Decolonising Australian doctoral education beyond/within the pandemic: Foregrounding Indigenous knowledges

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ABSTRACT

Global doctoral education has been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, which have drawn attention to the vast inequities faced by black, cultural minority and Indigenous peoples. These developments have focused urgent attention on the need to de-homogenise Australian doctoral education. Australian universities have been very slow to create recognition and accreditation programs for First Nations and transcultural (migrant, refugee and international candidates) knowledge systems, histories, geographies, languages and cultural practices in doctoral education. A significant body of research investigates Australian universities' education of Indigenous and transcultural doctoral candidates. However, few scholars have sought to trace the links between individual personal doctoral candidate life histories and large-scale Australian government policy trends. This paper draws upon the Indigenous knowledge global decolonization praxis framework and de Sousa Santos' theories about cognitive justice and epistemologies of the South to fill this gap. Future aspects of this project will involve conducting an international policy analysis, life histories and time mapping to implement key Indigenous knowledge approaches in Australian doctoral education. This paper will critically explore the application of three core First Nations knowledge approaches – the agency of Country, the power of Story and intergenerational, iterative and intercultural knowledges – to Australian doctoral education.

Introduction

Doctoral education has been hugely affected by two significant shifts in the global landscape since 2020. These shifts include the COVID-19 pandemic that began sweeping the world in January 2020 and the Black Lives Matter movement which was reignited by the death of George Floyd in May 2020. In this paper, we consider the myriad of ways in which these two global shifts have made the job of foregrounding Indigenous knowledges in Australian doctoral education even more urgent. We then outline the conceptual framework we will be using over the next few years to create greater recognition of Indigenous and transcultural (migrant, refugee background and international candidates) knowledge systems, histories, geographies, languages, and cultural practices in Australian doctoral education. A significant body of research has emerged relating to Australian universities' education of Indigenous and transcultural doctoral candidates (Barney, 2013; Bodkin-Andrews and Craven, 2013; Trudgett, 2011; 2014). However, few scholars have sought to trace the links between individual personal doctoral candidate life histories and large-scale Australian government policy initiatives. This paper outlines the conceptual framework for research designed to fill this gap. The empirical research for this project will be undertaken between 2021 and 2024.

After outlining the impact of COVID-19 and the BlackLivesMatter movement on doctoral education, we describe the Indigenous and non-Indigenous standpoints of our research team, before outlining current research on Indigenous and transcultural doctoral education. We then provide details of our theoretical framework which is based upon Williams, Bunda, Claxton and MacKinnon's (2018) Indigenous knowledge global decolonization praxis framework and de Sousa Santos' (2014; 2018) theories about cognitive justice and epistemologies of the South. Our paper will then explore the three key First Nations knowledge approaches we are seeking to apply to Australian doctoral education. These include the agency of Country, the power of Story and the intergenerational, iterative, and intercultural nature of First Nations knowledge production. We conclude by suggesting that applying these First Nations knowledge principles to Australian doctoral education will not only enhance doctoral education from the point of view of Indigenous doctoral candidates but also assist transcultural doctoral candidates.

Global trends impacting upon doctoral education

Global doctoral education has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in multiple ways. Intense public health risks and transnational border closures since early 2020 have led to disruptions, delays, and adaptations in international doctoral candidates' research. Many of them have had to suspend candidacy, study online, or battle financial challenges and mental health issues whilst stranded overseas (Wang and DeLaquil, 2020). International students are fully or partially ineligible for host government support despite losing casual job opportunities (Berg & Farbenblum, 2020). Employment for casual academic work has dried up as universities brace for loss of revenue in international student fees (Thatcher, Zhang, Todoroski, Chau, Wang & Liang, 2020). Some doctoral candidates have had to postpone or alter their research process as data collection, fieldwork, and access to research facilities have been hindered (Vasiliadou, 2020). Some doctoral candidates of colour have experienced microaggressions, systemic bias and racism (Levine, Nasir, Rios-Aguilar, Gildersleeve, Rosich, Bang…, 2021).

Meanwhile, community and university support for international students emerged in the form of food packages, grocery deliveries and other programs. People sought to rally around these groups and Australian academics and doctoral students volunteered as language translators and community helpers for particular communities (Kalache, 2020; Evlin, 2020.). These trends resulted in renewed significance given to the epistemologies and languages of the South to address lockdown issues. For example, when several public housing towers in Melbourne were subject to strict lockdown because

of an outbreak of COVID, the assistance of community language speakers, interpreters and translators were valuable in bridging the communication in securing essential medical supplies and easing tensions between the authorities and residents (Luo, 2021). In Australia, international students generated the third largest export industry before the COVID era. Huge loss of revenues from international student fees combined with little Federal Government support has resulted in sweeping job losses among Australian academics working at larger and mid-tier universities that were particularly exposed to the international student market (Heffernan, 2021). Even in universities not overly exposed to the loss of international students, employment uncertainty and increased workload remain significant concerns for doctoral supervisors. Work demands are ever swelling as universities push for change to online and blended learning. In addition, academic work is increasingly loaded with administrivia as administrative job positions have been drastically reduced (Maslen, 2021).

In 2021, international student numbers in Australia decreased by 17% as compared to the previous year (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021). Especially hampered are attempts to continue recruiting new international doctoral candidates. Australia's 2020-2021 Migration Program Planning Levels slashed a significant number of places in the general skilled immigration stream, a pathway often sought after by international doctoral candidates to permanent residency and citizenship (Department of Home Affairs, 2020). Political and diplomatic tensions impacted on Chinese international students' perceptions about studying in Australia. Lack of scholarship opportunities have also affected the appeal of research programs in Australia (Gregory, 2021).

Very high death and infection rates, a chronic lack of access to medical equipment and vaccines and the disproportionate impact of lockdowns on migrant labour and workers in the informal economy in many Southern countries have also exposed the "persistent systemic fault-lines in a global socioeconomic system where inequality has, yet again, come sharply into focus" (Adam, 2020; McCann and Matenga, 2020:161). For doctoral candidates and supervisors in many of these countries, progress in doctoral studies has had to be deferred as people struggle to remain healthy, retain their employment and care for those in their family that are sick or unemployed (Bob, Munien, Gumede & Gounden, 2021). Yet again it remains clear that the bulk of the world's health and other resources that can facilitate people to complete doctoral studies and other forms of higher education remain disproportionately concentrated in the global North. The pandemic has only reinforced the recognition by many working in Global South universities that the academy is a very long way away from becoming decolonised (Thomas & Jivraj, 2020).

In addition to the pandemic, the death of George Floyd in the US and subsequent Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests around the globe have very powerfully drawn our attention to the need for decolonisation across a range of sectors including the justice system, Education, health, and many other domains of life for Black, cultural minority and First Nations peoples around the globe. In June 2020, there were mass protests supporting the BLM movement on every continent (except Antarctica) and at a time during the COVID pandemic when people were strongly discouraged to attend mass gatherings because of the risk of infection especially amongst First Nations, minority, and Black populations. People felt the immediate need to demonstrate solidarity despite the risk of infection (Isaacs, Tarnow-Mordi & Sherwood, 2020).

The BLM movement in the US, UK and Canada has been going since 2013 and its mission is to:

> eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centring Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives (Black Lives Matter, n.d.).

Globally, we are at a crucial tipping point in the fight against institutional and all forms of racism and unconscious bias (Isaacs *et al*, 2020; Phoenix, Amesu, Naylor & Zafar, 2020). As Isaacs and colleagues (2020:1327) argued, "the time for nice words and good intentions is over". The killing of George Floyd and subsequent BLM action has ignited "fury and urgency" that must be harnessed to achieve real change (Phoenix *et al*, 2020:521). Academics have gained renewed energy from the BLM movement to draw attention to continuing instances of 'anti-blackness and liberal white supremacy' in universities (e.g., Bell, Berry, Leopold & Nkomo, 2021:39). Many theorists have adopted kihana ross' (quoted in Bell *et al*, 2021:42) definition of anti-blackness as "a theoretical framework that illuminates society's inability to recognize our humanity—the disdain, disregard and disgust for our existence". Bell and colleagues (2021:42) define white supremacy as "an institutional system of power that normalizes, privileges, and maintains whiteness and white advantages in all spheres of life, including higher education". In order to begin combatting ongoing evidence of white privilege in universities, it is vital that challenging conversations about the history of colonialism and slavery must be taken seriously, and real "acts of decolonisation" must be implemented (Phoenix *et al*, 2020: 521).

In the Australian context, the Black Lives Matter movement has focused particularly on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody, which remain a shocking record of shame in our country. Australia continues to have an over-representation of First Nations peoples in prison. As we write this article, there have been at least 478 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody since 1991 when the Royal Commission's deaths in custody report was released (Allam, 2021). No Australian

police personnel have ever been convicted for any of these deaths. These First Nations deaths in custody are symptomatic of an Australian state system that remains profoundly racist.

Universities represent significant institutions within this state apparatus. Very often these educational institutions remain sites where inequalities, unconscious bias and racism are perpetuated (Sharma, Catalano, Seetzen, Minors & Collins-Mayo, 2019). However, they could also be transformed into sites of radical intervention where we could seek to decolonise future generations and encourage people who can put an end to institutionalised racism and injustice. Colonial agendas and positions can be unpacked and problematised as part of a systematic overhaul of truth telling in all levels of education. We want future doctoral graduates to be informed and able to see past racist negative narratives about First Nations Australians and culturally diverse peoples and to bring about change on the ground for our Indigenous and transcultural communities.

The differential impact of the pandemic in the Global South and the Black Lives Matter movement, then, have created renewed attention and urgency for the acute need to decolonise doctoral education in Australia. Australian universities have not yet fully recognised First Nations and transcultural knowledge systems, histories, geographies, languages, and cultural practices in doctoral education. This is not the case in Aotearoa/New Zealand and South Africa where doctoral programs may now be fully completed in Māori or in one of the eleven official languages of South Africa (van der Walt, 2013; McKinley, Grant, Middleton, Irwin & Williams, 2011). Research from South Africa and Aotearoa New Zealand indicates that universities there recognise that Indigenous and transcultural doctoral candidates possess knowledge, languages and capabilities work for making a significant original contribution to knowledge (Doyle, Manathunga, Prinsen, Tallon & Cornforth, 2018; McKinley *et al* 2011; Pihama, Lee-Morgan, Smith & Seed-Pihama, 2019; Stewart, 2019; van der Walt, 2013).

Our standpoints

An important decolonising move in any research is to be very clear about the standpoint from which each of the authors is writing (Manathunga, 2020). We draw upon Harding's (2004) and Nakata's (2007) feminist and Indigenous standpoint theory to outline the positionality each of us occupies. We begin with the positionality of our Indigenous team members first. Raciti is a Kalkadoon-Thaniquith/Bwgcolman woman working on Kabi Kabi land at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) on what is now known as the Sunshine Coast. Raciti is a social market researcher who uses marketing tools and techniques to bring about social justice and behaviour change. Gilbey is an

Alyawarre woman working on a number of Aboriginal lands (eg. Kungarakan land) in the Northern Territory that stretch from what is now called Alice Springs to Batchelor at Batchelor Institute. Gilbey is an education researcher who specialises in First Nations knowledges, inclusive education, and critical race theories. The project is overseen by research team member and Elder Executive Advisor in Academic and Cultural Leadership at Batchelor Institute and a Kungarakan Traditional Owner-Custodian, Stanton. In addition, the project has a paid Elders Advisory Group of Indigenous senior Elders and cultural and academic advisors from each of the lands on which data will be collected in the project including Kabi Kabi; Kungarakan; Darug and Wurundjeri lands.

The First Nations team members have invited a transcultural team to join them in this research. Manathunga is an Irish-Australian historian who has a transcultural Sri Lankan/Irish-Australian/Colombian/Chippewa First Nations American family and has used her research to explore her responsibilities as a settler-invader scholar. She works on Kabi Kabi land at USC and she brings together expertise in historical, sociological, and cultural studies research to bring an innovative perspective to doctoral education research. Singh is a Punjabi-Australian man located on Darug Country at Western Sydney University. Singh acts as our senior transcultural Elder on the project and draws upon over 40 years of his research in the field of transcultural education. Qi is a Chinese-Mongol early career researcher with a specialization in critical multilingual knowledge co-construction. She works on Wurundjeri land at RMIT and draws upon her prior experience as an international student in Australia.

Indigenous and transcultural doctoral education

There is now a burgeoning literature on First Nations, international and transcultural doctoral education from across the globe. There is only space in this paper to sketch the broad outlines of this scholarly work. Here we will focus on the important work on First Nations Australian doctoral education and some of the research on international doctoral candidates studying in Australia (at least until the pandemic). We have been able to locate limited recent research in Australia on the experiences of culturally diverse migrant and refugee background doctoral candidates. We follow Naidoo's (2015) lead in adopting the term 'refugee background' rather than refugee students in order to acknowledge their present citizenship status as Australians.

Improving the participation and quality of Indigenous doctoral education in Australia has only recently become a national priority (Australian Council of Learned Academies, 2016; Behrendt, Larkin, Griew

& Kelly, 2012). To increase Indigenous Australians undertaking doctoral education by 50%, the Universities Australia (2017) *Indigenous Strategy 2017–2020* has mandated population parity targets and hopes to gain equal completion rates by 2028. During the last two decades, a body of significant research has emerged relating to Indigenous doctoral education in Australia (Barney, 2013; Bodkin-Andrews and Craven, 2013; Trudgett, 2011; 2014). Moreton-Robinson, Anderson, Nguyen and Pham (2020) have prepared a recent report on Indigenous success in HDR programs that summarises much of this research. They indicate that a group of these studies (e.g., Laycock *et al*, 2009; Trudgett, 2011; 2014) have identified some of the key aspects of quality supervision for Indigenous doctoral candidates including "supervisors' mentoring expertise, availability and respect for students and readiness to provide students with culturally specific support as well as compatibility within the supervisory teams" (Moreton-Robinson *et al*, 2020:2). Earlier studies also foreground the ways that supervisors often become the learners rather than the teachers in Indigenous doctoral supervision (Henry, 2007), which Ford (2012) suggests involves "goodwill, cultural openness and a measure of acceptance of the unknown" on the part of the supervisor. Moreton-Robinson and colleagues' (2020:7) recent focus group study with 34 Indigenous HDR students was designed to "identify the enabling factors … contributing to successful Indigenous completions". This takes up Moodie, Ewen, McLeod and Platania-Phung's (2018) recommendation that research on Australian Indigenous doctoral education stop focusing on barriers and challenges and instead adopt a strengths-based, success-focused approach. Moreton-Robinson and colleagues (2020) concluded that, in addition to the features of quality supervision identified by previous studies mentioned above, it was important that supervisors had the disciplinary knowledge students needed for their projects and that extra support was provided to support "students' ability to take ownership of their research" (Moreton-Robinson *et al*, 2020:2). They also recommended that additional capacity building programs for supervisors and Indigenous HDR candidates be provided (Moreton-Robinson *et al*, 2020).

Several studies have also explored, for many decades now, the experiences of international students in Australia. This literature can be grouped into the following general categories:

- studies recommending strategies to support the success of international students (e.g., Chatterjee-Padmanabhan and Nielson, 2018; Cotterall, 2015; Gao, 2021; Ma, 2020)
- autobiographical narratives and case studies of international doctoral candidates' experiences in Australia (e.g., Dang and Tran, 2017; Soong, Thi Tran & Pham, 2015)
- studies designed to explore the development of international student senses of institutional and other forms of belonging and acculturation in Australia (e.g., Fotovatian, 2012; Nomnian, 2018; Phelps, 2016; Yang and MacCallum, 2021)

- studies seeking to understand the theoretical and practical knowledge international and domestic culturally and linguistically diverse candidates bring from their histories, geographies, and cultures to their doctoral studies (e.g., Manathunga, 2014; Qi, 2015).

Recent studies have also sought to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international students located in a range of contexts like England, Australia, and other locations (e.g., Calvo, Cairns, Franc & de Azevedo, 2021; Hu, Xu & Tu, 2020; Wang and DeLaquil, 2020).

Most of the recent work done on refugee higher education in Australia focuses on refugee background students' transitions from school to higher education or their experiences of diploma or undergraduate studies (e.g., Naidoo, Wilkson & Adoniou, 2018; Molla, 2020; Sheikh, Koc & Anderson, 2019). There are very few studies of refugee background doctoral students' experiences. For example, Naidoo's (2015) study included one Rwandan refugee background student who received a doctoral scholarship from the Rwandan government to study in Australia. However, there appears to be no direct quotes from this student's experiences in the article. What this literature illustrates is that refugee background students face additional challenges that are likely to continue during their doctoral studies. These are best summed up through the findings of Sheikh and colleagues' (2019:361) study that included the impact on refugee background students of:

- high levels of family responsibilities, especially for those from collectivist cultures;
- 'the prevalence of mental health issue [especially significant and ongoing trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder]';
- 'the [logistical] obstacles to successfully accessing or pursuing their education' (e.g., paperwork, extended pathways, physical distance from educational institutes);
- a 'lack of information about (or even the existence of) education-relevant processes, ways to access content, and differences in styles and expectations of learning and teaching (including exposure to technology)';
- the 'disruptive impact of constant movement through countries, cities, regions, and educational institutions leading to educational gaps'; and
- 'struggles with financial stability and its negative impact on the student's education'.

Each of these challenges has only been further exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on culturally and linguistically diverse migrant and refugee background students, which has resulted in (among other issues) job losses, social isolation and worsening mental health (Mupenzi, Mude & Baker, 2020).

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Our research will also address the ongoing ways in which both First Nations and transcultural doctoral candidates are subjected to deficit discourses, marginalisation, assimilation, and racism (Manathunga, 2014; 2019). Other research and policy on doctoral education positions Indigenous and transcultural doctoral education candidates on the periphery, focuses on identifying barriers to their enrolment and timely completion, and offers compensatory strategies to overcome these (Moodie *et al*, 2018). The deficit model of doctoral education blames Indigenous and international candidates rather than the arbitrariness and inflexibilities of university Higher Degree Research governance systems. Difference is made into a deficit which is deviance from the 'normal' trajectories of doctoral education, despite the non-existence of these (Manathunga, 2019). Deficit thinking deflects attention from the universities' socio-political conditions and systems that privilege a monolingual mindset, exacerbate systematic racism, and underlie epistemic injustice.

Few scholars have sought to trace the links between individual personal doctoral candidate life histories and time maps (Manathunga, Bunda, Singh & Qi, 2020) and the large-scale Australian government policy initiatives and historical trends. Our theoretical and methodological approaches, which we outline in detail below, enable this crucial research to link individual doctoral candidate micro life histories with macro histories of government policy interventions and resulting university practices.

Theoretical departures: Epistemic justice and an Indigenous knowledge global decolonisation praxis framework

This study draws upon a postcolonial/decolonial theoretical positioning that encompasses the work of postcolonial theorists and subaltern studies (e.g., Chakrabarty, 2007) as well as empowering decolonial theories proposed by Southern and First Nations scholars (de Sousa Santos, 2014; 2018; Williams *et al*, 2018). Postcolonial/decolonial theories take as their central premise the argument that "colonialism did not end with the end of historical colonialism based on foreign territorial occupation. Only its form changed" (de Sousa Santos, 2018:109). In the Australian case, despite the overturning of terra nullius with the Mabo case, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty remains an unfinished business. As a result, there can be "no global social justice without global cognitive justice" (de Sousa Santos, 2014:42). Cognitive justice equates to making sure that all of the world's knowledge systems, languages and cultural practices are fully recognised, not only Northern science. Given the climate change emergency, it is becoming obvious that some of the world's environmental issues have

been caused by Eurocentric Northern science (Cutter, 2008), such as the terrible bushfires of the 2019/2020 Australian summer.

De Sousa Santos argues that the first step towards epistemic justice is to include, value and extend Southern, transcultural, and Indigenous knowledge systems in the university and re-instate local, land-based knowledge. These knowledge systems are what de Sousa Santos (2014) calls 'epistemologies of the South'. The epistemologies of the South involve two key features – the concept of ecologies of knowledges and of intercultural translations (de Sousa Santos, 2014). The ecologies of knowledges idea questions over-reliance on (Northern) scientific knowledge and instead suggests that scientific knowledge is only one knowledge system within a larger ecology of knowledge systems (de Sousa Santos, 2014). In such an ecology, all knowledge systems are accorded "equality of opportunity" to build "a more just and democratic society as well as one more balanced in its relations with nature" (de Sousa Santos, 2014:190). Such knowledge systems would be used in dialogue with each other and would accept the partiality and incompleteness of each knowledge system. The complexity of the world's current environmental and social problems requires interaction between all knowledge systems to create innovative new research strategies and solve real world problems. The recent Australian bushfire crisis is a case in point. De Sousa Santos (2014:212) defines intercultural translation as "developing, whenever appropriate, new hybrid forms of cultural understanding and intercommunication". He argues that intercultural translation is an essential feature of the epistemologies of the South that will enable us to work towards cognitive justice.

We will combine these theories about epistemic justice with Williams and colleagues' (2018) Indigenous knowledge global decolonization praxis framework, which is also intergenerational and intercultural like our project. The global decolonial praxis framework involves "cultural remapping in both an embodied and discursive sense … [which] incorporate[s] being on the land, arts-based approaches and dialogical experiences" (Williams *et al*, 2018:48). This framework is centred upon Indigenous leadership, epistemologies, ontologies, and research methods (Williams *et al*, 2018).

Central to Indigenous scholarship and ways of being, knowing and doing is the importance of Land or Country as a "thinking place" (Williams *et al*, 2018:44) whose ancient wisdom can be accessed through, where appropriate, "ceremony performed, Indigenous languages and music, imagery and dialogue" (Williams *et al*, 2018:46). This links strongly with our adherence to the principle of the special agency of Country in this research project. Secondly, arts-based approaches, such as the time mapping methodology developed by this research team (Manathunga *et al*, 2020), have been shown

to be a powerful strategy for resisting colonial domination and its "unconscious and outmoded (recolonizing) epistemological violences" (Williams *et al*, 2018:51). Arts-based approaches are also powerful modes of storytelling, where knowledge production is iterative, intergenerational, and intercultural. Finally, Indigenous epistemologies are based on the significance of dialogic approaches and deep "relationality, reciprocity and responsibility" between humans and between humans and our more than human kin (Williams *et al*, 2018:51). This involves "radical reconciliation" and "ecological justice" at "epistemic, relational and material levels" (Williams *et al*, 2018:44).

First Nations Australian approaches to knowledge creation

This project will reposition the centre to operate from a First Nations worldview and within Indigenous protocols, particularly those of the Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi (Sunshine Coast) and Kungarakan (Batchelor, Northern Territory) peoples. Specifically, we use a First Nations lens, which acts as the anchor of our research, and adopt key First Nations knowledge approaches as the foundation for our research project design and decision making: the agency of Country; the power of Stories and the production of knowledge as iterative, intergenerational, and intercultural (Ford, 2010; Grieves-Williams, 2019; Martin, 2003; Moreton, 2006; Williams *et al*, 2018). This will assist Australian universities to catch up with cutting edge, international developments in Indigenous and transcultural doctoral education policies and practices. In the next section, we explore in detail what each of these First Nations knowledge approaches involves.

The agency of Country

We begin with a fundamental insistence that the lands that we work on have agency within the project (Martin, 2003; Rose, 1996; Styres, Haig-Brown & Blimkie, 2013). The goal that we want to achieve is that, as a minimum, doctoral candidates participating in this project will be able to articulate connections to Country, ground practices and knowledge production in the notion of place and develop an educational philosophy using the history of land as a catalyst for understanding knowledge production. This approach does not limit the use of land to contemporary understanding of place-based learning, or pedagogy of place, but involves emotion, intelligence, and spiritual elements. Similar to the Australian Aboriginal conception of Country, Styres and colleagues (2013) consider the land as sentient. Rose (1996:7) explains:

> People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person; they
> speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, grieve for country
> and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes

care, is sorry or happy. Country is a living entity with a yesterday, today, and tomorrow, with consciousness and action, and a will towards life.

The agency of Country will be addressed in two ways in the project. First, the research team will conduct a comparative analysis of doctoral education policies from Aotearoa/New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, China, and Hawaii. This will establish the strategies different countries use to foreground and extend Indigenous and transcultural knowledge systems and languages in doctoral education. Secondly, a core design principle in the project will be learning as a research team and with participants on Country. We will conduct face-to-face meetings of the research team on Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi (Sunshine Coast), Kungarakan (Batchelor, Northern Territory), Wurundjeri (Melbourne) and Darug (Penrith) Country. These meetings will coincide with creative gatherings with doctoral candidates and supervisors in each Country. The whole research team will also enrol in an online Unit on Grounded in Local Knowledge (RTU541) offered by Batchelor Institute.

The power of Story

Secondly, the project builds upon the transformative power of Telling Stories, which is central to First Nations knowledge systems and cosmologies (Dion, 2009; Moreton, 2006; Noonuccal, 1970; Phillips and Bunda, 2018). Speaking the truth of our lives is a moment of embodying the power of old cultures and sharing this with a contemporary audience as a gift to the next seven generations (Dion, 2009; Pawu-Kurlpurlurnu, Holmes & Box, 2008). In these ways, Indigenous knowledge systems operate within an intergenerational "infinite present" (Moreton, 2006:276) where knowledge builds across and between generations and interweaves the past, present, and future. Indigenous knowledge systems generate the possibilities for doctoral research that produces dynamic new and original knowledge that addresses contemporary real-world problems based on evolving old and new stories of cultural and creative practices, and language about how to connect with the agency of Country (Hendry, 2010; Moreton, 2006; Phillips and Bunda, 2018).

The power of Stories will be demonstrated in this project through life history interviews (Middleton, 2014; Tamboukou, 2010) that will explore how First Nations and transcultural doctoral candidates' and their supervisors' intellectual development and knowledges have been shaped by personal, cultural, linguistic, and geographical histories and cultural practices. Semi-structured, individual life history interviews will be conducted with 80 doctoral candidates and 40 doctoral supervisors to generate narratives of participants' histories, geographies, and cultural knowledges. Participants will be identified from across all disciplines at USC, Batchelor Institute, RMIT and Western Sydney

University (WSU). These data will allow us to trace how these micro level histories have interacted with macro level histories within participants' own cultures. The Indigenous and non-Indigenous team members will pair up to co-create summaries of each interview and conduct thematic analysis. The co-creation of knowledge with participants will also involve member-checking.

At the end of each interview, each participant will create a visual and audio time map of how their personal histories, geographies, languages, and cultural knowledges have impacted upon their research. Time mapping is a multisensory methodology developed by Manathunga and colleagues (2020) in successful pilot studies in Australia, China, South Africa, and Rwanda. Time mapping uses art and audio recordings to chart the impact of First Nations and transcultural histories visually and aurally, geographies and cultural knowledges on doctoral education (Manathunga *et al*, 2020). Time maps create a visual and audio representation of history and an analysis of the intersections recorded within that history; those moments when race, class, gender, geography, language, location and cultures meet, interact, clash, or synthesise. Time mapping is a powerful tool for retelling previously muted experiences of migration, war, discrimination, destruction, colonisation, change, survival, faith, energy, language and cultural revival, growth, inspiration, and the power of Country (Bunda, Qi, Manathunga & Singh, 2017; Manathunga *et al*, 2020; Qi, Manathunga, Singh & Bunda, 2019; Singh, Manathunga, Bunda & Qi, 2016). These experiences all impact upon knowledge production and doctoral research. Our pilot study demonstrates how visual methodologies have the power to transgress engrained ways of thinking and being in doctoral education (Manathunga *et al*, 2020). As Aboriginal poet and filmmaker Romaine Moreton argues, (2006:x), western writing was a key tool of colonial invasion that "effectively cancelled Indigenous modes of storytelling, authorship and legitimate claims to land tenure". Life histories and time mapping allows for the [re]telling of those stories. These elements of life history interviewing and time mapping reiterate the iterative, intergenerational, and intercultural approaches used in First Nations knowledge production.

First Nations knowledge assemblages

The research design foregrounds First Nations approaches to knowledge assemblage that are *iterative*, *intergenerational*, and *intercultural*. The *iterative* approach is illustrated by the act of speaking and re-speaking a truth and the [re]telling of untold stories acts as a gift for the next generation (Ford, 2010; Martin, 2003; Phillips and Bunda, 2018). The reiteration of stories and the acts of speaking, listening, hearing, and remembering are central to First Nations knowledge creation (Dion, 2009; Moreton, 2006; Noonuccal, 1970; Phillips and Bunda, 2018). This iterative principle of First Nations knowledge

production is echoed in the time mapping methodology because it is based upon important Indigenous notions that time is iterative and cyclical and that storytelling acts as a key vehicle for the creation and dissemination of knowledge (Manathunga *et al*, 2020). Multisensory time mapping challenges the university policies of the doctorate on a linear progression basis and represents doctoral candidates' knowledge production as iterative cycles of exploration, inspiration and becoming with unpredictable ambivalences, disruptions, and adaptations occurring throughout (Manathunga *et al*, 2020). Through time mapping, doctoral candidates can visually depict the interweaving of micro personal biographies and genealogies and macro cultural and social histories.

First Nations knowledge creation is *intergenerational* and multidirectional across time and space. This knowledge is accrued across and between generations and brings together the past, present, and future into an intergenerational "infinite present" (Moreton, 2006:276). Inspired by the First Nations pedagogy of multidirectional intergenerational learning (Williams *et al*, 2018), we view knowledge production as intergenerational co-construction between doctoral supervisors and candidates. Doctoral candidates and supervisors are often from a range of age generations, which is mutually beneficial. Also, regardless of their chronological age, they constitute different disciplinary generations which ensures that knowledge is continually reinvigorated. Intergenerational learning goes beyond simply transmitting and preserving knowledges and incorporates advances and radical shifts in knowledges, which are central to the future of humankind (Faulkhead, Bradley & McKee, 2017). Through time mapping, intergenerational learning occurs iteratively and across both generations and disciplines, where First Nations and transcultural knowledges become living, community-based, and future-oriented. Time mapping reinvigorates knowledge production through releasing the possibilities for new and original research that emerge from re-engaging with the knowledges and wisdoms that First Nations cultures collectively contribute to contemporary society.

Approaches to First Nations' knowledge production have always been *intercultural*. It is estimated that there were over 400 (maybe 700) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations, approximately 260 distinct language groups and 500 dialects prior to invasion. Australian First Nations peoples also had important trading and knowledge exchange links with peoples from Southeast Asia. The home cultures of migrant, refugee and international doctoral candidates are similarly intercultural—an interweaving of diverse peoples and complex entangled histories and geographies. In some cases, some doctoral candidates may also have intercultural, hybrid personal backgrounds that transcend normative cultural groupings (Casinader and Manathunga, 2020). Intercultural or transcultural knowledge construction is not an externally imposed agenda for First Nations and transcultural peoples but rather

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an everyday way of being and knowing. Multisensory storytelling reconnects First Nations, Chinese, South African, refugee, migrant and international candidates' transcultural knowledges without having to pass through the restrictive sieve imposed by Eurocentric, white knowledge frameworks. For example, illustrating potential links between Chinese and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, Chinese artist, Cai GuoQiang, produced a gun powder painting entitled "Dragon or Rainbow Serpent: A Myth Glorified or Feared?".

Conclusion

We have argued that implementing these Indigenous knowledge approaches — the agency of Country, the power of Story and the nature of knowledge production as iterative, intergenerational and intercultural — in Australian doctoral education will enrich and celebrate Indigenous and transcultural doctoral candidates' already existing intellectual and multilingual strengths and knowledges. In a practical sense, foregrounding these Indigenous knowledge approaches will encourage all doctoral candidates, especially those from First Nations and transcultural backgrounds, to think carefully about the ancient land upon which they study and show gratitude and respect to the First Nations peoples who cared for this land for at least 60,000 years. These Indigenous knowledge strategies will also enable First Nations and transcultural (and indeed all) doctoral candidates to engage in self-reflexivity and draw explicitly and proudly upon their own unique historical, cultural and geographical stories in their research. It will give First Nations and transcultural students courage to draw upon their own cultural proverbs, languages, practices, skills and networks within their research. Understanding knowledge creation as iterative, intergenerational and intercultural will assist First Nations and transcultural students to recognise the iterative nature of research, to acknowledge the generations of knowledge creators that have preceded them in their literature reviews and to think creatively about how diverse cultural knowledge systems might be interwoven to create ecologies of knowledges that produce epistemic justice.

We hope that our research will enable Australian doctoral education policy makers to see that providing doctoral candidates choice about the language they wish to use in their thesis will contribute to the rejuvenation of First Nations and transcultural community languages in Australia and assist Australia to prepare for a post-monolingual future. This would bring Australia into line with Aotearoa/New Zealand and South Africa, inculcating respectful, generative doctoral supervision that incites cognitive and epistemic justice (de Sousa Santos, 2014; 2018) that gives rise to environmental, social and cultural benefits.

Both Indigenous and transcultural doctoral students will benefit from our research. This research will allow us to develop resources, professional development programs and university supervision and examination protocols that will recognise, 'unmute' and value Indigenous and transcultural knowledges, histories, geographies, languages, and cultural practices. We believe our three-pronged approach will improve the experiences, satisfaction and completion rates of Australia's Indigenous and transcultural migrant, refugee, culturally diverse and international doctoral candidates.

Acknowledgements

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