994) and Tatz (1979) in chapter three and by Barwick (1984) and Lowenthal (1985) in chapter seven. Howard called the Indigenous perspectives and stories of history a ‘black-armband’ version (chapter seven), but the historical published narrative has also painted versions of history that could well be called ‘white armband’ versions, noted especially in chapter three and by Langton (2008) in chapter one. Cavanagh’s contribution in Craven (1999) suggested that these published works are also utilised within the higher education institutions such as Universities, by academics, and it is here that the challenge for Wiradjuri is to remind non-Indigenous teachers that there exists in the narratives, a bias.

8.8 The Contemporary Discourse

Contemporary discourse that emanates from within the broader Australian community also impact on how Wiradjuri move forward in terms of the authentication, hence validity, of peoples and cultures, which the participants Lilly and Orson have alluded to in chapter six. In contemporary society, there is a tension between two competing narratives: a decolonising narrative expressed by Indigenous people such as the research participants, and by some in non-Indigenous society, and a ‘reactionary’ colonist narrative expressed in the popular media by some contemporary commentators and politicians. People such as Bolt (chapter one) and Oldfield (chapter six) are ‘reactionaries’; in that they are in “opposition to new ideas and opposed to political or social change” according to Geddes and Grosset (1999); they are reacting to anything they see getting in the way of the status quo. Bolt and Oldfield, along
with others of the same mentality, stand at the front lines of the fight against Wiradjuri and have pushed their thoughts into the public domain like a general would push his troops into battle. But, being an adaptable peoples, Wiradjuri have now entered this battlefield with their own troops as highlighted earlier in this chapter. Many Wiradjuri peoples such as writers, poets and artists have engaged at the front-lines of this battle.

Born in various parts of Wiradjuri country these writers, poets and artists have contributed to decolonisation by introducing alternative perspectives on life, spiritual beliefs, invasion and genocide and at their time of writing, the continued subjugation of peoples and culture, both physically and politically. Kevin Gilbert, born in the town of Narranderra was self-educated and is now an established writer and poet; Shirley Smith was born in Erambie and was the founding member of the Aboriginal Medical Service and consistently promoted cultural awareness amongst people that she had daily dealings with during her time as a Counsellor with the Department of Corrective Services; Mary Coe (writer) and Isabell Coe (artist), have become a part of the decolonisation process by their dual efforts in the narrative of Windradyne; and Anita Heiss, who through her poetry, brings new alternative perspectives on Wiradjuri peoples and cultures to an ever expanding range of readers. The works of these, and other Wiradjuri, are an integral part in the continuity of Wiradjuri cultures and bring to the attention of the broader Australian community that Wiradjuri are providing alternative perspectives of history through a common cultural lens, but through different media. Now according to the narrative of Attwood (2009) it is up to the Australian community to make some sense of it all.
8.9 Reflections and the Future

The historical published narratives have been for the most part, the bullets in the loaded guns that have seen Wiradjuri peoples and cultures fired upon whenever they dare to suggest that they still exist. The loaded guns in contemporary Australia can be the High Court Judges that take as gospel the written narratives and dismiss the alternative viewpoints that emanate from Indigenous peoples, including Wiradjuri, when a claim for Native Title comes before them; or are those in the media such as Bolt (chapter one) that continually question the identity and authenticity of Indigenous peoples.

The data has shown that whilst some participants acknowledge that Native Title is a very important issue, others are not as adamant as highlighted by the viewpoints of the participants Emily and Samantha: “I don’t like Native Title” (Emily); “Bugger Native Title” (Samantha). Those who do not see Native Title as playing a major part in the authentication of Wiradjuri peoples and cultures though, are still aware that somewhere down the pathway, it (Native Title) will be an issue that will be dealt with, as according to the participant Orson: “Wiradjuri need to focus on more important things...then maybe Native Title.”

Perhaps that time is coming sooner than they think. “On Saturday the 28th of April 2012, a historical meeting was convened at West Wyalong to begin the process of furthering the Wiradjuri People Nation Native Title Claim...[and] confirmed the need for a Native Title blanket claim over the entire Wiradjuri Nation” (Robinson, 2012, p. 1). The Media release by Robinson (2012), calls on all Wiradjuri to sit at the table of consultation, to stand as one Nation in unity in order to present a unified claim over all traditional Wiradjuri country. However the thoughts of Cousins (2005) and Weir (2009), as a warning of sorts, should be taken into account by Robinson and others. Cousins (2005, p. 4) suggested that the Yorta
Yorta decision had cast ... “doubt on the likelihood of being able to prove native title in southern Australia...” and in relation to the judgement in the Yorta Yorta case, J K Weir (2009a) stated that “Such is the influence of ‘tradition’ on Indigenous identity, that Indigenous people who seek to make a commercial livelihood from country...are not only being untraditional, they are not eligible for Indigenous rights, and their status as an authentic Indigenous persons is challenged” (p. 7).

The historical published narrative and the contemporary reactionary narrative of non-Indigenous people have between them, covered a huge amount of research on Wiradjuri peoples and cultures. In some instances they have some similarities, but for the most part are in direct contradiction to the contemporary decolonising narrative. What does this mean? The data has highlighted that for many, the historical published narrative should be believed as this is based on the written accounts of time long passed; if an anthropologist spent some time in the field researching about Wiradjuri peoples and cultures, then surely those accounts would be factual! If High Court Judges take as the ‘truth’ that which has been written and published by anthropologists then surely that too is what should be believed!

Contemporary reactionary narratives in the public discourse follow the same lines of thinking to a very large degree and a lot of contemporary reactionary narratives use the historical published narrative as a base on which to project contemporary ways of thinking. This however is not the case all of the time. There are in contemporary Australia, decolonising narratives that come from the research participants, from popular media, non-Indigenous commentators and from those in the academic world that differ greatly from the historical published narrative and contemporary reactionary decolonising narratives. Curthoys (2006, p. 16) asks these questions: Is it possible to have more than one true account? How do historians
develop accurate historical accounts when the evidence is fragmentary? How do we view histories that show no empathy with people’s sufferings in the past? Perhaps the mentality has changed whereby a fresh look at Indigenous affairs produces fresh information, or perhaps there are more Wiradjuri writers coming to the fore and producing Wiradjuri versions of history for example?

The oral stories of the participants shed some very interesting light on many of the issues under discussion. Many of the participants, for the most part, do not agree with much that has been written about them, past or present. They do however call for Wiradjuri peoples to provide a Wiradjuri perspective, to give voice to Wiradjuri peoples whether that voice refutes or agrees with what has been written about them by others. “The ways forward in ‘real’ terms for the participants hinge on a number of issues seen as central to their place in contemporary Australia and for the future of both peoples and cultures. Some of these issues are located in overturning current legislation, working from ‘the inside out’ in order to do so. In their attempts to assert their rights and authenticity, some of the participants call for the Nation of Wiradjuri to come together so that all peoples know of them and what their dreams and aspirations are, and how they hope to achieve them. Terry and Albert for example believed that in order to lead lives within a self-determining and social justice framework, the political chains that bind them must be unlocked. This according to some of the participants is how the fight against colonial oppression or peoples and cultures will be fought.”

8.10 A Bookend

My foray into researching my own peoples has had many enlightening moments and some very disheartening ones. The participants provided me with some perspectives that differed from my own and in some instances their responses mirrored what I believed to be the ‘truth’.
It was not an easy task, researching Wiradjuri; it was a great challenge. One of the research outcomes is located in how the colonising narratives (both historical published and contemporary reactionary narratives) have challenged Wiradjuri thought. My own thoughts, ideas, and beliefs were also constantly under challenge from people who wrote about us; the historical published narrative provided information that challenged my ‘truth’ as a Wiradjuri man. My ancestors were not immigrants (Berndt and Berndt in chapter four); therefore I am not a product of immigration. My ancestors were not cannibals (Broome in chapter three); therefore I am not a cannibal. My ancestors practiced cultures for 120,000 years (Rintoul in chapter three); therefore Wiradjuri cultures are alive in contemporary Australia. I know Wiradjuri language; therefore languages have not been lost (Alper in chapter three). I pass appropriate knowledge of Wiradjuri peoples, cultures and country on to all who would ask; therefore I contribute to cultural continuity. And I am just as authentic now as my Wiradjuri ancestors were 120,000 years ago.

I have looked on from the sidelines of the battlefield when reactionaries such as Bolt and Windschuttle took their racist thoughts on to the public arena in order to gather more troops. At times I have wanted to respond through the same media that they utilise, but at this point in time, I have not participated in the public discourse that denigrates peoples and cultures...my way is another way.

Coming to terms with what had been written about Wiradjuri was at times, very disheartening, but the hardest thing of all was listening to those participants that had sadness in their voices when they answered some of the questions asked of them.
In my own individual effort to contribute to the national debate on peoples and cultures, or in the ‘black-armband’ view of history, in 2007 I wrote a paper on Wiradjuri titled “Wiradjuri: Revival and Survival” (published in Minnerup and Solberg, 2011, pp. 132-148). I offer the following extract as a contribution to this section of my thesis.

“The road to revival and survival of the Wiradjuri people is not an easy journey. There are many that would see Wiradjuri revival and survival as being an important component of the future of Australia as a whole. There are others, however, that would see the demise of the Wiradjuri as the ultimate victory over Indigenous peoples and cultures. What chance do Wiradjuri peoples have when the forces against them are so great? Genuine equality between Wiradjuri and non-Indigenous people remains an illusion: invasion was the mother of inequality. The imposition of mainstream laws, organisations, and institutions would also become a tool in the hands of those opposed to anything Indigenous. More and more Wiradjuri people are aspiring to have control over their culture, amounting to cultural autonomy. This reflects, writes Keesing and Strathern (1998: 377), “the ability to adapt under circumstances related to the politics and economics of the invaders, the ability to exploit that which is presented to them so they may benefit and continue in an economical manner.” Social justice for Wiradjuri people is as slippery as an eel. Social justice is about reform of local, state and commonwealth laws that see my people treated as third-class people. The opportunity to continue traditional cultural practices is absolutely necessary for social justice to become a reality. Social justice is also about the non-Indigenous population listening to us with open hearts and minds, and having done that, to undertake a commitment to reconciliation. So where does the future of Wiradjuri peoples and their respective cultures lie? On whose shoulders rest the protection and preservation of a culture so unique? The future of our culture lies in the hands of the peoples themselves, especially the young. The
cultural knowledge that the elders have acquired from their elders must be passed to the young, so that each successive generation becomes the bearer of cultural continuity. Despite other people’s efforts to dictate who we are and what we should do, the Wiradjuri have taken steps of their own. They have begun a program of revival that will ultimately ensure Wiradjuri survival. This program is not generic; it is not a program that has been set out by all Wiradjuri. Rather it emanates from small pockets of people that see cultural survival as the major issue facing them at this point in time. Authenticity and validation can be located in those who identify as Wiradjuri, take great pride in who they are, spread the Wiradjuri “word”, and work to ensure the continued survival of this great nation.

Has “genocide in the colonies” been successful? Has the policy of assimilation worked? In some instances they have, in others they have not. Whilst Wiradjuri people are now employed in mainstream Australia, across many fields of education, health, housing, politics and other areas of importance, they still identify as Wiradjuri. Should this remain so for the next 120,000 years, then the unshakeable belief of the elders will have stood the test of time:

Wiradjuri will always be Wiradjuri” (pp.132-148).

The struggle for self-determination and social justice must continue. The revival of cultures and the survival of Wiradjuri as a Nation of peoples, recognised as diverse from other Indigenous cultural groups, is the light at the end of the tunnel for Wiradjuri peoples. The way forward for Wiradjuri is not through Native Title though, if the thoughts of Cousins (2005) and Weir (2009) ring true. The ways forward in ‘real’ terms for the participants hinge on a number of issues seen as central to their place in contemporary Australia and for the future of both peoples and cultures. Some of these issues are located in overturning current legislation, working from ‘the inside out’ in order to do so. In their attempts to assert their
rights and authenticity, some of the participants call for the Nation of Wiradjuri to come together so that all peoples know of them and what their dreams and aspirations are, and how they hope to achieve them. Perhaps the pathway could have been through the proposed changes to the Australian Constitution, but unless Wiradjuri were going to be recognised in any proposed changes in the future, as Wiradjuri, then the dominant culture still has the legal power of veto over identity and authentication of such.

The challenges that Wiradjuri face now, and will face in the future, are many. We Wiradjuri must continue to challenge, at every stage, the mentality behind colonisation, we must continually fight against the continued subjugation of our peoples and cultures and we must, through the process of decolonisation, provide as many of our voices as we can in order to create those alternative viewpoints that are necessary to understanding our versions of events, past and present.

My research adopted a Critical Indigenous Pedagogy (CIP) which involved researching through a Critical Indigenous Methodology (CIM) as depicted by Denzin and Lincoln (2008). The use of these approaches, in conjunction with each other, meant that the research was conducted from my own standpoint; that of an Indigenous (Wiradjuri) man. The use of CIP/CIM provided an opportunity for me as a Wiradjuri researcher to undertake research according to my own way of being and doing and as such, provided an opportunity to contribute to the decolonising process. As shown throughout the thesis, CIP/CIM provided me with the opportunity to conduct research in ways that ‘disrupted the rules of the research game, whereby research is more respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful, as opposed to research that was racist in practice and attitude, based on ethnocentric assumptions and which was exploitive’ (Lather, 1999). As suggested by Smith (1999), the presentation of the
thoughts, ideas, concerns, and opinions of my research participants in the thesis are presented in ways that benefit them, and will contribute to their ongoing pursuit of social justice and self determination for themselves and for their peoples.

Wiradjuri, as this thesis has shown, are challenging the status quo. They are challenging the way in which research is conducted and by whom it is conducted. This thesis has also shown that research methodology such as CIP/CIM which includes the aspirations of Indigenous peoples, can be an avenue through which non-Indigenous peoples, especially those from scientific and academic institutions, can tread in efforts to attain a greater understanding of peoples and cultures.

However, the greatest challenge is to keep going, to keep challenging the mind-set that drives political agendas that do nothing for Wiradjuri aspirations of self-determination and social justice.

The final words of this research project should not be attributed to Yalmambirra, either as a member of the academic community, nor as a Wiradjuri man. It is certainly ethical and very appropriate that the final words should go to that Wiradjuri man who first led me on the pathway of cultural knowledge.

“Nothing can change the past...it has happened, but the future can be changed if we look to the past...” (Wungamaa, 1999).
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

1. Affirming also that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind, Affirming further that all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust, Reaffirming that indigenous peoples, in the exercise of their rights, should be free from discrimination of any kind, Concerned that indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests, Recognizing the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources, Recognizing also the urgent need to respect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples affirmed in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements with States, Welcoming the fact that indigenous peoples are organizing themselves for political, economic, social and cultural enhancement and in order to bring to an end all forms of discrimination and oppression wherever they occur, Convinced that control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their
aspirations and needs, Recognizing that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment, Emphasizing the contribution of the demilitarization of the lands and territories of indigenous peoples to peace, economic and social progress and development, understanding and friendly relations among nations and peoples of the world, Recognizing in particular the right of indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child, Considering that the rights affirmed in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements between States and indigenous peoples are, in some situations, matters of international concern, interest, responsibility and character, Considering also that treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements, and the relationship they represent, are the basis for a strengthened partnership between indigenous peoples and States, Acknowledging that the Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, affirm the fundamental importance of the right to self-determination of all peoples, by virtue of which they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development, Bearing in mind that nothing in this Declaration may be used to deny any peoples their right to self-determination, exercised in conformity with international law, Convinced that the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples in this Declaration will enhance harmonious and cooperative relations between the State and indigenous peoples, based on principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith, Encouraging States to comply with and effectively implement all their obligations as they apply to indigenous peoples under international instruments, in particular those related to human rights, in consultation and cooperation with the peoples concerned,
Emphasizing that the United Nations has an important and continuing role to play in promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, Believing that this Declaration is a further important step forward for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples and in the development of relevant activities of the United Nations system in this field, Recognizing and reaffirming that indigenous individuals are entitled without discrimination to all human rights recognized in international law, and that indigenous peoples possess collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development as peoples, Recognizing that the situation of indigenous peoples varies from region to region and from country to country and that the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical and cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration, Solemnly proclaims the following United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect:

Article 1

Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law.

Article 2

Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.
**Article 3**

Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

**Article 4**

Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.

**Article 5**

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

**Article 6**

Every indigenous individual has the right to a nationality.

**Article 7**

1. Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.

2. Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.

**Article 8**

1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.

2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:
(a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities;

(b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;

(c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights;

(d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration;

(e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them,

Article 9

Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned. No discrimination of any kind may arise from the exercise of such a right.

Article 10

Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.

Article 11

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.
2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

Article 12

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.

2. States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned.

Article 13

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected and also to ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means.

Article 14

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.

3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

**Article 15**

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

2. States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

**Article 16**

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination. Media duly reflect indigenous cultural diversity. States, without prejudice to ensuring full freedom of expression, should encourage privately owned media to adequately reflect indigenous cultural diversity.

**Article 17**

1. Indigenous individuals and peoples have the right to enjoy fully all rights established under applicable international and domestic labour law.

2. States shall in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples take specific measures to protect indigenous children from economic exploitation and from performing any work
that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, taking into account their special vulnerability and the importance of education for their empowerment.

3. Indigenous individuals have the right not to be subjected to any discriminatory conditions of labour and, inter alia, employment or salary.

*Article 18*

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision making institutions.

*Article 19*

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

*Article 20*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.

2. Indigenous peoples deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress.

*Article 21*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
2. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

Article 22

1. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration.

2. States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.

Article 23

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

Article 24

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.

2. Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.
Article 25

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

Article 26

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.

2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.

3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.

Article 27

States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples’ laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

Article 28

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when this is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which
have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.

2. Unless otherwise freely agreed upon by the peoples concerned, compensation shall take the form of lands, territories and resources equal in quality, size and legal status or of monetary compensation or other appropriate redress.

*Article 29*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.

3. States shall also take effective measures to ensure, as needed, that programmes for monitoring, maintaining and restoring the health of indigenous peoples, as developed and implemented by the peoples affected by such materials, are duly implemented.

*Article 30*

1. Military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples, unless justified by a relevant public interest or otherwise freely agreed with or requested by the indigenous peoples concerned.

2. States shall undertake effective consultations with the indigenous peoples concerned, through appropriate procedures and in particular through their representative institutions, prior to using their lands or territories for military activities.
Article 31

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.

2. In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights.

Article 32

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

2. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.

3. States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact.

Article 33

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions. This does not impair the right of indigenous individuals to obtain citizenship of the States in which they live.
2. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the structures and to select the membership of their institutions in accordance with their own procedures.

*Article 34*

Indigenous peoples have the right to promote, develop and maintain their institutional structures and their distinctive customs, spirituality, traditions, procedures, practices and, in the cases where they exist, juridical systems or customs, in accordance with international human rights standards.

*Article 35*

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the responsibilities of individuals to their communities.

*Article 36*

1. Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.

2. States, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, shall take effective measures to facilitate the exercise and ensure the implementation of this right.

*Article 37*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements concluded with States or their successors and to have States honour and respect such treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.
2. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as diminishing or eliminating the rights of indigenous peoples contained in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.

**Article 38**

States, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, shall take the appropriate measures, including legislative measures, to achieve the ends of this Declaration.

**Article 39**

Indigenous peoples have the right to have access to financial and technical assistance from States and through international cooperation, for the enjoyment of the rights contained in this Declaration.

**Article 40**

Indigenous peoples have the right to access to and prompt decision through just and fair procedures for the resolution of conflicts and disputes with States or other parties, as well as to effective remedies for all infringements of their individual and collective rights. Such a decision shall give due consideration to the customs, traditions, rules and legal systems of the indigenous peoples concerned and international human rights.

**Article 41**

The organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations shall contribute to the full realization of the provisions of this Declaration through the mobilization, inter alia, of financial cooperation and technical assistance. Ways and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them shall be established.

**Article 42**

The United Nations, its bodies, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and specialized agencies, including at the country level, and States shall promote respect for and full application of the provisions of this Declaration and follow up the effectiveness of
Article 43

The rights recognized herein constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.

Article 44

All the rights and freedoms recognized herein are equally guaranteed to male and female indigenous individuals.

Article 45

Nothing in this Declaration may be construed as diminishing or extinguishing the rights indigenous peoples have now or may acquire in the future.

Article 46

1. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations or construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States.

2. In the exercise of the rights enunciated in the present Declaration, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all shall be respected. The exercise of the rights set forth in this Declaration shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law and in accordance with international human rights obligations. Any such limitations shall be non-discriminatory and strictly necessary solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for meeting the just and most compelling requirements of a democratic society.
3. The provisions set forth in this Declaration shall be interpreted in accordance with the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, equality, non-discrimination, good governance and good faith.

APPENDIX 2: Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies

Principle 1: Recognition of the diversity and uniqueness of peoples, as well as of individuals, is essential.

Principle 2: The rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination must be recognised.

Principle 3: The rights of Indigenous peoples to their intangible heritage must be recognised.

Principle 4: Rights in the traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions of Indigenous peoples must be respected, protected and maintained.

Principle 5: Indigenous knowledge, practices and innovations must be respected, protected and maintained.

Principle 6: Consultation, negotiation and free, prior and informed consent are the foundations for research with or about Indigenous peoples.

Principle 7: Responsibility for consultation and negotiation is ongoing.

Principle 8: Consultation and negotiation should achieve mutual understanding about the proposed research.

Principle 9: Negotiation should result in a formal agreement for the conduct of a research project.
Principle 10: Indigenous people have the right to full participation appropriate to their skills and experiences in research projects and processes.

Principle 11: Indigenous people involved in research, or who may be affected by research, should benefit from, and not be disadvantaged by, the research project.

Principle 12: Research outcomes should include specific results that respond to the needs and interests of Indigenous people.

Principle 13: Plans should be agreed for managing use of, and access to, research results.

Principle 14: Research projects should include appropriate mechanisms and procedures for reporting on ethical aspects of the research and complying with these guidelines.

Source: AIATSIS (2011)
APPENDIX 3: The area and locations where the interviews took place. Source: Fraser (1882).