

The Ethics of Intercultural Research

Estelle Barrett Deakin University

Acknowledgement of Country - Perth

- I would like to acknowledge the Noongar people who are the traditional custodians of this land and to pay my respects to Elders past and present as well as to other Indigenous Australians here today.

Acknowledgement of Country - Melbourne

I would like to acknowledge the Boonwurung and Wurundjeri people who are the traditional custodians of this land. I would also like to pay my respect to Elders both past and present of the Kulin Nation and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians present.

Acknowledgement of Country - Geelong

- I would like to acknowledge the Wathaurong people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting on today. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders both past and present and also to other Aboriginal people present here today. I extend my respect to Bunjil, creator and ancestor of the Kulin nation.

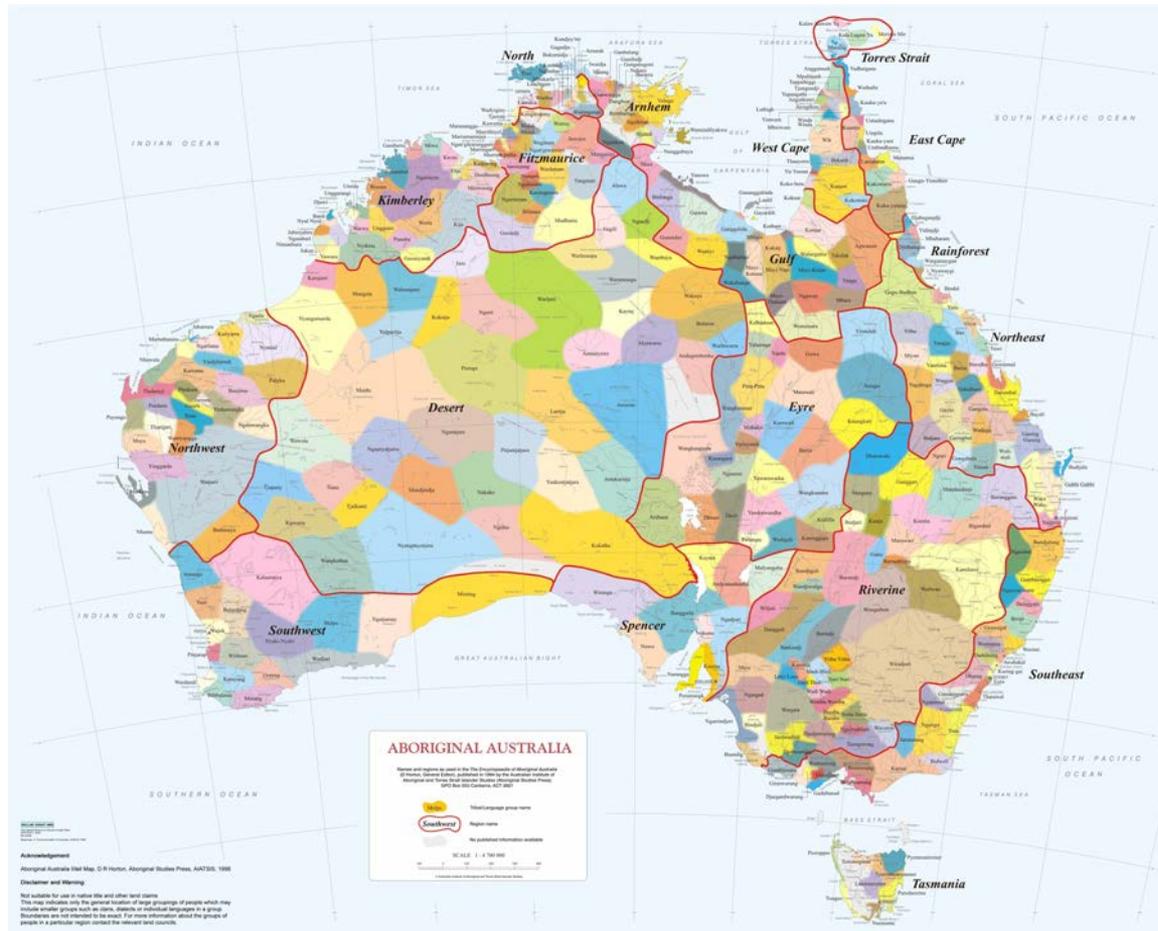
The First Protocol

Acknowledgement of Country is an important protocol when conducting Indigenous research and official activities in Australia.

There are at least 500 different clan group or Nations across the country each with their own language and protocols of engagement

Aboriginal Australia Wall Map, D R Horton, Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS, 1996

<http://www.nationalunitygovernment.org/pdf/aboriginal-australia-map.pdf> (accessed 3/10/17)



Overview

- This presentation is based on two iDare Papers: “Setting up relationality for research” (protocols of engagement)

(Barrett, Martin, Koolmatrie et al. 2016) and
“Relationality and Ethical Know-How in
Indigenous Research” (Barrett 2016)
(process and practice of research)

Indigenous Research as Case study

- Overcoming blind spots: different ontologies differing epistemologies
- Differing conceptions about what constitutes art and research
- Lack of know-how and/or coercion may be Inadvertent

Part 1: Setting Up Relationality For Research

Developed by Brian, Martin, Estelle Barrett and
Institute of Koorie Education Higher Degree by
Research Students: Janis Koolmatrie, Lexine
Solomon, Deanne Gilson, Cheryl Creed, Deborah
Swan, Bradley Webb, Daphne Toby, Dee Bassaraba,
Monica Stevens, Davena Monro and Debra Dank

Relationality

- When research is conducted with Indigenous peoples, communities and entities, relationality is the most important starting point.
- The positioning of the researchers and the participants is vital before the research takes place. Participants are not “something” to be studied, but are themselves active producers/researchers in the process.

1. Situating/positioning oneself as a person and a researcher

Who you are as a person and who you are as a researcher will influence the relationality between you and the participants. Relationships built on trust need to be established through agreed negotiation of the aims and parameters of the research before the research commences (pre-ethics Protocols)

2. Participants are co-producers/co-researchers

- Participants are producers of content and therefore take on the position of the object *and* subject of the research.
- Participants are owners of their own cultural knowledge and are producers of this knowledge. Before research commences, participants are informed that they are co-producers of the research.

3. Recognising the nature of the participant is in relation to Country and other entities

- Participants have a connection to locality (Country) and other entities on Country. These entities include animals, land and other natural and metaphysical beings that relate to people and Country. (knowledge is visual and tacit, imaginary, intra-active).
- *All* entities have agency. The word “kin” is used as a description of relationships with all entities including people and Country.

4. Recognising the importance of lived experience and its relation to use value in research

- Real life experience and the narratives of lived experience contribute to research in a participatory *and* academic manner.
- Indigenous peoples have an intellectual tradition that goes back 40,000 years. Much of this is enshrined in art forms

From ABC *First Footprints* 2013



5. The location of the research is paramount in terms of whether the community approves the competency of the research

- The locality of the research needs to be established in terms of community support
- Regular member checking during the research process and approval at the conclusion of the research is necessary.

6. The participant reserves the right to consent orally

- Some Indigenous peoples and communities use English as a fourth and fifth language and some community members may have literacy issues. An oral agreement may also hold more validity in some communities.
- Audiotaping of consent should be admissible as evidence in such cases.

7. Principles need to be negotiated and Time needs to be recognised from the perspective of the participants' commitments and world view

- These principles and the time allocated to building relationality with participants, co-producers and communities need to be flexible and negotiated.
- Situated ethics is an overarching principle

PART 2: Ethical Knowhow and Indigenous Research

Estelle Barrett
(iDARE Paper)

Is the Application of Principals Sufficient?

- We may ask whether the principals discussed above, are *in themselves* enough, if the very ontological and epistemological foundations of western research remain the same?
- Relationality and relatedness fundamental to protocols of engagement with Indigenous communities in research need to be extended to the actual *processes* and *operations* of research in order to enhance ethical know-how of conducting cross-cultural research including art related research

Fundamental Difference Between Indigenous Research and Western Models

Western Models of Research:

- Tendency to be empirical and focused on data collection related to problems, but solutions not necessarily motivated by or linked to participants' needs
- Often pre-determined, abstract and/or includes application of inductive method – observations leading to theory or deductive method – stating a theory and seeking evidence to substantiate it

Indigenous Research:

- Is communal, emergent and related to practical and cultural imperatives: reclamation, commemoration, testimony, resistance - this applies to art too

Indigenous Research

- Relatedness/relationality - all entities are equally positioned: real, imaginary and spiritual (agential realism)
- Experiential/situated – fluid, interactive emergent , collaborative
- Nature of knowledge conforms to ethical protocols of engagement – research is communal and linked to practical benefits
- Art making (aesthetics)in all its forms underpin production and transmission of knowledge – involves multiple registers and interpolation
- Egalitarian approach – “yarning” as method
- Different concept of time

Knowledge

- Indigenous ways of knowing are *experiential* and passed down from generation to generation
- Tied to memory, practices and ceremonial re-enactment
- Tacit dimension - shared/ distributed /sacred
- Embodied, sensory and aesthetic
- May include subconscious “non-rational” elements such as dreams

Deanne Gilson, *Wadawurrung Cultural Tree of Knowledge*, 2015



Indigenous Epistemology

- Is closely linked to place or country and ways of doing (250 language groups – protocols of entry and engagement; member checking)
- Languages are verb-based; no separation between knowing and doing. The words denoting “art” are verb
- No separation between material, imaginary and spiritual/metaphysical entities

Relational Knowledge

- Shared/participatory - participant as co-producer – this relates to art as well
- Tied to Country, group practice and material realities and experience
- Distributed according to age, gender, roles
- Confers identity
- May be sacred (art and the materials used almost always have a sacred/ceremonial dimension)

Methodology

- Grounded in material realities
- Aesthetic: visual and verbal narratives
- Yarning – participatory, egalitarian
- Interactive and intra-active, interpolative
- Emergent, subjective
- Relational/collaborative community based*
- Method and content/data can be interchangeable*
- Internal duration tied to ceremony and process

Nerida Blair (2015)

- Indigenous ways of gaining knowledge can be understood through the term *dadirri*, “a coming to know through, listening, waiting” (Blair, 2015: 50) Hence the time it takes, is the time it takes for the knowledge to emerge.
- Like the process of sugar dissolving in water making and interpreting unfolds across time and across generations.
- Linked to age and gender

Research as Ceremony



Data

- Aesthetic Image: elements of indeterminacy
- Includes stories , myths dreams
- Multiple, ambiguous
- Disruptive/Decolonizing
- Interactive and intra-active
- Interchangeable with interpretation
(interpolation)

Artwork is tied to ways of being and doing: multiple values and uses

From ABC *First Foot Prints*, 2013



Interpretation

- “interpolation” “to corrupt”, “to add” “to alter.”
Involves knowing-in-action
- Involves giving new appearance to entities and ideas,
- Insertion of foreign or new matter
- Active and participatory process of production and analysis, based on intuitive) fuzzy logic)
- Performative, Emergent, Experiential for both makers and audience

From ABC *First Footprints* 2013



Ethical Know-how

Ethical know-how in Indigenous research rests not only with developing relationality with participants and related entities , but also developing different perspectives on what constitutes research, art, practice, knowledge, methodology, data, interpretation.

Critical Commentary

- In relation to Indigenous art, materiality as both the framework and point of departure can assist in developing more rigorous approaches to artistic and aesthetic inquiry. A focus on materials can help to provide proper contextualisation of cultural exigencies and values, and thereby build formal and structural approaches to address in gaps in critical commentary. (Slogett, 2016)

Intercultural Aesthetics and Ethics

- Different ontologies generate alternative knowledge, aesthetics and notions of authenticity, value
- Market-driven arts industry and criticism at odds with emerging field Indigenous PAR

Possum Skin Cloak *Boonwurrung* Carolyn Briggs (Victoria)



Possum Skin Cloak Baraparapa (worn by Esther Kirby sister of Phoebe Nicholson at 2006 Commonwealth Games)



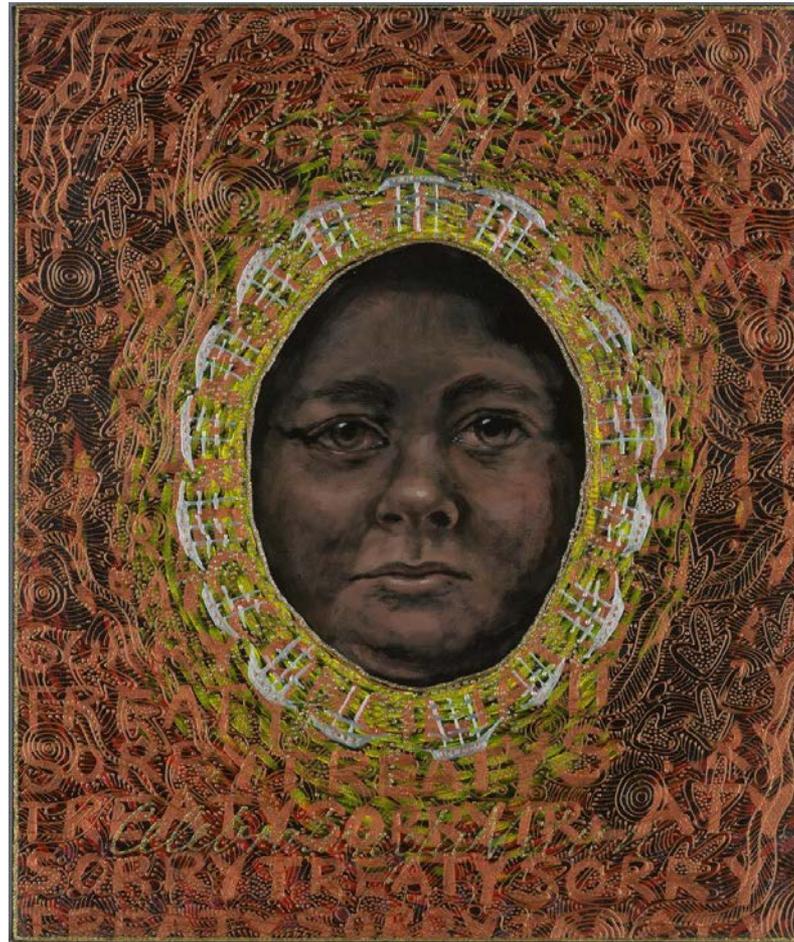
Possum Skin Cloak NSW worn by Phoebe Nicholson



Lorraine Connelly-Northey, *An O'possum - skin Cloak*, 2005-6, *rusted corrugated iron, wire*, 119.5 x 131.5 x 5.0 cm. Collection: National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.



Julie Dowling *Carol*, 2001. Synthetic polymer paint, earth pigments, metallic paint and glitter on canvas



Kelly Koumalatsos, (possum skin print on tissue paper)2018 PhD in progress



Kelly Koumalatsos (detail Possum skin cloak ink and tissue paper)



Kelly Koumalatsos, 2016 (detail possum skin
apron/ink and tissue paper)



Kelly Koumalatsos, 2016 (detail possum skin apron/ink
and tissue paper)



Deanne Gilson *Warrongawon Veil (To Mourn The Veil,*
2014-15) Installation. paper, clay, raku, wood, tulle.
MA Research



Deanne Gilson *Warrongawon Veil* (*To Mourn The Veil*, 2014-15). Detail



Deanne Gilson, *Reconciliation*, 2016, Black Hill
ochre, gold leaf acrylic on linen.



Deanne Gilson, *Reconciliation*, 2016, Black Hill ochre, gold leaf acrylic on linen.(detail)





Jenny Murray-Jones, *Ancestors*, 2016.
oil on canvas. (PhD) Research



Jenny Murray-Jones, *Piggery Lake*, 2016. oil on canvas. (PhD) Research



Jenny Murray-Jones, *Aggies Creek*, 2016. oil on canvas. (PhD) Research



Ethical Engagement With Indigenous Art as Research

Acknowledges that Contemporary Indigenous
Art Operates:

- Aesthetically
- Conceptually
- Critically
- Culturally