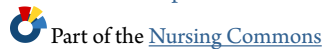

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Aboriginal women yarning about experiences as undergraduate nursing students in
Western Australian universities

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Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology followed in this study. It discusses the design, specifically related to the aim of the study, and offers an answer to the research question. It was important to use a methodology based within an Indigenous epistemology that would allow the researcher to share the participants' stories. This framework ensured that the participants' culture remained intact and that their voices were preserved in the telling of their stories.

3.2 Narrative Inquiry

This study aimed to provide a holistic view of Aboriginal women's experiences during their undergraduate nursing programs. To provide this view, it was appropriate to use a qualitative study with a narrative inquiry approach. The study needed to be framed from an Aboriginal perspective. The ultimate aim of such an inquiry was the interpretation of the Aboriginal women's experiences through the use of storytelling (Josselson, 2006).

Narrative inquiry embodies both the phenomenon and method of study. As a method, it examines experiences expressed in stories told by a narrator (participant) (Liamputtong, 2009). Essentially, narrative inquiry is a reconstruction of the narrator's experience in relation to the inquirer (the researcher) and the social milieu (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Stories are not fixed texts; they are composed in and out of lived experience, and in relation to others (Caine & Estefan, 2011). The relationship between the inquirer and the narrator is one of collaboration as the emerging story evolves in ways that make meaning. It encompasses both the 'etic' and 'emic' (Clandinin, 2007).

Storytelling is a traditional way for people to make sense of the world. They use it to organise experiences into episodes that have meaning (Bruner, 1986). From an Aboriginal perspective, people continue their history by sharing knowledge through the passing down of information, person to person, from one generation to the next (Kovach, 2009). In narrative inquiry, the story is treated as data. Narrative analysis

is the interpretation of the story, comparing it with other stories within a context (Patton, 2015). The context for this study is set out in Chapter 1, section 1.1.

Narrative inquiry uses culture and social structures that impact on the stories being told (Frazer, 2004). Within the Indigenous context, story is methodologically congruent with a clan's knowledge (Kovach, 2009). It is a culturally appropriate way of representing truth, where the narrator, rather than the inquirer, retains the control. Using Indigenous methodology, the narrator makes decisions about what is in the foreground, what is in the background and how the issue is defined. Indigenous methodologies are used to gather the story and understand the 'Indigenous paradigm' as the participants share their stories for the benefit of others (Kovach, 2009, p.40). Research within the Indigenous space allows the researcher to tell the story from an Indigenous perspective or viewpoint. The researcher needs to share the knowledge to enable others to understand the Indigenous worldview in a respectable and responsible way (Kovach, 2009, p.41). The sharing of this study will take place at appropriate conferences and will be written in journal articles.

An Indigenous framework unifies traditional knowledge systems with adaptations of Western knowledge systems. Moreover, it employs 'Indigenous principles such as relational accountability to guide the ethos of the approach' (Ray, 2012. p.91). Such accountability is built on 'respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and rights and regulation during the research process' (Louis, 2007 as cited in Chilisa, 2012, p.21). Thus, an Indigenous framework acts as a nest encompassing the relational epistemology which influences the process and content of the research journey (Kovach, 2009, p.45).

Narrative inquiry is more than interviews and participants telling stories. It is about the participants' experiences being shared in a subjective way (Sandelowski, 2000). Sharing knowledge between Indigenous peoples is underpinned by the assumption that knowledge is of a collective benefit (Smith, 1999). Within the Indigenous epistemology there is a fundamental belief that knowledge is shared with the cosmos, with all creation, including animals and plants (Chilisa, 2012). Narrative inquiry allows researchers to offer marginalised groups, such as Indigenous peoples, an opportunity to participate in knowledge construction (Canagarajah 1996). Many studies look at outcomes but disregard the impact of the experience itself (Bell, 2002).

Narrative inquiry seeks a rich understanding of stories, recognising that there are deeper stories that people are sometimes unaware of. These provide a window into people's beliefs and experiences (Bell, 2002). Therefore, individual experience, captured through narrative inquiry, affords the inquirer a greater insight into, and understanding of, broad social phenomena (Devlin, 2009; Hatch & Wisniewski, 2002). Researchers enter into the 'midst of the story' and this forms part of the ongoing narrative being told. It requires engagement with the participants to be able to gather the data through field and research text (Clandinin, 2006, p.47).

John Dewey's theory of experience is most often cited as the philosophy of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2007). Dewey's conception of experience suggests that it is a 'changing stream that is characterised by continuous interaction of human thought with a person's personal, social and material environment' (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p.35). It is argued that this process is transactional, implying that experience is generated in context of the situation between the knower and the unknown. It is a pragmatic view of knowledge. A person's representation of the situation must return to that experience to be validated (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). A caveat to this notion is that no single statement, no matter how faithfully it appears to depict the situation, 'involves selective emphasis of the experience' (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p.39). A Deweyan view of experience allows for a study of experience that acknowledges the embodiment of the person living in their world (Johnson, 1987).

Narrative inquiry is characterised by the description of human experiences that unfold through time, i.e. they are continuous (Josselson, 2006, p.40). The researcher's narrative view of experience gives attention to place, temporality and sociality within the participants' life stories and experiences. Within this space, each story told and lived is situated and understood within a larger cultural, social, and institutional narrative (Caine & Estefan, 2011). This approach honours lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007). Therefore, by using the principles of a narrative inquiry and an Indigenous framework, the researcher was able to honour the participants. This honour was reciprocated and enabled a more in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences in their journey through university.

3.3 Indigenous Epistemology

Research on Indigenous people can be a euphemism for colonisation, so it needs to be grounded in the Indigenous epistemology that provides privilege to Aboriginal voices. Colonisation is the subjugation of one group by another. Within the world context, this process has resulted in the destruction of beliefs and cultures. The dominant culture controls the 'Other' group, making it reliant on the Western culture for economic and political control (Chilisa, 2012).

To be culturally responsive in research, colonisation is understood to be destructive, particularly in relation to valuing 'Indigenous ways of knowing.' Indigenous episteme (knowledges) have been marginalised within the Western research process (Smith, 1999). Western methodologies have failed to recognise the impact of colonisation and have invalidated the experience and knowledge of Indigenous people (Chilisa, 2012). Research within this context has been set up with researchers encoding information in 'imperial and colonial discourse' (Smith, 1999, p.215).

It is important that research be conducted to meet the community's needs and be 'culturally appropriate and inclusive', not exploiting the Indigenous people. In the 19th Century, research treated Aboriginal people as objects of curiosity. They were seen but not heard or respected. This situation has caused mistrust, animosity and resistance amongst many Aboriginal people (Martin, 2003). Research needs to be more culturally responsive, recognise the impact of colonisation, and value the ways of knowing for Indigenous people (Chilisa, 2012).

Within the Indigenous epistemology, principles that guide the process and structure of research include:

- Honouring our social beliefs and values as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our lands and in the lands of other Aboriginal people;
- Recognising our world views, our knowledges and our realities to be distinctive and vital to our existence;
- Emphasising the social, historical and political contexts which shape our experiences, lives, positions and futures;
- Privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands (Martin, 2003, p.5).

3.4 Design

In an Indigenous framework, the sampling, recruitment, data collection and analysis of data are interdependent and relational (Kovach, 2009). This iterative design is depicted in Figure 3.1.

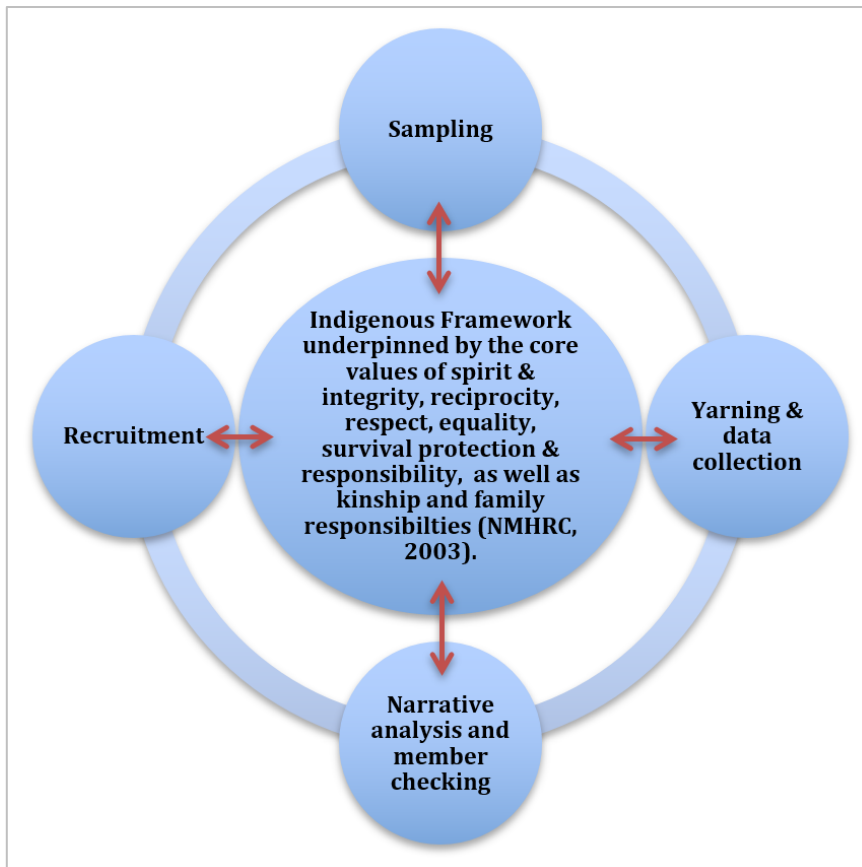


Figure 3.1 Design of the study

It is recommended that narrative inquiry uses purposeful sampling, since its focus is the interpretation of meaning embedded in the stories, rather than a generalisation of findings (Reissman, 2008). Thus, the sampling method for this study was purposeful, with participants being identified as Aboriginal women either in their final year of, or new graduates from, an undergraduate nursing program undertaken in a Western Australian university. The participants were chosen as they had both the capacity to share their experiences and the commitment to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Initially, four participants volunteered for the study. This number was deemed insufficient, so snowballing was used to identify another five people. The four initial

participants talked to other potential participants about the study and invited them to contact me about being involved. In qualitative studies there is no lower limit on sample size, but it does need to be sufficiently large to generate a rich dataset that can answer the research question (Joyce, 2015). A study similar to this current one was conducted in Queensland with a purposive sample of eight Indigenous third-year nursing participants (West, Usher, Buettner, Foster & Stewart 2013). Using this number as a guide, I contacted a total of nine volunteers.

Whilst the sample size in a qualitative methodology is dependent on the saturation of data, I felt the need to collect enough stories to fully answer the research question, rather than stopping the data analysis when the stories became repetitive. In any event, it has been recommended that the researcher must gather substantial data about the participant and must have a clear understanding of the context of the participant's life (Creswell, 2007). By yarning with nine participants, I was able to better appreciate some commonalities and shared experiences.

Participants were recruited from a list of Aboriginal cadets known to me through my role as a Senior Development Officer. A pre-existing and ongoing relationship with participants is an accepted characteristic of research within an Indigenous framework. Knowing the participants is unlike other research approaches, which caution researchers against potential bias. There was no power differential between the participants and me. Our relationship was built on trust and reciprocity, a collaborative effort to tell and record stories. This shift in power allowed participants' voices to be heard and their experiences to be shared on their terms (Kovach, 2009).

A relationship of trust requires a pre-existing relationship with participants, and in the Indigenous epistemology, a shift in power is required to allow collaboration between the participant and the researcher. In the past, research has been seen as a negative experience for Aboriginal people and communities. Until recently, research has not had an Indigenous voice or expressed the Indigenous experience or perspective. Consequently, Indigenous people have not been present in the research (Elston, Saunders, Hayes, Bainbridge & McCoy, 2013).

Knowing the participants meant they felt they could trust the researcher. This relationship was reciprocal. In the relational aspect of storytelling, any mistrust is offset by respect for each other, knowing the connections and having contact with

community. Therefore, my reputation was of paramount importance in the process of sampling (Kovach, 2009). The relationship I had with the potential participants was grounded in our prior sharing of stories: they already knew me and I already knew them. Rapport and trust is seen as an essential part of a successful narrative interview (Liamputtong, 2009). Aboriginal people value relationships and they honour the telling and sharing of stories. Trust is about the participant feeling comfortable with the researcher and understanding what is said. I listened to their stories which, on occasions, were deep and personal (Kovach, 2009).

3.5 Recruitment of Participants

Initially, participants were contacted by telephone. I knew the participants, having been a mentor to most of them, some currently and others in the past as cadets. The telephone contact was followed up by email or face-to face contact, where the information sheet (see Appendix D) and consent form (see Appendix E) were provided. At the same time arrangements were made for a date, time and venue to listen to the participants' stories. The participants were the leaders in making these arrangements, as venues needed to be convenient. Some potential participants were residents in country areas, so distance or expense made it impractical for them to travel. In those circumstances, I travelled to a designated meeting place.

3.6 Data Collection

This study used yarning as a data collection method. This facilitated sharing and telling of stories, enabling me to explore the topic in greater detail and depth. Yarning is a relaxed and informal conversation, a method of sharing, exploring and learning from previous generations (Dean, 2010). Yarning is a form of data collection that provides 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). It was an appropriate method of data collection for me, given the past experiences of Aboriginal people with feelings of distrust and wariness toward non-Aboriginal researchers. Yarning has been undervalued and underutilised as a data collection method, as it challenges some academics who are grounded in Western methodologies (Kovach, 2009).

A culturally adapted way of life depends on shared meanings, shared concepts and shared modes of discourse for negotiating differences in meaning and interpretation (Bruner, 1986). Indigenous peoples understand each other because they share a common world view which embraces common enduring beliefs (Kovach, 2009). For many years, storytelling/yarning/talking circles have been a practice of Indigenous peoples and have been embedded in their culture (Aseron, Neyooxet Greymorning, Miller & Wilde, 2013, p.410).

Yarning as a data collection method is culturally safe and entails the inquirer and the narrator taking a journey together, building and developing a trusting relationship. It is an intuitive protocol of introduction that shows respect to our ancestors and allows the community to locate us. It establishes family connections and the location of the person's country. Self-location situates me with a particular language group. My own *bidee* or path to the research is described in Chapter 1, section 1.4.

Yarning for research purposes can take two forms: social and research. In this study, *social yarning* was used in the initial stage to create a connection, establish a relationship and build trust before the data collection commenced (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). It created a space for participants' stories to be composed and heard (Clandinin, 2013). In a yarning conversation, responses are not premeditated, deliberate or formalised around predetermined questions. Yarning is elastic, allowing participants to share their story without the periodic disruptions characteristic of a structured interview. Using this type of data collection, responses created an opening into the real meaning of the stories and depended on me being open to the participants' experiences (Brown, 1996).

In Indigenous research, it is important to bring the voice of the marginalised to the centre of the research. Yarning supported equality, built relationships and promoted a feeling of connection between the participants and me, enabling the telling of their stories through an 'Indigenous lens' (Chilisa & Gaelebale, 2014, p.224).

Aboriginal people tend to be inappropriately and overly researched using Western methods of research. These fail to consider the need for culturally respectful methodologies. Yarning is about decolonising the research process, allowing a safe place to share experiences and communicate. It takes into account that Aboriginal people have experienced a long history of marginalisation and oppression (Kovach,

2009; Smith, 1999; Walker, Fredericks, Mills & Anderson, 2014; Nakata, 2007; West, Usher, Buettner, Foster & Stewart, 2013). It is argued that using yarning as an approach to data collection is an 'Indigenist' re-framing of Western research methods, ensuring an Aboriginal perspective is integrated into the research process (Kovach, 2009).

Initially in the social yarning, I discussed with participants the aim of the study and facilitated open dialogue about their experiences (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010, p.44). This conversational method showed respect for the participants' story and allowed participants greater control over what they wished to share (Kovach, 2009). Participants were accustomed to the oral tradition of storytelling and to self-regulating their response to ensure the question was being respected and answered. It was my responsibility to honour the exploratory approach and not to interrupt through redirection and prompting (Kovach, 2009).

Following the social yarning I asked the participants to tell me their story and share their experiences at university. The participants were reassured that anything they said would be de-identified and the stories would be sent to them for authentication. In the early stage of yarning with the participants, I made mental notes for inclusion in my journal, but no recordings were made until the research yarning commenced. I also created memos to recall discussions for later interpretation, and these included extra cultural information around body language and non-verbal cues including hand gestures. Recording data collection and analysing notes in my journal promoted self-reflection and kept me focused on the aim of the study. As researchers, we must examine our subjective involvement as this assists in shaping our interpretation of the story (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). A deeper understanding of the participants' stories was enabled by self-reflection during the research process (Green, 2013). It culminated in a holistic perspective of self-situation within the context of the study (Kovach, 2009). By journaling I was able to keep an open mind and differentiate between my thoughts and those of the participants (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). To keep myself on track, I also discussed my progress with my Aboriginal advisors.

Once the yarning had been conducted, it was necessary to conduct one-on-one interviews to capture deeper experiences that participants were reluctant to talk about during the yarning sessions. At all times I listened attentively, not only to the language

used but also to the participants' tone of voice and body language. In addition, I allowed for silences (Geia, Hayes & Usher, 2013). By listening for gaps or contradictions in the story and by reiterating the invitation to tell the story, I was able to encourage fuller narration, often unearthing unexpected parts to the story (Josselson & Lieblich, 1995).

3.7 Research Ethics

The ethics approval for this research was obtained from the Health Ethics Research Committee at the University of Notre Dame (Reference 016076F) (see Appendix G, section G.1) and the WA Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (Reference 700) (see Appendix G, section G.2).

3.8 Data Analysis

In narrative inquiry, the story is treated as data. Narrative analysis is the interpretation of the story, comparing it with other stories within a context (Patton, 2015). It consists of actions, events and happenings, an iterative process which moves from data gathering to data analysis. Whilst thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative methodology, narrative scholars keep the story intact by theorising from the case rather than from component themes (Bruner, 1987).

It has been argued that in an Indigenous framework, thematic analysis could be interpreted as devaluing the story and therefore be considered disrespectful. Thematic analysis has been labelled a concession to the Western research approach since it is not an Indigenous method (Kovach, 2009). In qualitative thematic analysis, the story is decontextualized into codes, and the whole story can be lost, whereas in an Indigenous framework, the whole story is important (Kovach, 2009). Often in mainstream scholarship, recorded 'facts' are extracted and the remaining 'superfluous' data set aside. The holistic picture is plundered, and the voice of the participant is silenced (Kovach, 2009). Storied versions of experiences only make sense in terms of the bigger picture (Bruner, 1986). In narrative analysis this phenomenon is likened to gestalt where 'the whole is greater than the sum of the parts' (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000, p.69).

To be able to gain the trust of the participants, I needed to be positioned within the study (Absolam & Willett, 2005). Sharing one's story is an aspect of co-constructing knowledge from and Aboriginal perspective (Absolon & Willet, 2005). I took an active role in story gathering and 're-storying'. In an effort to deconstruct stories to expose dichotomies, I probed words, phrases and larger units of discourse, looking for meaning and patterns (Creswell, 2013).

Narrative analysis requires recognition that stories help people make sense of their lives, and although the stories change as new events happen, they are continually shaped by a lifetime of experiences. For the most part, a narrative does not exist in a vacuum (Bell, 2002, p.208). It entails imposing a meaningful pattern on what would otherwise be random and disconnected, involving the review of the data and the identification of categories and meaningful patterns (Simons, Lathlean & Squire, 2008).

Narrative analysis interprets 'what' rather than 'how' something is spoken or written. As conversation between the researcher and the participants is interactively produced and performed as narrative, the researcher becomes an active and visible presence in the data gathering, data analysis and the written report. Therefore, the yarning was audio-recorded then transcribed verbatim, prior to analysis. In addition, my journal entries were scrutinised to identify patterns. Every effort was made to include each participant's voice when making comments in relation to the emerging patterns, as evidence of the participant's experience in a nursing undergraduate program. I endeavoured to keep each story as intact as possible.

The process of narrative analysis involved following a 'thread' through a sequential approach to interpreting the stories. I read and reread, looked and relooked at the transcripts, paying simultaneous attention to temporality, sociality and place in the context of the story. These three dimensions were interconnected and interwoven, enabling me to delve deeper into multiple meanings of experiences (Clandinin, 2013). Long accounts were distilled into categories, but I took care to keep the contextual issues in play because, in narrative analysis, particularities and context come to the fore (Bruner, 1987). I interpreted the stories, then drafted the interim texts to take back to the participants (Clandinin, 2013). Memos that needed further elaboration and interpretation were also checked with the participants. This checking assisted in the

authentication of the stories. The hallmark of narrative analysis is the recognition that people make sense of their lives according to their narratives (Bruner, 1986).

Narrative analysis usually attends to language, form or interaction. In this study, yarning contained words in language spoken and understood in the context of Aboriginal women (Kovach, 2009). As language is saturated with ideology and meanings, I needed to recognise if the story had continuity. I also needed to be aware if sections of the theoretical argument were linked and consistent, so that major gaps or inconsistencies could be exposed. Triangulation of data was achieved by comparing and contrasting stories, which then assisted in pattern recognition. An overview of the framework used to analyse participants' stories can be seen in Figure 3.2.

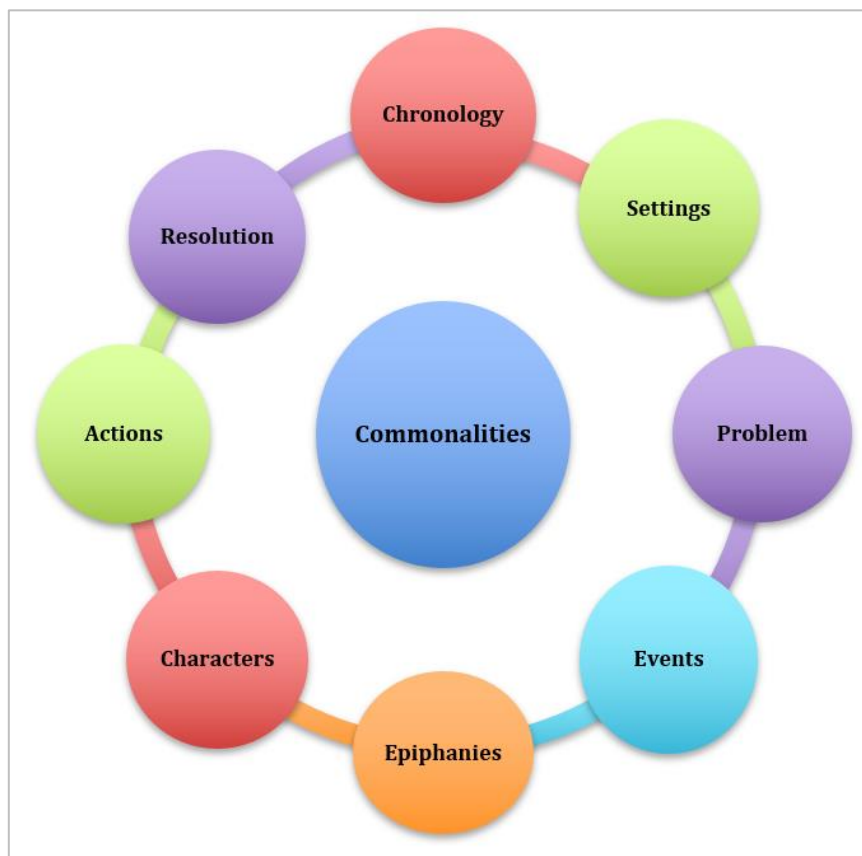


Figure 3.2 Model of narrative data analysis
(Adapted from Creswell, 2013).

The model of narrative analysis was adapted and modified to render it more culturally appropriate (Creswell, 2013). Concentric circles depicted a set of categories which often overlapped within the participants' stories. Initially the stories were analysed in chronological order, outlining any epiphanies and events. Plots were

analysed for characters, settings and problems. Using this approach, patterns were identified within the context of the study. To maintain the quality of the findings and the enable the results from the study to be replicated, categories were directly linked to the research question (Denzin, 2009). The whole transcript was offered for member checking to enable participants to visualise their stories and to delete parts that they felt were inappropriate (Kovach, 2009).

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter put forward a case for the use of narrative inquiry as a culturally appropriate methodology in this study. Narrative inquiry enabled me to tell the participants' stories in a way that preserved each individual voice.

The next chapter presents the stories and experiences of the participants¹ in Western Australian universities.

¹ In this study the labels 'participant', 'woman', 'student' and '*Yorga*' are used interchangeably.