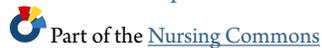

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
A U S T R A L I A

**Aboriginal Women Yarning About Experiences
as Undergraduate Nursing Students in
Western Australian Universities**

Melanie Robinson

Student Number: 20142869

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters in Nursing (Research)

School of Nursing and Midwifery
The University of Notre Dame Australia
Fremantle

2018

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the Wadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which I work and study. I would like to pay my respects to their elders, past, present and future.

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I dedicate this thesis to all the strong women from my family, including my sister Vanessa, my Anglo-Indian mother and the many Aboriginal mothers who have raised and nurtured me. These mothers, in the western way, would be known as my aunts and grandmothers.

I also dedicate this thesis to my daughter Caitlin. I hope that one day she will learn the importance of education. Education opens doors for our people, who continue to suffer from oppression, marginalisation and racism every day of their lives. Education is the key to overcoming inequality, and it is important that this message be shared with the first people of Australia and with first people around the world.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my Auntie Sylvia, a registered nurse, who inspired me to enter nursing and kept me dreaming of a future with many opportunities and adventures. Thank you for all the stories you told and yarns we had. I hope one day to be as good a nurse as you, sharing your kindness and love with all the people you cared for throughout your career.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is an account of my own research and contains as its main content work that has not been previously submitted for an award of degree or diploma in any university or other institution.

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Mel Robinson

Melanie Robinson

2018

Abstract

The inequities and poor health outcomes experienced by Aboriginal people in Western Australia are well documented. It has been suggested that such issues could be better addressed if more Aboriginal nurses were employed, as there appears to be a link between improved health outcomes and the inclusion of Aboriginal health professionals in practice. In recent years the number of Aboriginal nursing students undertaking tertiary studies has increased, but their completion rates could be improved. Aboriginal nursing students continue to struggle to achieve success.

The aim of this study was to investigate factors that enabled (supported) or inhibited (prevented) the progress of Aboriginal women through their undergraduate nursing programs in Western Australian universities. In order to provide a view of their experiences, this qualitative study used a narrative inquiry approach within an Aboriginal framework. This study drew on a carefully selected sample of Aboriginal nursing students from undergraduate-nursing programs in Western Australia. Some were in their final year of study, others were new graduates. The data was collected through the use of “yarning”, a form of data collection that is a culturally appropriate way to build trust and learn about Aboriginal people’s stories. Yarning is considered culturally safe and is recognised as a way for Aboriginal people to interact (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010). In this study, yarning with the participants was done either by telephone or through face-to-face contact.

Narrative analysis using an Aboriginal framework was undertaken, with attention being given to temporality, sociality and place within the context of the story. In addition, a journal was kept during the collection and analysis of data, and journal entries were scrutinised for pattern identification and emerging trends. The stories of the participants revealed commonalities including: the importance of support, particularly in the first year of study; a sense of belonging and community on campus; a meeting place on campus for Aboriginal students including ‘a go to person’; the importance of self-motivation; resilience; and role models, both at university and in personal life. This study’s significance lies in its potential to inform universities and policy makers of ways to attract and retain greater numbers of Aboriginal students.

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Glossary of Terms

Cultural Awareness is where an individual does not have more than a foundational level of understanding of Aboriginal history and culture, and therefore exhibits only very limited behavioural change towards Aboriginal people (Cultural Respect Framework, 2016-2026).

Cultural Security is where an individual delivers care based on the needs of Aboriginal people and is responsive to an Aboriginal person's cultural beliefs, views and knowledge (Cultural Respect Framework, 2016-2026).

Cultural Safety is where an Aboriginal person is made to feel safe in the healthcare setting, safe to access healthcare, and safe to practice in accordance with his or her own culture and beliefs (Papps & Ramsden, 1996).

Cultural Competency is where a health professional demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the needs of Aboriginal people accessing the healthcare system, and embeds this understanding in his or her everyday practices and behaviours (Papps & Ramsden, 1996).