A double-edged spear - the social life of youth, mobile phones and social media in a remote Aboriginal community

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A DOUBLE-EDGED SPEAR - THE SOCIAL LIFE OF YOUTH, MOBILE PHONES AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN A REMOTE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

Kishan Kariippanon

This thesis is presented as part of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Wollongong

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ABSTRACT

Social media and mobile phones are a global phenomenon and remote communities in North East Arnhem Land have been drawn into the adoption of these emergent technologies. This study of youth and emergent technology is grounded in a traditional Aboriginal context; a remote community with limited access to resources and employment opportunities. It is important to take into account that this community still practised Aboriginal culture, law, discipline, sorcery, traditional medicine and demand sharing as part of their social life.

This ethnography spanned the duration of three years, applied a series of in-depth interviews which were followed up throughout the fieldwork. The informants and interview participant’s contributions were triangulated with informal discussions and interactions with youth, socio-historical narratives of technology appropriation and relevant findings from key Indigenous academics. The engagement with young people, generally a hard-to-reach population, was carried out within a respectful relationship dictated by Yolngu kinship laws. All interviews and interactions were undertaken in several locations in the town of Nhulunbuy and the communities of Yirrkala and Birritjimi making the environment and space accessible and relevant to Aboriginal participants and intellectuals especially the young people.

The key study questions were to:

- Understand the role of mobile phones and social media in a remote Aboriginal community and how they were used as a combination between the traditional and contemporary (i.e. The Yirrkala Bark Petition);
- Analyse the attitudes towards mobile phones and social media in the community, particularly amongst young people;
- Describe how these new objects (mobile phones and social media) belong in the Yirritja and Dhuwa moieties, and the kinship system;
- Analyse the use of sorcery or ‘accusations and suspicions of sorcery’ in the Yolngu online social life.
The ethnography is a story of youth and their struggles, as a result of disproportionate access to economic resources and opportunities. Their partial resistance to the dominant culture, some traditional and cultural norms, including powerful individuals and families in the community, whilst striving to be part of contemporary global youth culture contributed to their expressed feelings of frustration and lack of hope for the future.
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I also acknowledge the following people and organisations:

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The Traditional Owners, families and individuals in Yirrkala and Birritjimi for their hospitality, their collaboration and the valuable contribution to this body of work;

The late Munyarryun O, waku mirringu, you are deeply missed. #warwu #djapana #tobaccostoryofarnhemland;

My loving partner Katharina and children, Jamilah and Rafael who made the move to Arnhem Land with enthusiasm and encouraged the countless weekends spent in the write-up.

I dedicate this thesis to the Rirratjingu leaders of the past, Mawalan, Milirrpum, Mathaman and Wandjuk Marika, their descendants and the youth who will take Yirrkala into the future.
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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE DOUBLE-EDGED SPEAR

‘Mobile phones: they see it as participating in the current trend. As if any young person wants to be considered a part of the contemporary society’.

(Senior elder and Yolngu entrepreneur)

This thesis explored how people in a remote Australian Aboriginal community use and understand mobile phones and digital technology; as such, it is mostly a study of the social life and cultural embeddedness of mobile phones and social media. However, it is also a study of the assumptions that outsiders have about the role and purpose of such technology and how they consider it will facilitate their aims.

In this thesis, I attempt to unpack and describe the connections between new technology use, power structures, social inequality and dissent, based on the knowledge contributed by my interview participants and many cultural advisors throughout the three years of my fieldwork. In this setting, tools such as Facebook, acquire new meaning, encompassing novelty and innovation and at the same time provide the convenience for immediate communication in a way that was previously inconceivable.

The title of this thesis captures the complexity of what is a ubiquitous object of modern life. In the remote Indigenous context, the mobile phone at once facilitates kinship connections but encourages individuality. It is often carefully protected as
an object that cannot be shared and yet is a conduit for demand sharing among close
and extended kin. It becomes a receptacle for cultural knowledge, but also
encourages exploration of a globalised world.

I came to this study, however, with a very different set of assumptions. As a medical
professional with interest in public health and the role of technology in public health
practice, I was intrigued by how digital technology could be used to engage and
promote health in a remote Indigenous community. As with many public health
practitioners, captivated by the novelty of this approach (Taylor 2012), I put little
thought into the meaning of the tool. I thought that if you could get the message
right, the job would be done. When I found that without a study of the meaning of
mobile phones, the biography of things (Kopytoff 1986), such as social media or
how meaning was made from online information, that such approaches, may result
in futility. With that realisation in mind, I began the ethnographic work that
underpins this thesis.

1.1.1 The setting

My relationship with the Traditional Owner of Yirrkala began with a collaboration
to ‘de-normalise’ scabies through a digital and social media marketing effort. The
mutual understanding that my engagement with the life of the community
engendered was an essential part of the social marketing program. As a result, I was
not only welcomed but supported when my request to rent a dwelling for my family
to move in, was granted. I was confident that my relationship in Yirrkala as a
volunteer in the Djarrak Football Club would also open up further opportunities to
become acquainted with a small part of the life of young men engaged in sports.
These early connections and a mutual understanding gave me the confidence that this study would be feasible, supported by the young people and possibly benefit the elders engaged in administrative duties on the Local and Regional Council, including the Aboriginal Medical Services Board.

1.1.2 Remote communities, media and communication

Young people in this remote Aboriginal Australian community lived a traditional lifestyle isolated from the general Australian sociality (Burbank 2006) until the arrival of the mining corporation in the 70s, the urbanisation of the mining town in the 90s and when access to the Internet first became available to Aboriginal youth in the Anglicare Youth Centre in Nhulunbuy. Aboriginal people from remote communities engaged with a non-Indigenous world through the lens of the television and radio, but the turbulent history of colonisation always underpinned this interaction.

The ‘one way’ broadcast from the ‘outside’ was overturned by the ‘Aboriginal invention of television in Central Australia’ (Michaels 1986; Hinkson 1996) where media, film, video and television, became a new form of Indigenous expression that coincided with the acceleration of empowerment for Indigenous people since the 1960s (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod & Larking 2002). Opportunities, however, for young people to become engaged in a globalised youth culture remained limited until the emergence of mobile technology and social media (Kral 2010; Taylor 2012; Carlson et al. 2015). In 2009, Chenhall and Senior described the frustrations of “glimpsed opportunities” and how this might affect young people’s mental health (p. 29).
It seemed to me, a former inhabitant of a small rural town in a developing country that newfound freedom was possible through online communication. Technological advances in mobile technology created this availability. The accessibility both form a human centred design and price point perspective had begun its replacement of televisions and radio ownership in remote locations across the country (Kral 2010; 2014). The remote communal society appeared to be interrupted by not only disenfranchisement in a post-colonial system, but growing individualisation. This individualisation was a result of the affordability and accessibility of emergent technology and more importantly the effects of globalisation and customer segmentation, explicitly targeting remote locations of Australia. These developments enabled its ‘free market’ hand to extend into the shallow pockets of women, men and children, even in the remotest parts of the world (Taylor 2012; Owiny, Mehta & Maretzki 2014; Carlson et al. 2015).

1.1.3 Youth and mobile phones

Yolngu youth growing up in this society appeared to be thrust under a process of re-organisation to produce things which were both culturally and economically sustainable but bound dominant non-Aboriginal culture from the outside. This involved for some, voluntarily completing twelve years of schooling, gaining employment, building professional and social networks, nurturing romantic relationships (Senior & Chenhall 2008), whilst balancing secular laws with tradition and kinship structures (Ingold, Riches & Woodburn 1991; Altman & Petersen 1988; Altman 2011, Senior & Chenhall 2012).
The personal desktop computer was unable to integrate itself into the lived experiences of youth in this Aboriginal community. They were trapped in a cycle of reduced employment opportunities and overcrowded housing. For them, this technology (personal desktop computers) remained inaccessible, unaffordable and inappropriate due to poverty and high population mobility. The technology contributed to another set of complex problems instead of providing solutions. To intensify this experience, the young people in this study grew up against the backdrop of a wealthy and affluent mining community situated only twenty kilometres away. This vivid difference brought with it severe consequences which will be discussed in this thesis. The appearance of affordable and personal digital tools, such as mobile phones (Kral 2010; Taylor 2012; Carlson et al. 2015; Senior, Helmer & Chenhall 2016) and smartphones, were to a certain degree influence the cultural continuity of this remote Aboriginal community and added to the imagination of an Aboriginal ‘globalisation’.

The strong connection to traditional law, kinship and strict obedience to senior elders and traditional owners were sometimes perceived unfavourable by youth. They appear, according to their elders, to have recently resorted to avoidance of their cultural obligations and engage with another life in cyberspace. This escape was discreetly facilitated and managed by the adoption of mobile technology, particularly smartphones. Through the use of this technology, young people were able to explore their identities and social networks without outwardly questioning their elders’ instructions and the demands of kinship laws (Altman & Petersen 1988).
The mobile phone, now within the grasp of the globalised Aboriginal ‘individual’, was reluctant to be shared as a tool with kin and extended family, due to digital features of personalisation. It now embodied and contained personalised, private information. This practice appeared in the discourse and contributions from the study participants, as well as from my analysis in contrast to the appropriated historical foreign artefacts. Items such as the dugout canoe, the metal hooks and prongs for hunting and the Macassan pipe called Lunging, were disembodied from personalities and personal data (Clark & May 2013; Langton & Sloggett 2014) and were always shared communally.

The use of social media through mobile phones, particularly Facebook, YouTube and Divas Chat, has strategically created avenues for young people to escape the boredom of community life and overcrowded housing, the conflicts and competition for physical space and resources (Senior & Chenhall 2012). From the perception of their elders, it has made young people disinterested in the opportunities for traditional economies and cultural ways of being, such as hunting, making traditional art and participation in ceremonial practice (Kral 2014). The youth in Yirrkala have migrated offline practices of kinship, sharing and maintenance of alliances onto social media by using mobile phones. The cultural practice of caring for kin and country assisted by mobile phones and social media where Yolngu were able to manage their lives both individuals (Berndt & Berndt 1985) and as members of a ‘socii’ or alliance (Rowse 2012). The replacement or supplementary to the face to face interactions, of being ‘on country’, was found to coexist with online interactions, a significant disjuncture from traditional practices signified by the globalisation and continuity of traditional Aboriginal culture.
1.1.4 Community structure and social capital

According to Schofield (2015), the education and structures of contemporary society were a product of enculturation that created the environment and systems for individualisation and differentiation between community members. The development of individuality was covertly affected by the Yolngu nation’s dependence on a power structure, as their day to day living and engagement with the economy and the dominant non-Aboriginal structures demanded an exchange of goods and services (Schofield 2015). As a result, certain families and individuals in the community with administrative responsibilities or owners of capital gained more access to opportunities and resources relative to other members of their communities. This ideology of reciprocity, exchange and dependency, a dual ethic according to Scheper-Hughes (1993), was not new to remote Aboriginal Australians (Berndt & Berndt 1985; Altman & Petersen 1988; Ingold et al. 1991; Petersen 1993; Altman 2011) but a well-crafted social law that kept the clans and individuals in equal power structures. Today this continuing ideology was joined by the rise of globalisation which has emerged as a new challenge to cultural continuity and human flourishing (Appadurai 1996).

This reciprocal and interdependent Yolngu community, now in a post-colonial globalised world was in tension. The nature of this community had begun to experience individuality and independence, which traditionally contradicted Aboriginal social order and de-stabilise at the grassroots (Schofield 2015). This dual ethic from Scheper-Hughes’ perspective (1993) is both egalitarian and collectivist, but could at the same time be hierarchical and dyadic. Acknowledging
and understanding the Aboriginal version of Scheper-Hughes’s (1993) dual ethic is essential in this study.

Under this dual ethic, both family and kin were observed to have taken on Avatars of their former colonial bosses, superiors and benefactors within the kinship system (Langton 2008). However, how can we be sure that this new invasion of globalisation and Aboriginal dual ethic in the lives of the Yolngu people, has taken away the power of the individual, forcing them to act in ways contrary to their intentions and desires (Schofield 2015)? Does this then create an economy of ‘bad faith’, according to Bourdieu (1977 p. 176) where relationships are governed by transactions of forced dependencies, where loyalty and the exploitation of the vulnerable are interpreted as care and nurturance (Scheper-Hughes 1993).

1.1.5 Is technology a conduit for solidarity?

Internet technology now accessed through mobile phones and social media earned the reputation for being a conduit for advancing solidarity (Gerbaudo 2012; Eltantawy & Wiest 2011; Lotan et al. 2011; Duarte 2017) since the events of the Arab Spring. The individualisation of the Aboriginal youth culture through Internet and Communication Technology (ICT) however, has the potential, as a result of globalisation, to become an instrument for the division of a communal society (Schofield 2015), mainly traditional Aboriginal communities. The reader will find elements of social inequality as a result of youth consumerism, dramatised in the daily news feeds of the individuals in this study as discussed by the study participants.
A separation between those with the ability to earn wages for a living (by choice), to those forced to ‘work’ to afford ‘living’, against a backdrop of multiple families and kin living off welfare payments, may have created a new interdependence. This interdependence was unlike the traditional, reciprocal, obligatory sharing in Yolngu culture (Berndt & Berndt 1985, Altman & Petersen 1993; Altman 2011) which yielded unequal returns between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, according to Ingold, Riches & Woodburn (1991). Advances in material benefits by one group of Aboriginal community members, a new middle class of Indigenous managers and leaders (Dodson & Smith 2003; Rowse 2012), obtained at the expense of others (traditional owners and non-traditional owners) according to Davis (2004), had potentially made conflict and competition between family members (Scheper-Hughes 1993) endemic to the relationships of people in this Aboriginal community.

Donald Thomson, to whose work I refer to across the pages of this thesis, was a cartographer who represented the Commonwealth Government to settle a dispute in the North East Arnhem Land in the mid-1930s. He was an avid photographer and a detailed ethnographer who captured the lived experiences, the philosophy and Yolngu structures of power and communal living that helped foreground my ability to engage with the community during the early days of my arrival in the region. Donald Thomson was also particularly skilful in cross-cultural negotiations and finding resolutions where the government had initially failed and caused much conflict between law enforcement officer and the leader of the Djaru clan, Mr Wonggu Mununggur.
1.2 WHY THIS STUDY?

Evidence from the literature shows a paucity of studies conducted in Indigenous Australia focussing on emergent communication technology. The critical contribution of this thesis is the exploration of the very assumptions that went untested in previous research efforts on the role of emergent technology and social media. The concept of a ‘community’ is deconstructed in this thesis, and the homogeneity created by the use of such a colonial term gave way to insights into clans and alliances (Rowse 2012). Evident in Rowse (2012 p.116); ‘there are no such things as an autonomous arena of Indigenous values and practices; rather there is a contested intercultural field of transforming and transformed practices and values’. The definition of ‘alliance’, one that I have incorporated from Rowse’s (2012) ‘Rethinking Social Justice’, is a that of a community subdivided or fictionalised into complex inter-allegiances and groups based on families, clans and ownership of ancestral lands. A similar discussion on the interclan relationship, family ties and social capital also appear and supported in studies conducted by Keen (2003) and Christie & Greatorex (2006).

The purpose of this study was to apply the knowledge gained through observations, by participation and from in-depth interviews to create a thesis ‘where all voices were heard’ and that the voices would advocate for ‘public policies that were responsive to multiple voices’ (Ferguson 2012 p. 141). I agreed with Ferguson (2012 p. 143) that opportunity ‘is not just structured by race but by the confluence of race, class, gender, and other dimensions of difference’ where interpersonal power refers to ‘routinized, day to day practices of how people treat one another’ (Ferguson 2012 p. 147). Through an ethnographic approach, this study attempts to
provide a holistic and complex picture of the phenomenon and its inter-relationship between human and non-human actors.

1.3 THE ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD OF THE STUDY

My entry to North East Arnhem Land and engagement with Yolngu communities was first initiated by a not-for-profit organisation who delivered scabies prevention treatment and care services in the region. I volunteered my time to engage with Yolngu health workers and leaders to facilitate Yolngu-led scabies ‘de-normalisation’ social marketing campaign.

After two field trips of approximately two and four weeks in length, I asked the Traditional Owners of Rirratjingu country permission to relocate my family closer to the community to conduct my doctoral study. In the meantime, I began a study of basic Yolngu Matha, the traditional language group of the Yolngu nation, through the help of an academic who had worked closely with the Yolngu nation for several decades. I discussed the research proposal with senior elders from the Rirratjingu clan, Aboriginal health workers, directors from the Mulka Project and members of the One Disease (scabies prevention) senior management team and provided several revisions before finalising the document. Once satisfied with the level of consultation and feedback, I prepared a formal document to present to numerous government and Aboriginal organisations.

I approached The Northern Territory Government Office of Youth Affairs with a copy of my proposal and an executive summary with the main points and procedures for the study. I proceeded to share a draft of my proposal with the
director of the Centre for Disease Control, the board members of the Miwatj Health
Aboriginal Corporation (the local health service provider in the Miwatj Region of
North East Arnhem Land), the Mulka Project, the board of the East Arnhem Shire
Council’s Youth Project, and the Traditional Owners of the Rirratjingu clan. After
scrutinising and making changes to the proposal based on suggestions from the
stakeholders, I received a letter of support from the Traditional Owner of
Rirratjingu country (Mr Bakamumu Marika), the Mulka Project, the Office of
Youth Affairs (Northern Territory Government), and from Miwatj Health
Aboriginal Corporation. I did not receive a response from the East Arnhem Shire
Council nor the Northern Territory Centre for Disease Control despite several
follow-ups.

All in-depth interview participants were recruited based on the kinship structure
that allowed me to communicate in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner. I
turned to my Yolngu adopted brothers, maternal uncles and brothers of my adopted
father for introductions and recommendations to interview participants and
mentorship, including language and cultural training. They also welcomed my
discussion with them as I gathered data and analysed them with cultural sensitivity.
I also interviewed women who were not my poison cousins\(^1\). Some of the interview
participants were not Yolngu, but have been adopted into the community and have
spent more than a decade working for Yolngu businesses and Traditional Owners.
The names of the interview participants have been changed several times in the
thesis to avoid compromising their anonymity. Many of the participants are vocal

\(^1\) People in a particularly highly respectful relationship which the expression of reverence
and respect involves complete avoidance (Nicholls 2009)
advocates in the community and were happy to talk to me anonymously, and asked
that I made sure their tone, language and voice were not identifiable, even their
genders. Each of the interview participants has been strong advocates for the
appropriate use of mobile technology and social media. Many interviewees are still
raising teenage children and have adult children living at home. The formal,
informal and follow up interviews, took almost three years to collect.

The young men were a particularly hard-to-reach population, and many of them
were put off by the western institution of consent forms, participant information
sheets and voice recorder. They based their participation on Aboriginal law and
taught me culture and the use of mobile technology in their community within a
reciprocal relationship (Petersen 1993) bounded by kinship ties. I realised within
the first year of engagement with men that to go beyond our mutual conversations
and formally contribute their knowledge to the study during usual business hours
was impossible. I found that the men were more accessible in the evenings often
sitting in a pub, on the weekends hunting by the mangroves, taking long bush walks
or having a meal at my house. The informal settings were more conducive to in-
depth discussions about the research questions while maintaining cultural protocol
of respect and reciprocity.

As I began to understand that a diverse group of Yolngu individuals were
empowered differently, either by their standing in their community, their mastery
of the English language or access to employment opportunities, I began to seek out
young people who were not necessarily emerging leaders among their peers or who
held a loud voice in the community. This process was made more accessible by
complying with requests from men for lifts from Birritjimi to town or from Yirrkala
to town as they often belonged to families' without a vehicle. My relationship with
Wayne and Brice (not their real names), two senior men from Yirrkala, was the
bedrock upon which all my relationships with younger men were established.
Towards the final year of my study, I became close to Daniel from ‘house number
one’. We engaged in long discussions of power, structure and agency. We bonded
over the making of the ‘Ngarali-tobacco story of Arnhem Land’ documentary, and
during the weekends that were spent talking about tobacco, hunting and the
similarities between my Indigenous Tamil heritage, the Yolngu cultures and our
respective languages.

My Yolngu mentors, interview participants and extended community members saw
me as a man stuck between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds. I was not
the oppressor or coloniser, nor was I disadvantaged by a lack of education and
employment opportunities. Within this nexus, we engaged. Having grown up in a
family of seven that shared a two-bedroom government public housing dwelling
with a fence instead of a front yard, and grandparents who were illiterate labourers
from the south of India, parents who suffered discrimination, whether in school or
at work, the Yolngu narrative and history was somewhat familiar to me. However,
as a doctoral student and homeowner, my life had begun to take a capitalist turn
when compared to a Yolngu of the same gender and age. It would only be fair that
I accepted my arrival in Yirrkala and Birritjimi with some relative privilege.
1.4 AN OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

In Chapter two, I set the scene for the study through a deconstruction of the socio-political life of Yirrkala between 2012 and 2015. I described this assemblage of identities and alliances, as no longer a singular or homogenous egalitarian society. I discuss the contribution of leaders who had experienced one of the most significant struggles for land rights in Australian history. The band of leaders were from a variety of age groups, some as young as 17 years old. Together, in solidarity, they took on the Commonwealth Government and the multinational mining company, Nabalco Pty Ltd, in a legal battle entitled Milirrpum vs Nabalco and the Commonwealth Government 1971 (Williams 1986). This phenomenon appeared to me as the first glimmering of an Aboriginal Spring.

This uniquely documented event (Milirrpum vs Nabalco and the Commonwealth Government 1971) resulted in the well-known Land Rights struggle and the Northern Territory Land Rights Act 1976 being passed (Williams 1986). The chapter relates to the reader a contemporary story of conflict and agreement that played out between clans, between Yolngu and non-Yolngu actors, which may have also occurred during the era of trade with Macassans from across the sea, and continued until the events of the Gove (Nhulunbuy) Dispute of 2012 (Taylor 2014). I describe the interdependence that was gradually formed between the mining industry, the Commonwealth Government and the remote Aboriginal community in the last 40 years contrary to the emancipation of the Yolngu nation through Milirrpum vs Nabalco 1971 (Williams 1986). I use the evolution of relationships, both current and historical, to draw a macro example of the struggle between clans.
and families to adapt to contemporary political life, to acquire resources for the survival and advancement of their families and alliances (Rowse 2012).

Also in the second chapter, the theory of cultural continuity (Burbank 1994) is explored. In a post-colonial community, traditional law, dissent, conflict, agreement and history with foreign trade predating European colonisation, had created a need for clans to acquire and appropriate resources through Indigenous corporatisation (Rowse 2012). In today’s globalised culture and the free market, the community members were armed with a clan-centric ideology in which alliances were maintained for economic gains and geared towards progress and political sustainability (Rowse 2012). In this chapter, these factors are discussed in the events of a dispute between two influential clans. Their struggles were analysed as symptoms of a society that reflect the colonial oppression it had internalised (Freire 2000; Langton 2008). Durkheim’s ‘Theory of Anomie’, Lewis’s ‘Culture of Poverty’ and Murray’s underclass or ‘Dependency Culture Theory’ in are all considered in a discussion where each posit that poor communities tend to develop unusual cultural patterns that may have destructive and adverse effects for social and health outcomes (Mackenbach 2012).

It would be culturally inappropriate and methodologically flawed to discuss the emergence of new technology without the examination of traditional Yolngu theory, previously referred to as ‘mythology’ that emerged at the beginning of time and was modified during the era of engagement and trade with Macassan seafarers in North East Arnhem Land (Macknight 1986; McIntosh 2000; 2006; 2011). The combination of current political events and interactions between clans is compared
and understood through the interactions of Yolngu with Macassans, with a particular focus on the ancient dingo and ‘Bayini’ theory (McIntosh 2006). Theories that were used to prophesize the struggle of change, improvisation and cultural continuity. Acknowledging this connection is necessary to understand the complexity of Yolngu interactions between kinship, culture and the adoption of new technology.

The discussion on the ‘Bayini’ theory is particularly one of power and agency in the face of an ever-changing world, where Yolngu were afraid of remaining ‘black’ (impoverished and marginalised) if they did not adapt to new technology, and chose to practice their culture unaltered and authentic (McIntosh 2011; 2013). This chapter is essential in establishing the prophetic conflict according to Burrumarra M.B.E. (McIntosh 2011; 2013; Clark & May 2013). The struggle between cultural continuity and the advancement of Yolngu society through the adoption of new practices or new technology, while finding the balance between cultural identity and the inevitable forces of change becomes a theoretical discourse, trope or metaphor for this thesis.

This thesis attempts to discuss the adoption of new technology brought by Macassan seafarers for trade with Yolngu (which lasted over 200 years). In order to discuss the traditional metaphors that were used in the control, interpretation and incorporation of new technology into Yolngu traditional life and kinship structures (McIntosh 2011; 2013; Robertson et al. 2013; Clark & May 2013) it is necessary to use a historical lens that enables the study to analyse patterns and draw parallels for comparison. This approach made the discussion and interviews with Yolngu
participants more feasible and transferable to the English language for analysis and writing this thesis.

The purpose of this chapter was not to turn a mere sequence of events into a discussion of causality or to simplify the great history and struggle towards the ‘peoplehood’ (Rowse 2012) of remote Aboriginal Australians. On the contrary, my intention was to problematize the lack of opportunity that remote Aboriginal people have had and to critique and theorise cultural continuity in their current post-colonial context (Burbank 2006; Senior & Chenhall 2012). Those who survived colonisation and the Christian Mission administration under the Commonwealth Government (Morphy 2009), must be given the space to reorganise and restructure for the future, through ‘Intergenerational dialogue’\(^2\) as described by Rowse (2012 p. 60) drew on the example of a community reorganisation in Goulburn Island. It is important that this study evaluates how and why new decisions have to be made in order to understand ‘[how] the results of the former affect the social action of other people in a rippling movement which may go far before it is spent’ (Moberg 2012 p. 208).

The third chapter discusses a current trend in Indigenous public health practice focusing on the use of mobile phones and social media by public health professionals to engage young people. The chapter explores how the methods of post-colonial public health, which sought to improve health outcomes without acknowledging the beliefs and traditions of Indigenous people, albeit utilising

\(^{2}\) The changes to marriage customs in September 1969 in Goulburn Island
cultural relativism (Kowal & Paradies 2005), was indirectly challenging the cultural practices and beliefs of the Yolngu. Cultural relativism that is referred to in this thesis particularly in Chapter 3 is a perspective where the ‘traits, beliefs, practices and the like must be understood within their particular cultural contexts’ (Feinberg & Ottenheimer 2001, p. 16) but does not preclude any cross-cultural comparison. Ottenheimer in Feinberg & Ottenheimer (2001) stated that cultural relativism was ‘self–defeating’ as the results of such perspectives (grounded in relativism), merely substitutes one form of ethnocentrism for another, a point which is agreed upon by Kowal & Paradies (2005).

Without a basis in social theory, public health methods that varied between structuralist and agentic programs (Lea 2005) unintentionally undermined traditional authority (Burbank 1994; 2006) and decision-making on the subject of health, disease, and the causality of life and death (Reid 1983; Lea 2005; Senior & Chenhall 2008). The public health agenda, even when implemented by a local Aboriginal Community Controlled primary health care provider, who identified and employed culturally appropriate Aboriginal health workers, had required them to separate themselves from traditional culture and belief in sorcery and traditional healers. The health workers were asked to hold the discussion about health and illness with the community of traditional people on behalf of the scientific community or between the communal body politic of their society and the health service provider.

The use of transactionalism in public health (Lea 2005) was where behavioural change was manufactured. The assumption that Aboriginal community members
would make better-informed lifestyle choices based on a simplistic story on disease causation did not take into account the possibility individuals may pursue and prioritise self-interest over health information. Another focus of this chapter is the belief in the value of digital engagement via social media in the public health space and the assumptions made on the part of public health practitioners in their perceptions of Aboriginal people’s thinking of social media marketing and health communications.

In Chapter 4, I theorise on the research methods that were applied in this Indigenous context and the purposive sampling methods (Agar 1996; 2004, DeWalt & DeWalt 2010) that were incorporated based on traditional kinship laws and Yolngu culture, as advised by my cultural mentors. The non-reductionist method of sampling (Agar 1996; 2004) used in this study was supported and guided by several Aboriginal senior elders and my supervisor (Senior 2003). I refer to myself in this chapter as the ‘Macassan returned’ as a researcher, in order to emphasise that my role in the community involved maintaining reciprocal relationships as dictated by kinship, but also acknowledging that Yolngu and I have both examined and evaluated each other over a three-year period in the making of this analysis. The metaphor also refers to the historical connection and experiences of colonialism that we share. The added value of my fluency in Malay and the ability to understand Malay words that were incorporated into Yolngu Matha were an added strength to the level of engagement, trust and rapport I was able to nurture during the study.

Using the example of Macassans and the recruitment of Yolngu in the harvesting of trepang, a traditionally gendered activity (Berndt & Berndt 1988), I proposed
that culture and practice, to Yolngu, have always been a reflexive activity lacking in the cultural conservatism witnessed today by a generation raised within the walls of the Church (Morphy 2009), and the Mission era. ‘By satisfying wants without compelling sacrifice and subordination to elders, the colonising power has effectively addressed the insurgent energies of youth’ according to Rowse (2012 p. 57), through the provision of ‘food, clothing, freedom from hunger and want, the breaking of age-old shackles and above all natural curiosity and the spirit of youthful adventure’. Therefore, the method of ethnography and semi-structured interviews in an immersive experience of collaboration and a posture of learning was intended to create an interaction that encouraged reflexivity (Agar 1996; 2004; DeWalt & DeWalt 2010).

In Chapter 5, I explain how I finalised my research question after a period of stakeholder consultation and deliberation. During the period of my engagement as a volunteer and an adopted member of the Rirratjingu clan, community members, especially elders and health workers had led the process of consultation with key influencers in the community. The observations and community consultations helped the formulation of the research question. The series of consultation took me on a path that challenged my hypothesis; where social media, mobile phones in public health and social marketing were robust solutions to behavioural challenges or as tools for public health interventions as argued by Syme (1998) especially for a cohort of men with low health seeking behaviour (Senior 2003; Senior & Chenhall 2012). This process eventually led me to formulate a more appropriate and suitable research question, one that attempted to bridge anthropological theory with public health practice.
Chapter 6 is the results and discussion section written as an ethnography of young people and mobile phones in the community. This chapter is further strengthened by Chapter 7, an ethnography of social media use, in the community. In both chapters, an in-depth analysis of the effects of the prolonged or intense use of social media via mobile phones by young people is provided. I also deliberated on the nature of compulsive communication (Carlson et al. 2015; Senior, Helmer & Chenhall 2016), online self-disclosure (Suler 2004) and reassurance seeking (Van Orden et al. 2010; Clerkin 2013) by youth as a symptom of chronic stress from interpersonal conflict, prolonged social and emotional isolation (Kral 2014) and possible inter-clan tension (Rowse 2012). The social drama of young people’s lives viewed through their use of social media and mobile phones was examined as ‘an optimal unit of analysis because it has a beginning, a middle and an end’ (Moberg 2012 p. 284). The use of an inanimate object like social media and mobile phones allowed for more in-depth discussion on what affected the lived experiences of young people in the community because of its finite nature, therefore making my research, a feasible study.

In the final chapter, I used the work of Nikolai Gogol’s short story entitled “The Overcoat”, to deconstruct the assembly of class, power and social inequality (Foucault 1982; Bevir 1999) in a remote Aboriginal context. Gogol’s depiction is analogous to the social drama created from the ownership and use of mobile phones and social media as described in this study. The use of these tools has drawn lines in the community connecting those who have power and possessions and disconnecting those who do not. By using the example of ‘The Overcoat’ I was able
to tell the story of the rise of Aboriginal young people in the online world and their need to become noticed, respected and liked within the Yolngu network and beyond. The need for reassurance and acceptance locally and globally is a typical behaviour observed in youth culture, and its appearance in the egalitarian communal structure of an Aboriginal community in Arnhem Land signified the potency of globalisation as a threat and at the same time, an enabler to Aboriginal cultural continuity.

In the concluding chapter, my discussion continues to bring the learnings and arguments into a framework of social inequality in a community exacerbated by young people’s perception of social and emotional repression and isolation. These perceptions, based on contributions of my valued and respected interview participants, was conceived to be due to a lack of opportunity and resources for healthy adolescent development, social and economic advancement (Senior & Chenhall 2012).

Before allowing the reader to turn to the next chapter and engage with a historical analysis of technology transfer, power and corporate Australia, I would like the reader to be patient with my style of writing. I use the passive voice with the intention to convey the emphasis on objects but de-emphasise the unknown subject or actor. The de-emphasis on the subject or actor is a deliberate embrace of complexity and ambiguity in this qualitative study and provides the reader with the ability to think about what is being discussed rather than be told what to think even though facts support it.
CHAPTER 2 - THE SOCIO-POLITICAL LIFE OF YIRRKALA

‘... The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state and from the state’s institutions but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualisation which is linked to the state’. (Foucault 1982 p. 785).

Yirrkala, the “Land of the Seagull Dreaming” is approximately 600 kilometres east of Darwin, in the Northern Territory. It was a community established by the Reverend Wilbur Chaseling in 1935 (Marika & Isaacs 1995). In the 2011 census, Yirrkala consisted of 843 people from thirteen clans, and more than three-quarters of this population was of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background³.

Figure 2.1: Map of North East Arnhem Land

³ http://www.dlgcs.nt.gov.au/about_us/remote_service_delivery/major_remote_towns/yirrkala/profile
Since the 1970s, several clans set out to re-establish themselves away from Yirrkala on their lands, and by the 1980s there were about ten outstations with a population of about 200\(^3\). Many Yolngu have a home in both Yirrkala and their homeland centre. The population in Yirrkala was projected to grow from 1,472 in 2006 to 2,005 in 2026\(^3\). The number of people of Indigenous descent aged 15 to 64 was expected to grow from 953 in 2006 to 1,301 in 2026\(^3\). The number of people living in Yirrkala above the age of 65 was expected to more than triple from 33 in 2006 to 112 in 2026\(^2\).

Figure 2.2: Map of Gove Peninsula
Yirrkala is located on the Rirratjingu clan’s red earth country, rich in bauxite. I saw the mined bauxite transported on kilometres of conveyor belts from Yirrkala into the Gumatj clan’s territory called Gunyangara. The conveyor belts that cut through Yolngu country passed the community of Birritjimi (known interchangeably as Wallaby Beach) before reaching its destination at the Rio Tinto Alcan refinery. Before the bauxite was processed, it was stored in a heap opposite a row of Yolngu houses by the beach, in a community called Galupa. The bauxite was refined into alumina, in a factory with two large smokestacks visible from Birritjimi. The processed bauxite was exported to China before returning, albeit partially, to its ‘home’ in the form of monies for royalty payments.

Nhulunbuy, the town centre, was approximately twenty kilometres away on a sealed road from Yirrkala and 10 kilometres away from Birritjimi. Yolngu came into town to shop, to access health and commercial services and also engaged in social events or to sell works of art. Some Yolngu avoided the crowd and preferred to pay a premium for food products and take away meals from the supermarket at the Captain Cook Shopping Centre as opposed to Woolworths in town. The Captain Cook Shopping Centre supermarket was accessed by Yolngu who owned a vehicle, and this allowed them to avoid the ‘humbug’ (Petersen 1993; Altman 2011). ‘Humbug’ is a term used to describe ‘demand sharing’ (Petersen 1993; Altman 2011) and could be generally observed in mutual or aggressive expressions in front of Woolworths, in the town square next to the bank where police officers were
known to be called to settle aggressive disputes (Burbank 1994). I was often
reminded of Donald Thomson’s push for the Australian Government to discontinue
their colonialist relationship with the Yolngu and to abolish the anomalous system
of police constables acting as “Protectors of Aborigines” (Thomson & Petersen
1983)

Conflict and disagreement in the Yolngu community were not unusual and almost
as predictable as the ebb and flow of tides (Burbank 1994). Conflict commonly led
to a transitory period of the agreement and then, to another dispute (Burbank 1994;
Lloyd et al. 2010). The power structures of the two most influential clans in the
region, the Rirratjingu and Gumatj had experienced their fair share of collaboration
and conflict especially in the recent court proceedings between the Northern Land

Figure 2.5: Woolworths in Nhulunbuy town centre

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5 “The Commonwealth created the position of Chief Protector of Aboriginals following the
practice adopted by the States. The Chief Protector was empowered to assume the care, custody
or control of any Aboriginal or half-caste if, in his opinion, it was necessary or desirable in the
interests of that person for this to be done. The powers derived from the Aboriginals Ordinance
1911, the Commonwealth’s first legislation dealing with Aboriginal people in the Northern
Territory, which remained in place until 1957.” (http://guides.naa.gov.au/records-about-northern-
Council and the leaders of Gunyangara and Yirrkala (Taylor 2014). An examination of the historical engagement of Yolngu with foreign structures (Lloyd et al. 2010), according to Yunupingu and Muller (2009), argued that conflict and agreement were unavoidable but negotiable.

Figure 2.4: Map of Yirrkala, Nhulunbuy, Birritjimi (Wallaby Beach) and Gunyangara

Bauxite was not the only resource exported to China from Yirrkala. For about two centuries (circa 1700) several tonnes of sea cucumber were harvested, gutted, cooked, cured and smoked by Macassan seafarers with the labour of Yolngu men on the shores of North East Arnhem Land. The finished product was packed and transported on Malay ‘praus’ (boats) towards South East Asia for trading with China (Clark & May 2013). Three hundred years ago, well before European colonisation, the Macassans arrived in the Gove peninsula on their ‘praus’ (Thomson & Petersen 1983; Clark & May 2013; Langton & Sloggett 2014), a much safer and efficient boat than Yolngu’s bark canoes (Lloyd et al. 2010). According to Yolngu oral history, the Macassan seafarers established a working relationship
with men from the Yirritja clans in order to harvest trepang and to a lesser degree, native pearl shells, pearls, tortoiseshell and sandalwood (Warner 1958; Thomson & Petersen 1983; Lloyd et al. 2010; Clark & May 2013; Langton & Sloggett 2014).

The economic significance of North East Arnhem Land to international trade (Clark & May 2013) was self-evident and continued to this day with its export of bauxite and alumina.

2.1 SIGNIFICANT TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF YIRRKALA

I was adopted into the Rirratjingu clan by Waninya Marika OAM, the son of Milierrpum Marika and the grandson of Mawalan Marika I. When I got to know my Yolngu family; my respect grew into awe and admiration. To illustrate the importance of being adopted into the Marika family I will provide a brief biography of these philosophers and visionary leaders who have inspired both the method that I applied in this study and how I experienced Yolngu history as a researcher. These leaders, though no longer alive, continue to extend their influence into the future through their philosophy and became the foundation of my understanding of Yolngu values, which I was able to substantiate and confirm with my cultural mentors.

2.1.1 Mawalan I Marika (c. 1908-1967)

Mawalan was a prolific artist, ceremonial leader and Rirratjingu clan leader. He was the Traditional Owner of the Yirrkala when the Mission was established on Rirratjingu land in 1936 (Marika & Isaacs 1995). He became the central figure of cross-cultural exchange between the Yolngu and non-Yolngu nation. His approach to cross-cultural communication was through the use of art as a tool to advocate for
a better understanding and appreciation of the Yolngu world. As an early example of Yolngu entrepreneurship, he helped shape the commercial bark painting movement. He was the first to establish the Marika artistic dynasty and challenged cultural practice and tradition by teaching his oldest daughters to paint, along with his sons. This encouraged Yolngu women to establish themselves as artists and subsequently created a feminist economy that made them self-sufficient. Mawalan’s daughter, Banduk Marika, was not only a renowned artist but also recognised and revered as an eloquent champion of her community. I was acquainted with one of her grandsons in the Djarrak Football Club and engaged in listening to his stories of his grandmother.

2.1.2 Milirrpum Marika (c. 1923-1983)

Milirrpum was the father of Waninya Marika. He played a significant role in the land rights movement (Williams 1986) and saw the Marika elders took to the court as Milirrpum and Others versus Nabalco Pty Ltd and the Commonwealth of Australia in 1971. The level of cross-cultural communication that made this enterprise possible, and succeeded in the land rights struggle was a testimony of the resilience and reflexivity (Gordon & Gurierr 2014) of Yolngu in matters concerning their land, culture and the source of spiritual nourishment.

2.1.3 Roy Dadaynga Marika

Roy succeeded his older brother Milirrpum after his death as the Rirratjingu, clan leader. He was awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for his advocacy on Indigenous rights and community work. His son, Bakamumu Marika is the current leader of the Rirratjingu clan and traditional owner of Yirrkala. It was
to Bakamumu that I turned with my research proposal for his permission to enter Yirrkala, to conduct the study. He permitted me to conduct my research through an email from his personal, iPhone 4. He expressed hope that my effort would contribute positively to the youth. I saw Bakamumu as a father figure although I was adopted as his brother. He gave me a valuable opportunity and recognised that I needed his support, as my post-colonial past was not too different from his. I also acknowledged the Yolngu academics that promulgated participatory research as a method for the development of Yolngu education (Marika, Ngurruwuthun & White 1992). The academic leadership provided by Marika and White as members of my adopted family, tremendously influenced the analysis in this thesis.

2.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF YOLNGU TRADE AND POLITICS

The Macassans created a mutual relationship with Yolngu (McIntosh 2013; Clark & May 2013; Langton & Sloggett 2014), from both the Yirritja and Dhuwa moiety⁶. Both reciprocity and dependency (Thomson & Petersen 1983; Scheper-Hughes 1993) flourished during the two centuries of engagement with the Macassan traders (Clark & May 2013). In exchange for Yolngu labour, the Macassans brought with them metal hooks, spears, dugout canoes, rice, pots, clothes and the incorporation of Malay vocabulary into Yolngu Matha (Thomson & Petersen 1983; Clark & May 2013). The relationship between Yolngu and Macassan was categorised as one of

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⁶ According to Reid (1983): “everyone in Yolngu society was born into the clan of his or her father. The clan is a named group, the members of which are related through patrifiliation, speak a common dialect of ‘matha’. Each clan and each person belongs to either Dhuwa or Yirritja moieties. Moieties are exogamous”. Yunupingu & Muller (2009) explain that “every person, animal, plant, place, name, ancestor, everything living and nonliving is either Yirritja or Dhuwa. The cooperation and interdependence of the holders of Dhuwa and Yirritja laws words as a fundamental legal principle in Yolngu society. There is a significant philosophical body of Yolngu knowledge associated with the interaction between the two moieties”.

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exchange and is theorised by Yolngu to be a guiding principle in all intra- and inter-
Yolngu collaborations (Muller 2012). This principle of exchange or “Ganma”
according to Muller (2012 p. 62) “has been used as a mechanism to ensure that
Yolngu have an equal and active part in the thinking, planning and management of
their community institution”. Yolngu academic and Gumatj leader, Djawa
Yunupingu explained that this Yolngu system of knowledge and economic
exchange permeated all Yolngu information and management systems (Yunupingu
& Muller 2009).

All Macassan artefacts belonged to Yirritja clans. The Dhuwa clans acted as
“Djungaya” or clan executives, similar to the Malay word ‘penjaga’ or
caretaker/manager, of Macassan artefacts. Consequently, all introduced foreign
artefacts had become classified as belonging to the Yirritja moiety (see Appendix
1). Before the arrival of Macassans, Yolngu collective ownership was held in a
balance between the Yirritja and Dhuwa clans (Warner 1964; Thomson & Petersen
1983). Ownership of material was mutual, driven and sustained by ‘Gurrutu’\(^7\)
(Kinship) until ‘rrupiah’\(^8\) (money) (Yunupingu & Muller 2009) and other artefacts
from Macassans possibly played a role in creating a noticeable power imbalance
which took several centuries for its ripple effects to become apparent to researchers
today.

\(^7\) Gurrutu or kinship according to Yunupingu & Muller (2009) ‘is the way that we [Yolngu] are
related to one another and everything’.

\(^8\) Macassan word meaning money adopted into Yolngu Matha.
The Yirrkala that I observed was a mix of clans from both moieties, though predominantly made up of Rirratjingu and Djapu clans from the Dhuwa moiety. Further, the administrative body of Yirrkala was made up of Rirratjingu traditional landowners who formed two Indigenous corporations known as Bunuwal Industrial and Bunuwal Investments. Eventually, they were both consolidated under a new administration called the Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation.

2.2.1 The Kinship system

According to Nicholls (2009, pp.304-305), a Yolngu leader explained in their terms the essence of the kinship system. He said:

Firstly, there are two moieties, Dhuwa and Yirritja. Everyone and everything is either Dhuwa or Yirritja. Yirritja people sing about Yirritja things, for examples, Yirritja rocks, winds, fauna, ancestors, flora, clouds and creators, and many other things. A Yirritja person must always marry a Dhuwa person, and Dhuwa must marry Yirritja. You cannot marry the same moiety. That is how the world works. It has been there for thousands of years. We live by that.

If a man or woman is Dhuwa, their mother will be Yirritja. Dhuwa land can be located nearby his mother’s Yirritja land. For example, the Bawaka, which belongs to the Yirritja clan, Gumatj is situated next to the Rirratjingu land called Yalangbara, a Dhuwa land. The mother and child relationship beyond its human symbol is found in the land and other animate and inanimate objects. This relationship is referred to by Yolngu as Yothu-Yindi. In a Yothu Yindi partnership, one person is always Dhuwa, and the other is always Yirritja. The Yothu is always considered the child of the Yindi or mother regardless of gender, even in inanimate objects like land. Sometimes Yirritja is the mother of Dhuwa, sometimes Dhuwa is the mother for Yirritja.
Table 2.1: The People of Arnhem Land by Nicholls (2009 p. 305)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dhuwa Mälk</th>
<th>Yirritja Mälk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
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2.2.2 A discussion on trade relations between Macassan seafarers and Yolngu

According to Yolngu, their historic trade arrangements with Macassans were usually presented as a story of collaboration and agreement. Lloyd et al. (2010) argued that this is highly unlikely. Petty disagreements, dishonourable behaviour by Macassan men, including sexual exploitation of Yolngu women have been forgotten since the curtailment of Macassan trade at the turn of the 20th century by the South Australian Government (Thomson & Petersen; Clark & May 2013). Nostalgia according to Morphy and Morphy (1984) and Senior (2003) tended to portray the Macassan and Yolngu relationships as existing in an era of peace and prosperity. However, Epp (2015) argued that this was an example of ‘cultural amnesia’, a condition caused by external damage or trauma (Nakata 2007) experienced by Yolngu as a result of colonisation and the Christian Mission administration. Professor Martin Nakata is a Pro Vice-Chancellor and head of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre based at James Cook University. He has focused his research in the area of Australian Indigenous
education and the higher education sector for the last twenty years. The centuries
of interaction with Macassan men was probably considered more beneficial than
harmful when compared with European colonisation (Berndt & Berndt 1985; 1996)
being especially significant for Yolngu Yirritja clans who were owners of Macassan
artefacts and trade. The voices and stories of disadvantaged or exploited women
had been possibly forgotten and replaced with different memories that enabled the
continued collaboration (Epp 2015) between Yolngu and Macassan men.

2.3 THE INFLUENCE OF MACASSAN TRADE ON YOLNGU CULTURE
The period of trade between the Macassans and Yolngu produced a co-dependent
relationship, which altered hunting practices. The relationship stimulated new
productivity through the introduction of metal hooks, spears and dugout canoes,
and resulted in the increased consumption of turtle and dugong as part of the
traditional diet (Thomson & Petersen 1983; Clark & May 2013; Langton & Sloggett
2014). The prolonged interaction also introduced valuable artefacts for ceremonial
exchange known as “Kumur Muadak” (Thomson & Petersen 1983).

In 1988, Yolngu celebrated the anniversary of the landing of the ‘Hati Marege’
(Heart of Arnhem Land) in Arnhem Land also known to the Macassan voyagers as
‘Marege’ (Macknight 1986; Stephenson 2007). This celebration marked a deep
connection that Yolngu shared with Macassan traders, a relationship that was
mutual, reciprocal and inter-dependent. Each year in December, with the western
winds called Barra (from Malay word ‘Barat’ meaning west), a fleet of up to fifty
or more ‘praus’ arrived on the shores of North East Arnhem Land (Stephenson
2007; Clark & May 2013). For approximately 300 years, the Yolngu traded and
formed familial relationships with the Macassans (Thomson & Petersen 1983; Clark & May 2013).

The Macassan trepang industry declined from 1880 due to taxes and charges imposed on the ‘trepangers’ and was curtailed in 1906-07 (Stephenson 2007), when ‘the South Australian Government effectively refused to grant fishing licenses to non-Australian operators’ (Macknight 1986 in Clark & May 2013 p. 2). This action on the part of the government caused the Yolngu to suffer severe economic depression (Morphy 2009).

2.3.1 The Macassan influence on Yolngu technology, religion and ceremonial practice

Barefoot and wading through the mangroves near East Woody with Jonny, Simon and Danny, I mentioned the metal heads of their spears for hunting and the men talked a lot about the Macassans and their influence on Yolngu. These three young men between twenty and twenty-three, were married with children and enjoyed telling me stories of historical significance and compared them with mine, as a Malaysian Tamil. These Yolngu hunters in the mangroves were masters of their environment and were relaxed enough to teach me about Macassan influence on their culture.

I asked Simon if Macassans and Yolngu exchanged a lot of knowledge or Dhawu⁹. ‘I do not think the Macassans took much from us,’ he said while pointing to the

⁹ Meaning knowledge, story or narrative in Yolngu Matha according to Yunupingu and Muller (2009)
metal spikes on his spear; ‘Yolngu got a lot from Mangathara (Macassan) mob, they
gave us technology and changed us’. He was a reformer at heart and had ideas of
moving away from the cultural conservatism in the community. Even though he
cared for his family and relatives, he still wanted his independence and the much-
desired change that Macassans had previously brought to Arnhem Land centuries
ago in the form of efficiency and increased productivity.

Some studies have shown that there were tens if not hundreds of Yolngu travellers
who made their way on a return journey to Makassar (Thomson & Petersen 1983;
Clark & May 2013). A few Yolngu men and women even settled there with local
inhabitants. These relationships continued into recent history. A friend of mine, a
professional Yolngu dancer, recalled that his great-grandfather, who had spent
many years in Makassar, returned in the later part of his life to Arnhem Land when
his grandsons went to Makassar to ask for his return to the homeland. The
Macassan-Aboriginal encounter was also linked to ‘Yalangbara’ which, according
to Marika (2008, p. 8) is ‘the place of the first people, the first people who were
born or created there’. The Yalangbara artworks depicting the events associated
with the creative period when the Djangkawu10 undertook their journeys (Clark &
May 2013) were notable for “depicting the legendary ‘Bayini’ widely believed to
be a mythical group of white or golden-coloured Asian seafarers who voyaged to
Arnhem Land, before the arrival of the Macassan fishing fleet (McIntosh 2013 p.
4).

10. The Djang'kawu is believed to be the ‘first ancestors’ of northeast Arnhem Land according to
I thought about my status in Malaysia as a fourth generation Tamil migrant and the politics of the current Prime Minister Najib Razak, a descendant from Sulawesi (Makassar). I reflected on my research with the Yolngu people of Arnhem Land, and their connection to the Malays or Macassans from Sulawesi, and how these mighty seafarers influenced both our cultures (Willford 2007). The Kingdom of Gowa with Makassar as its capital formally accepted Islam in 1603-05 (Clark & May 2013), and it was assumed that the fishermen who arrived in Arnhem Land were therefore predominantly Muslim (Tjandrasasmita 1978 in Ganter 2013). It is possible that the outward signs of conversion, the use of circumcision as a cultural practice and the incorporation of names from the Arabic language such as Hussein (Ganter 2013) were a sign of the profound cultural and social influences between the two nations.

When I attended my first Yolngu funeral ceremony, it was for the reknowned leader and musician, Dr Yunupingu\(^{11,12}\), founder of Yothu Yindi. I noticed that the Yolngu ceremonial songs reminded me of Malay traditional music, or more accurately ‘traces of classical Arabic religious music’ according to Toner (2000) in Ganter (2013, p. 59). Ganter (2013) explained that the singers whom I heard and the dances

\(^{11}\) was an advocate for the Two Way Education development in Yirrkala. It is a system of education built by the Gurindji people of Daguragu in the Northern Territory in the 1970s. According to Dr Yunupingu, it is a system in which ‘both European and Indigenous cultures are to be taught’ (Yunupingu 1999, p. 5) as a form of reversing the historical impact of the one-way imposition of non-Indigenous culture upon Indigenous people. Dr Yunupingu explained that the Missionaries were responsible for stopping the use of Yolngu languages in the community and therefore the community cannot engage holistically in an education system that didn’t make room for Yolngu language to flourish. The ultimate aim of the Two Way Education philosophy is to provide Indigenous children with education in both their own Aboriginal Culture as well as Western culture.

\(^{12}\) It is usually a mark of respect to discontinuing the use of deceased person’s first name for a period as decided by close family members but in some cases, this may not be observed (Carlson 2014; Glaskin 2017).
with swords and flags that I observed were adopted from the old traditional tools and practices of the Macassan seafarers. These were, according to Ganter (2013), an improvised performance with religious texts, and symbols of Macassan artefacts like ships, anchors, swords and flags including the tobacco and alcohol dances. McIntosh (2006) in Ganter (2013 p. 60) argued that Yolngu “never embraced Islam as a faith; rather they incorporated elements of what they observed from their Indonesian visitors into their cosmology”. The Indigenisation of foreign practices and tools were evident from the discussions in Ganter (2013). Without the threat of altering established Yolngu cultural practices, Yolngu were always receptive to innovation and change, according to researchers who have worked for decades in Indigenous communities in the North East Arnhem Land (Reid 1983; Berndt & Berndt 1985; McIntosh 2013). This openness to innovation and change sustained itself until their submission to the Christian Mission administration, which may have coerced them into a cultural conservatism (Money et al. 1970) based on Christian beliefs and practices.

By the turn of the 20th century, Yolngu ‘were circumcised, polygamous, well-travelled, enmeshed in transnational trade and family relationships, spoke using Macassan vocabulary and carried Macassan names’ (Ganter 2013 p. 60). Despite a high level of influence and conflict with the Macassan seafarers (Thomson & Petersen 1983; McIntosh 2013), Yolngu saw the relationship as beneficial and progressive (Clark & May 2013).

2.4 CAPITALISM, LAND RIGHTS AND INTER-CLAN DISPUTE
In the 1960s, Yolngu leaders were the first Aboriginal people to fight for recognition of their traditional ownership of land through litigation in an Australian court (Williams 1986). Subsequently, the enactment of legislation in the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 enabled Yolngu to claim vacant crown land (Williams 1986). Yirrkala which was ‘home’ to both Rirratjingu and Gumatj in the seventies (as a result of the Christian Mission administration), saw a united Roy Marika and Galarrwuy Yunupingu fight against a common Oppressor in Milirrpum vs Nabalco Pty. Ltd. 1971 (Williams 1986). The late Mr Marika M.B.E. was the leader of the Rirratjingu clan, and Dr Galarrwuy Yunupingu represented his father, the leader of the Gumatj clan in court proceedings and negotiations with the Commonwealth Government of Australia.

![Figure 2.6: Galarrwuy Yunupingu (Left), Roy Marika (middle) and Daymbalipu Mununggur (Right), outside the High Court of Australia, Canberra, ACT.](image)

The negotiations for the mining lease in Yirrkala were initially held between the Federal Government, the Christian Mission and the mining company (Williams 1986). Yolngu leaders persevered for many years to uphold the principle of
“Ganma” in negotiating with the Australian government and the mining company for what was rightfully their land and that an exchange between the two parties should be mutually advantageous, putting Yolngu in control of their land and maritime borders (Yunupingu & Muller 2009; Muller 2012). The people of Yirrkala, especially the Rirratjingu and Gumatj Traditional Owners, were not consulted according to Williams (1986), and the Commonwealth acted under a conflict of interest; on the one hand enabling the mining of bauxite reserves near Yirrkala, while on the other hand remaining charged with protecting the interests of the local Aborigines. For many years, the traditional owners of Yirrkala and Gunyangara, under the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Fund, were paid a sum that was far lower than that payable under the Mining Ordinance as royalties (Williams 1986). As a result, the people of Yirrkala involuntarily subsidised the national economy and a multinational mining company, despite being opposed to the mining operations (Williams 1986). Williams (1986) also clarified that royalty payments were predominantly viewed as money for traditional owners who were solely responsible for bringing royalty payments back to Yirrkala to be shared within their familial networks.

Following the analysis from Rowse (2012), I observed that Yirrkala was a society that shared power between alliances and clans, and had gradually become influenced by capitalist values through Indigenous corporatisation. My analysis was based on the words of the late signatory of the Yirrkala Bark Petition in Gosford (2013), who passed away in 2015:

In 1963, I signed the historic bark petition which opposed the Gove refinery and bauxite mine and started the land rights movement, and which is now displayed in
Parliament House, Canberra. In 2011, I signed the historic mining agreement with Rio Tinto Alcan, which guarantees the refinery and bauxite mine for another 42 years. How the wheel turns – what was conflict is now agreement, what was dispute is now Yolngu and Balanda people working together. This was a great achievement.

2.4.1 The Gove Dispute of 2013

In the mid-2000s, united in their effort to bring “Gas to Gove” both of the leading clans in the region (Rirratjingu and Gumatj) were challenged by a new type of land rights struggle – an inter-clan struggle for royalty payments. Under the heading “When rights go wrong,” Toohey (2014) from News Corp Australia, Editorial Network introduced a nine-page thesis about the division that occurred between the two leading clans of the Gove Peninsula due to royalty disputes. The two Yolngu clans had taken their disagreement over land rights to the Balanda (European) court to seek resolution in what essentially was a matter for Yolngu jurisprudence. Is it possible that because of the gradual adoption of capitalist values within the structure of Indigenous Land Councils in a post-colonial system, a matter that would seemingly be resolved by traditional knowledge was now being disputed and a resolution sought from the Australian justice system?

Betty’s father was Gumatj and her mother, a Rirratjingu senior elder. She was married to a traditional owner and one of the sons of the late Roy Marika M.B.E. She jumped into my car and asked me to take her back to her community. I asked

her about the recent dispute between the Gumatj and Rirratjingu clans and her reply to me was that 'I am sad, but I do not get involved'. Rio Tinto Alcan had agreed to pay both Yirrkala and Gunyangara administration a sum of 15 million dollars each, tax-free, every year for 40 years. Bakamumu, the leader of the Rirratjingu clan was certain, that only through this agreement; his people would become independent of welfare, self-sufficient and able to reap the economic benefits of land rights. At the 2013 Garma Festival, I recorded the Gumatj leader, Galarrwuy’s keynote speech that 'land rights did not make Yolngu happy'. Seated at the back row typing his words away as fast as possible on my iPhone 4, I noticed the silence and the restrained and hesitant hands of the audience clapping to the new Aboriginal standpoint.

Figure 2.7: Garma Festival 2013

Galarrwuy explained that land rights left Yolngu cash-poor and that they needed hard cash to live and thrive, which I would agree, is an important point. He pointed to the Australians sitting in the crowd and remarked that everyone else could earn money and this money sat in the bank and grew, while Yolngu, till today, were left
with nothing. ‘This Land Rights is empty’ were his words to Kevin Rudd at the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Bark Petition held in Yirrkala only approximately one month later. Galarrwuy tore land rights apart and questioned the very principle of the struggle for land rights when he said that land rights were “full of everything, but full of nothing. When you look at it, closely, there’s nothing that gives to individuals” he said (Toohey 2014).

By a twist of fate, even after Bakamumu was reassured by lawyers acting for the Northern Land Council (NLC) that a fifty-fifty split of the royalty was imminent, the NLC had decided that Gumatj should get 72.61 per cent of the royalty payments, a decision that was based on anthropological assessment of the affected lease area. When the last signature was etched on paper at the ceremonial signing of the Gove Agreement in 2011, Galarrwuy sat quietly, his eyes concealed by a pair of dark aviator sunglasses. The former Prime Minister Gillard, seated to his right, applauded with a smile and behind her stood directors of the Gumatj board with bilma (clapping sticks) and yidaki (didgeridoo). Both Bakamumu and his brother Sam raised their hands like Black Panthers from the civil rights movement in the United States of America. Bakamumu said, ‘I was excited. I was thinking; “This is it. I would take my family to their destinations”’ (Toohey 2014). Within a short space of time, the alumina refinery was shut down due to unprofitable operations as a result of the global impact on the price of alumina (Toohey 2014) and discussed in further detail in the following sections.

2.4.2 The challenge of managing business and kinship
In 2013, the dispute over the 2011 Gove Agreement was not the only problem Rirratjingu traditional owners faced in Yirrkala. One of the traditional owners had formed a breakaway group throwing Rirratjingu into a downward spiral that gave the NLC an excuse to label Rirratjingu a divided clan, going so far as to withhold the first royalty payments from Rio Tinto. One Saturday morning, I noticed an AIG (East Arnhem Trading Pty Ltd) food truck parked outside my neighbour’s house and some elders who lived in Birritjimi and a couple of others from Yirrkala were seated in a circle under a carport (Field notes 2013). The NLC according to Toohey (2014) had taken an interest in the Rirratjingu clan dissenters, who operated as Gamarrwa Aboriginal Corporation. Registered in March of 2013, the board of directors and some community members supplied fuel and food products under a charity operated by the NLC’s investment arm, the AIG (Toohey 2014).

My family and I returned to Birritjimi after a short holiday overseas to find an act of violence had been perpetrated by a male member of the Gamarrwa group, and the police were putting a case together for prosecution. This unfortunate turn of events for the new breakaway group, Gamarrwa, was a blow to its future sustainability. While Gamarrwa was forced to seek help, one of the board members returned to the Rirratjingu clan and was provided legal support by a barrister from Queensland. He was released under a good behaviour bond, and I never heard of the activities of the breakaway clan until the news hit the media in 2014 (Toohey 2014).

Along with the Gove dispute over mining, royalties was the funeral of the late Dr M Yunupingu. According to Yolngu custom, the names of those who have passed...
on are not mentioned as a cultural obligation and mark of reverence (Petchkovsky & Cawte 1986). The Australian reported on the 26th of August 2013\textsuperscript{14}That, "entwined with that dispute over mining royalties (The Gove Agreement 2011 dispute) within one divided Yolngu group" were the rights to bury the remains of that great frontman of Yothu Yindi which became another unexpected feud between the Rirratjingu and Gumatj clan and their non-Aboriginal advisers. The widow of Dr Yunupingu wanted her husband buried in Yirrkala where he had lived for many years. She had asked a mutual friend to contact me and inquire about the use of Twitter to communicate online about her burial plans for her late husband. However, Yirrkala was thrown into a spiral of embarrassment according to Toohey (2014) when Ms Banduk Marika, a member of the breakaway group, Gamarrwa Aboriginal Corporation, contacted The Australian “with an extraordinary plea for financial help” on behalf of Dr Yunupingu’s widow to cover the expenses of the funeral.

During these challenging times, the prominent brother of the late Dr Yunupingu came forward with Yolngu law and authority over funeral arrangements and the money to disburse on the ceremony. In a press statement for the Australian, Dr Galarrwuy Yunupingu’s brother, Djawa Yunupingu, said that an ultimatum had been reached after much deliberation between the heads of the clans according to the Yolngu parliament. He said, ‘The Gumatj clan and other clans have met under Yolngu law, and decided that the burial place for our brother will be Gunyangara’. The decision was respected, and the burial took place as planned. This incident was, 

in my opinion, an example of the struggle to be united despite the imbalance of
power and authority within the Yolngu community, which may have been slowly
eroded through their participation in the capitalist economic and power structures
(Nakata 2007; Moreton-Robinson 2015).

2.5 THE YOLNGU DILEMMA & THE CURTAILMENT OF THE RIO
TINTO ALCAN REFINERY OPERATIONS

By 2013, the price of alumina had dropped significantly due to the dynamics of
Chinese trade, forcing Rio Tinto Alcan to announce the curtailment of its refinery
operations, which became financially unsustainable. Soon after the 50th
anniversary of the Yirrkala Bark Petition, 2,000 non-Indigenous residents, some
born and raised in Nhulunbuy since the late sixties, were forced to leave the town.
The uncertainty and redundancies forced people to look for more secure options in
other mining towns, and many moved to other mining operations across Australia.
Yolngu leaders and youth employed under local businesses were seen amongst the
miners with “Gas to Gove” cardboard posters at the local town square in the centre
of Nhulunbuy. They organised a peaceful yet futile protest, in an attempt to
convince the government to build a multibillion-dollar gas pipeline to absorb the
financial costs caused by diesel-fuelled machinery and the low market value of
alumina.

The town hall in November 2013 was a sea of men in orange fluorescent uniforms
and steel-capped boots. There were miners in uniform, executives in high heels and
men and women in tears. There were schoolteachers, investors and local business
The people of Nhulunbuy had been confident that the new gas pipeline subsidising their lifestyle promised by the Giles Liberal Government, would come through to fruition. The thought of a ‘forced removal’ of non-Indigenous families from Nhulunbuy, the land in which they have formed a close bond with, caused everyone to shudder on that humid November afternoon.

Over forty years ago, contrary to what I witnessed on that day, was a multitude of Yolngu men with spears on top of Mount Nhulun, who protested against Nabalco Pty. Ltd. and the arrival of the White mining community. Despite Yolngu protests, the mining company established the sites known today as the Walkabout Hotel and The Arnhem Club. Today there were no spears in the hall, but sitting behind me was Djuwalpi Marika, the son of Mathaman Marika (who continued the fight for land rights after the sudden passing of his older brother, Milirrpum). He sat next to his wife from the homeland of GanGan, on the edge of his seat when I greeted him. He carried his smartphone in a dilly bag clenched in one hand, a neatly trimmed French beard and a piece of paper which he kept looking at, was held in the other.

Figure 2.8: Community meeting with the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory.
hand. He was not distracted by my greeting and was focused and ready to seize the
attention of the hall and the first Indigenous Chief Minister of the Northern
Territory.

On stage with the Chief Minister was a panel of experts including one from Rio
Tinto Alcan who wore a business shirt tucked neatly under a pair of black jeans and
a pair of polished R.M. Williams’s boots. The right-hand man of Dr Galarrwuy
Yunupingu, a German migrant to the Gove Peninsula in the early sixties, sat
between the government and the company representatives. He opened the meeting
with ‘polli speak’, according to the boilermaker sitting next to me who whispered
in my ear like a simultaneous interpreter.

The hall was packed, and all passages were blocked by men poised for action and
for that moment reminiscent of Geertz’s description of the Balinese cockfight
(Geertz 1994). The media engaged and preyed on the conflict with cameras and
microphones aimed at the stage and the crowd. The members of the Northern
Territory ‘politburo’ now serving the public through the Minister, kept the engine
of the car running, ready for an efficient and comfortable trip to the airport just as
soon as the bad news was given to the people of Nhulunbuy. The man who worked
for Galarrwuy was Klaus Helms, now in his sixties; he arrived as a teenager in the
region and was accustomed to standing between people of power and the modern
proletariats. He ordered the journalist who was filming the proceedings to stop.
Enraged at Klaus’ demands, the men and women whose lives were turned around
by what they concluded was a tragedy of plain corporate greed, raised their arms
and voices in protest. Some stood up and started booing.
A Rirratjingu traditional owner stood up from amongst the miners with a microphone in hand. He faced a non-Indigenous panel seated on the stage although a non-Indigenous man, Mr Helms represented the Gumatj clan instead of a member of the Yunupingu or a Burrarwanga family as the rightful members of the clan. Why Klaus and not the other directors of Gumatj? 'Why was there not one Yolngu on the panel?’ I briefly distracted myself before refocusing my attention to the respected Yolngu leader who was about to speak. The Rirratjingu traditional owner told the Chief Minister seated on stage, that the Yolngu people will be severely impacted by the curtailment of the refinery and cause the exodus of businesses, services and Yolngu jobs. He asked the government to intervene and reverse the decision of Rio Tinto to shut down refinery operations for the long-term progress of the Yolngu community.

I was intrigued by his speech, his plea for the survival of the Yolngu nation. I wanted to turn the interview around to this Yolngu leader to understand how ordinary Yolngu, the women and children, have directly benefitted from the refinery other than through the receipt of royalty payments to traditional owners. Earlier in 2013, when the non-Indigenous and Yolngu community were petitioning for a gas pipeline to Nhulunbuy, Balupalu Yunupingu, a member of the Gumatj Aboriginal Corporation, spoke to the Arafura Times and said, that “the children of the region would lose their prospects should gas not arrive, and cause the refinery to shut down” (Arafura Times, February 2013). I wondered how a refinery in the

region, once almost blocked by a platoon of men with spears and war cries, had
today become the foundation of Yolngu enterprise and prospects.

Since the Yirrkala Bark Petitions, Yolngu have embraced the mining operations in
their land and formed a unique and co-dependent relationship with the western
world, (similar to that of the historic Macassan-Yolngu enterprise), with private
businesses, government departments and programs, according to the Chief
Executive Officer of Yolngu Business Enterprises, Glenn Atchison (Arafura Times
2013). Christmas of 2013 was wrapped in uncertainty and impending change. There
were frantic and desperate garage sales seven days a week. Everything went on sale
from favourite toys to boats, tinnies, and four-wheel drives sold at a loss. Only a
small proportion of the community members in Yirrkala and Birritjimi who owned
functioning personal vehicles were able to pick up from where their non-Indigenous
peers left off in the quest for material possessions at an affordable price. Those
without mutikar (motorcars) were not as fortunate.

Davis (2004 p. 26) called this phenomenon a ‘paradoxical circumstance’ when he
observed that the Aboriginal traditional owners now ‘want to be part of what
formerly oppressed them’. He explained that relationships between culture and
economy have the potential to give new meaning to the symbiotic interactions
between Aboriginal and in this case the mining industry (Davis 2004). This does
not entail the erosion of Aboriginal cultural distinctiveness, but speaks of a
transformation of individuals and groups as they reposition themselves in ‘terms of
their status, control of resources and exercise of power’ including ‘redefining the
norms of interaction that define relatedness among Aboriginal people and creating
conditions for the establishment of a landowning elite within regional Aboriginal society’ (Davis 2004 p. 26). The following sections will attempt to draw examples and the literature to further this point.

2.6 YIRRKALA FROM 2012-2015

My father grew up in post-colonial Malaya, in a British tea plantation with mud floors and kerosene lamps. I invited him for a visit to North East Arnhem Land where he enabled me to grasp and understand certain aspects of his post-colonial childhood. I wanted to explore how he would relate to the current standards of living endured by the Yolngu since the establishment of the Christian Mission in Yirrkala. I wanted a fresh set of eyes to observe if there were differences in the general standard of living amongst the inhabitants of Yirrkala, or whether there were signs of social inequality slowly appearing as a result of globalisation. As someone who had himself endured political and societal change, his observations of social inequality were insightful.

We drove towards Rirratjingu country one morning when he found himself at ‘home’ as we drove past dwellings in Yirrkala, having left behind the privilege of Nhulunbuy. We drove past symbols of modernity where the Laynhapuy Homelands Clinic and the Shire offices were located and had parked their impressive four-wheel-drives. He noticed the contrast between the town of Nhulunbuy with non-Indigenous and Indigenous houses in Yirrkala. He shook his head at the state of some of the houses in Yirrkala but remained silent even as I tried to solicit a more specific reaction. He could not understand how a minority in a wealthy nation was still entrapped in relative poverty, in the same way, some needy Tamil families from
the plantations he had seen growing up in Malaysia had been unable to break from
the cycle. He did also point out a visible difference between the homes of the
traditional owners and other Yolngu dwellings.

Yirrkala, with its ‘colonial plantation’-like distribution of houses along sealed and
graded roads, sporadic refurbishments of houses by the Department of Housing,
satellite dishes on some roofs and a grocery store with takeaway food stood grand
and proud compared to the Tamil communities from the Boh tea plantation estate
where my father came from. We both agreed that a strong and resilient nation was
alive and thriving, but struggling to keep the old and the new under one roof. There
were different designs of houses, some made from timber and stood on stilts with
spacious verandas, while other houses were new, made of concrete blocks but had
no verandas. Houses that were allocated to government employees came with air-
conditioning and a carport. There were subtle differences in Yirrkala, unlike the
uniformity of a middle-class suburb in Nhulunbuy. In Yirrkala, there were signs of
both relative wealth and poverty. We even drove past a silver Hummer with
personalised number plates parked in front of a dwelling. There seemed to be some
amount of heterogeneity in the economic capability of some family members when
compared to other from purely visual observation.

A blue house on stilts and two red houses of a similar design stood on a hill and
faced the ocean with the Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation office located on the
same row with its back towards the Arts Centre and the local supermarket. These
houses belonged to both past and present leaders. The Yirrkala Church, where the
former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee Chairman, Mr Djerrkura
held church fellowship meetings, was painted a similar colour to his blue house. The houses that sat along the cliffs with an abundant view of the sea and to the south of the store were large houses which Reid (1983) described as appropriately designed two-to-three-bedroom dwellings which were allocated to non-Aboriginal staff until the mid-seventies. The houses were allocated to ‘teachers, a mechanic, an electrician, an accountant, horticulturalists, pilots, community development officers, a plumber, a builder, the store manager, the art and craft advisor’ which by 1981, had slowly begun to be occupied by Yolngu, ‘either prominent community leaders or individuals employed by the government and their families’ (Reid 1983 p. 18).

Nothing much had changed (except for a series of minimal repairs) since Reid (1983) described the Yolngu dwellings, including the weathered corrugated iron houses at Beach Camp where my Yolngu adopted brother, Brice, lived with his family. The ‘two and three bedroom’ houses were built with asbestos sheets for walls on a cement base with an iron roof, just as Reid had described in 1983 (p. 18). These houses still lacked ‘flywire, glass louvres, and parts of walls’ as noted by Reid (1983 p. 18). The sound of music from both stereos and television in Yirrkala, described by Reid (1983) were still heard in 2013 albeit by an older generation. The ‘highly visible face of change’ and ‘innovations which people had welcomed and incorporated’ (Reid 1983 p. 18) since the time of Reid study were now intertwined with young people’s silent sounds of change. With their earphones in, the young people watched and listened to the media on their mobile phones, as they walked to the shops, played footy or even during a chat with mates. The earphones played music in one ear while the other ear heard and engaged in conversation.
seemed to be a deep connection between Yolngu youth and the individualised emergent technological capabilities of the mobile phone and social media.

Not all dwellings, however, looked the same. There was no uniformity of structure and physical appearance, but those who were able to secure the essential requirements and resources had created a more comfortable dwelling, often behind gates and fences. Not all celebrities, leaders, and people in business were able to secure and maintain a comfortable dwelling in Yirrkala. The Housing Reference Group in Yirrkala was made up of clan elders who met with a representative from the Department of Housing in a purpose-built hall, 300 metres away from the clinic where they discussed the public housing waiting list and future housing allocations.

The Reference Group decided who should be next in line to receive a new house or a refurbishment. This multipurpose hall was a favourite venue of ministers of Indigenous affairs, prime ministers, community-housing officers, bureaucrats from the education department and especially influential personalities from within the community.

Four-wheel-drive vehicles and Aboriginal Corporation-owned cars that ferried the ‘Big Men’ from Hughes (2007) in Rowse (2012) and Langton (2008) were parked outside Yolngu offices. The ‘Big Men’ (Langton 2008) allocated their time to sit on several boards such as the East Arnhem Shire Council16, Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation, Dhirurr Aboriginal Corporation, Gumatj and Rirratjingu

16 The East Arnhem Shire Council is a local government area in the Northern Territory with an area of 33,359 square kilometres and a population of 10,730.
Aboriginal Corporations, East Journey Aboriginal Corporation and last but not least, the Yothu Yindi Foundation.

Past Djapu Road and towards the Yirrkala School were the ceremonial grounds where funerals were held. Dr M Yunupingu’s funeral was held on these grounds, opposite the house where he spent many years with his wife and daughters. The cemetery where the former Rirratjingu leader and land rights activist, Roy Dadaynga Marika was laid to rest was also close to the funeral grounds.

Figure 2.9: Resting place of Mr Marika

Amongst the sites of cultural and historic significance, was the school, which according to Marika & Isaacs (1995) operated as a European institution. He said it ignored the Yolngu knowledge and culture and contributed to the degradation of traditional values and culture and failed to impart to the children, wholesome Yolngu education (Marika & Isaacs 1995). Marika went on to say that this was the school where Yolngu children’s minds were used, quite openly, to be acculturated into mainstream Anglo or European culture (Marika & Isaacs 1995) and to be
assimilated into a non-Indigenous society. Here again, Yolngu methods of education through the application of ‘Ganma’ or exchange (Yunupingu 1990; Yunupingu & Muller 2009; Muller 2012; Kelly 2013) were rejected for colonial methods of education. The school building itself was well looked after and was managed by a Yolngu principal. The conviction that Yirrkala was a ‘failure’ of Aboriginal development, where Aboriginal lives were a product of trauma, illness and premature death (Pearson 2000; 2001; Burbank 2006) was linked with the engagement of Aboriginal culture and the dominant social and economic structures of the country (Burbank 2006). This standpoint was also held by non-Indigenous people living in Yirrkala, who worked in health, education and non-governmental agencies.

Nevertheless, between the new and old public houses during the day and several hours after sunset, in the welcoming darkness invisible to the gaze of elders, were children and teenagers who did what they ‘like doing’ (Burbank 2006 p. 6). They were undaunted by the struggles of their elders, even on their journey to becoming an ‘autonomous person’ (Merlan 2015). With 0.6 per cent more women than men in Yirrkala (49.7% men & 50.3% women) and a median age of 27, a third of the community was made up of adolescents and young adults.

2.6.1. Contemporary Yirrkala Youth culture

Many young people were engaged in choreographing contemporary dance moves that often combined traditional moves with Hip-Hop. In the absence of male

\[17\] http://www.dlgcs.nt.gov.au/about_us/remote_service_delivery/major_remote_towns/yirrkala
supervision as traditional ceremonial dancing would have required, an enthusiastic
non-Indigenous woman who worked for the Shire Council sat behind the controls
of a loud amplifier. Through her facilitation, teenagers took turns to plug in their
phones and rehearsed their dance for the annual Gove’s Got Talent competition
organised by Anglicare. Young men, passed around bottles of coke and lemonade
while some took turns to play on the basketball court, and others waited for their
turn to rehearse their dance sequence for a chance at the grand prize of 500 dollars.
In this case, there was no ‘plan’ or project officer in charge of ‘dance’. The young
people solely drove this preparation. If there were no space and amplifier to access,
they would have choreographed and practised their performance somewhere else,
because they ‘liked’ doing it as discussed by Burbank (2006) but in the context of
the Western institution of ‘bedtime’.

Interspersed between sleep and wakefulness, the people of Yirrkala, avoided the
heat by day and were alive at night. Those who were able to balance family, culture
and work, escaped the boredom of community life with employment and enjoyed
the company of family and friends in town after sunset. They were not lazy like
others, said Jesse, a young man who was proud of his work ethic, when he shared
his thoughts with his Facebook friends, that he now had two jobs. Since 2014,
Yirrkala had been enmeshed in a re-construction of not only houses but what
seemed to be, an unintentional re-construction of ‘Aboriginal commonality’ with
western influences of the ‘nuclear family’ (Eickelkamp 2011). Living nearby,
Yolngu families in Yirrkala created an artificial environment in which many family
members had to manage the redistribution of resources and wages from the
employed to the unemployed which resulted in bringing more mutikar (motorcar),
rupiah (money) and miyalk or dhirammu (woman or man) into closer proximity to those who didn’t have such resources. This artificial proximity of the ‘Aboriginal commonality’ according to Eickelkamp (2011) created conflict as Warner (1958) as cited in Reid (1983 p. 7) confirmed, how even though the ‘clan was the basic unit of solidarity, the ties of kinship, with their attendant obligations, duties, rights and privileges, tended to enlarge disputes’.

The disputes noted by Reid (1983), in Yirrkala, spilt over into other neighbouring clans so that loyalties and alliances were put to the test for collaboration, support and reciprocal obligation. Some leaders and their families, therefore, chose to move away from Yirrkala to their homelands to avoid trouble (Hughes 2007). Even community leaders were not spared from this predicament, and an inspirational elder from GanGan moved to his homelands to avoid disputes of this nature. Yirrkala was a semi-urban centre for Yolngu who lived in the homelands and travelled back to use the services and facilities of the regional centre, Nhulunbuy. The had moved to the homelands so that some families could escape social issues as a result of drugs and alcohol abuse in town (Hughes 2007). Yirrkala also created its chambers that enabled some to roam freely within while others had to keep to strict quarters as dictated by Rimggitj or alliances (Williams 1986; Rowse 2012).

Different camps in Yirrkala were accessible to individuals based on their kinship status, but also on the status of relationships between families and alliances.

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18 Ringitj: Alliance or the Nation States
Between funerals and ceremonies, Woolworths and the Walkabout Hotel, Yirrkala residents regularly hosted a stream of visitors from their homelands, including non-Indigenous people from the Shire, government departments and other Indigenous people from interstate. Yolngu came from as far as Galiwin’ku and Millingimbi by chartered plane. Some drove on unsealed roads, while others hopped on to vacant seats on chartered planes managed by Yolngu organisations or Christian Missionaries. The fear and rejection of becoming ‘one alone’ in Eickelkamp (2011, p. 139) included becoming a modern, self-focused and an individualistic moral domestic economy, was the burden of being a young person and teenager (Senior & Chenhall 2008), in Yirrkala.

The youth and their elders were influenced by the global forces that nurtured individualistic consumer behaviour through their access to mobile phones and the Internet (Arnould & Thompson 2005; Brigg & Maddison 2011). From my discussions with young people, it became evident that they also wanted to feel less marginalised, included in the regional economy and respected by their non-Indigenous peers. The question at this point that begs to be asked is what the forces that keep Aboriginal youth in this position are?

2.7 WHY ARE WE A MINORITY IN OUR LAND?

In this section, I will discuss the cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1958) and the Yolngu link between the emotion and morality of being inferior within the community and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (McIntosh 2013). I refer to this topic here because Yolngu themselves struggled with identity...
formation as a result of their interaction in the past with Macassans through trade
(Thomson and Petersen 1983; Clark & May 2013), in the recent decades of
engagement with the church (Morphy 2009) and last but not least, with the broader
society which had possibly affected their feelings of inferiority (McIntosh 2013).
My analysis was based on the interviews with study participants and analysing the
research conducted by McIntosh (2013) and Blakeman (2015).

The coexistence between Yolngu clans, especially between Yolngu and the pre-
Macassan seafarers, referred to as the ‘Bayini’, marked the golden age when the
two moieties of the Yolngu nation, the Yirritja and Dhuwa became a harmonious
and intricate fabric of social relationships (McIntosh 2013). To the utter dismay of
Yolngu, the same cannot be said of the relationships between Indigenous and non-
Indigenous people (McIntosh 2013). The ‘sense of connectedness’, spoken by the
Warramiri leader, the late David Burrumarra M.B.E., in McIntosh (2013) was not
only absent in black and white Australian relationships but also between two
Dhuwa and Yirritja clans today, specifically since the political tumult between the
traditional owners of the Rirratjingu and Gumatj clans, as discussed in the 2011
Gove Agreement Dispute (Taylor 2014) in section 2.5.

According to McIntosh (2013), the ‘Bayini’ was the golden-skinned baby that did
not appear ‘in the image of the father’, the Yolngu word for this being ‘Gayi’,
representing the image or face of the land and the close connections that tied the
people as a singular nation along with their totemic spirits. The ‘Bayini’ had to
become ‘black’, transformed into a Yolngu ‘person’ of appropriate skin colouring
(black). This is important to Yolngu as even I was categorised as Yolngu, not
because I was fluent in Yolngu Rom (Law) or Raypirri Dhukar (discipline), or even Yolngu Matha, but according to my adopted Yolngu brother, for the only reason that I was black, and my facial features were similar to the Yolngu of Arnhem Land.

When the bark of the ‘gutu’ tree, was rubbed on the baby’s skin (Bayini), it did not change the colour of her skin as intended, As a result of this her paternal grandmother was stricken with grief, and ‘a world in which there was an eternal balance between temporal and the non-temporal, the physical and the spiritual had been thrown into doubt’ and chaos (McIntosh 2013 p. 97). Yolngu believed that individuals were created to be interdependent rather than autonomous and individualistic (Blakeman 2015). The appearance of the Bayini child had a ripple effect on the commonality of Yolngu society. Similar to my own Tamil culture (which coincidentally uses the same word for ‘string’), the Yolngu considered the ideal relationship between groups or clans is when their ‘raki’ are joined and connected (manapan-mirri), and the groups are united as one (wangany-nura) according to (Blakeman 2015).

From the dawn of time, when the equilibrium of the Yolngu world was upset by the birth of the light-brown-skinned and golden-haired child (Bayini), McIntosh (2013) argued that the normative ideal of ‘ngayanu wanggany’ was put to the test. The Yolngu elders, according to McIntosh became aware of a ‘new order in the universe, a new law in the land and a new principle guiding human interaction’

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19 strings of relatedness
20 joined, connected, linked [together to each other]
21 one state or sense of feeling
(2013, p. 97) and there was nothing they could do to control it. Bayini was not a black person but a ‘product of the new world entering Yolngu lives’ (McIntosh 2013, p.97).

According to Burrumarra’s analysis, he delineates a world of ‘Yolngu for Yolngu and Macassar for Macassan (McIntosh 2013, p. 97). In the context of 2012-2015, the two worlds of the Australian and the Yolngu must never intersect for Yolngu cultural continuity, even as Yolngu considered their interactions with Macassans as part of an era of human flourishing. This contradiction confused me. The emerging consensus by the 1980s, according to the discussions Yolngu elders held with McIntosh (2013) on the significance of the ‘Bayini’ became contextualised in the possibility of reconciliation in Australia (McIntosh 2013). The verdict, was that the ‘Yolngu would not be overrun by the new, losing control of their lands and bodies as the influence of newcomers steadily grew’ and even as the Bayini herself represented all things new, technology, transport and philosophy (McIntosh 2013 p. 99).

This aversion to impending change and the glorification of all things new was interpreted by Yolngu elders and documented by McIntosh (2013) in what seemed to be an example of cultural relativity, in the same way, Newtonian physics and Einstein’s Theory of Relativity coexist in contemporary physics (Feinberg & Ottenheimer 2001).

Cultural relativity is not alien to Yolngu philosophy. In the past, they had situated the teachings of Christianity relative to their own Creation stories and ceremonial
practice too much success (Morphy 2009). To Yolngu, there was no contradiction between the two beliefs. McIntosh turned to Leon Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1958) to analyse the conflict or tension between traditional beliefs and new knowledge which resulted in chaos, and motivated people to interpret, and apply reductionism to explain away the contradictions which were not the case in Yirrkala. According to Festinger (1958) and McIntosh (2013) what they called ‘adaptive preference formation’ was not pronounced in this community. There were no rejections made towards Christianity nor to traditional and cultural beliefs.

It is also possible that instead of ‘cultural relativity’ (Feinberg & Ottenheimer 2001), the Yolngu were defeated in their power struggle with the Christian Missions and were forced to establish a new doctrine that is visible to this day. As an example, Attwood (1989 p. 29) in his historical analysis of Aboriginal people in the Mission Station of Ramahyuck in Victoria argued that ‘the missionaries determined the boundaries or parameters within which Aborigines had to live, and they did so mostly by establishing a system whereby their ideas and values actually came to be imbricated in the very fabric of Aborigines’ consciousness and way of being’.

The man who was credited by Burrumarra on the philosophy of the Bayini (and the cognitive dissonance between resisting change but embracing new technology) was his ancestor from the Warramiri clan, who chose the surname Bukulatjpi in the sixties, when Yolngu were being bound and subjected to conform to the administrative procedures of the Commonwealth Government of Australia (McIntosh 2013). With the appearance of a ‘golden-haired’ and ‘light brown
skinned’ Bayini child, the colour of one’s skin began to take on a new dimension for Yolngu, who no longer viewed black as the only colour of humanity. Cognitive dissonance reached great levels at Unbirri (where the Bayini child appeared) according to McIntosh (2013), as once there were only black Yolngu and maybe long before the dawn of time, pre Bayini, pre Macassan, a cataclysm had changed Yolngu from the same colour as the Bayini child to a black nation. This mirrored the discussion from (Robb 1999 p. 97) that even in my Tamil history a similar event had impacted on my people; ‘Originally Brahma created Brahmans, but some Brahmans who in their delusion took to injury and untruth, turned black and became Sudras’, members of a lower caste, inferior to the Brahman class.

In addition to this discourse of white and black colour of skin, of identity and the acceptance of new technology from the Macassans is the dingo myth, documented by Warner (1958) from a conversation with Makarrwola (Wanguri Leader) in the 1920s. In this discussion, the dingo was concerned that if it accepted gifts from a foreign culture, then it would suffer imminently from loss of its own culture (Warner 1958). The story depicted the tragic fate of the dingo upon accepting the new technology and items from the Macassans and therefore abandoned its own culture to become Macassan (Warner 1958; McIntosh 2013) and can be read as a story of the acceptance of new technologies and at the same time, the rejection of cultural change for the maintenance of identity and continuity (McIntosh 2013).

What I struggled to understand was another particular dingo myth variation cited by McIntosh (2013); a classic tale from the Gupapuyngu and Warramiri territories where, Yolngu were white, (like the Bayini child), but become black as a result of
their rejection of the tides of change and a co-dependency with a foreign entity i.e. Macassans. Until now McIntosh (2013) had guided me to think in the words of Burrumarra that, the Bayini was a pre-Macassan entity, unless ‘becoming black’ meant remaining authentic to their culture, laws, technology and ways of life. This appropriation of new technology, gave the Yirritja clans more influence and power over trade and exchange, impacting the interdependence of clans and individuals along the raki (string) of manapan-mirri (joined, connected, linked [together to each other]), and the groups, wangany-nura ([at] one) (Blakeman 2015).

According to McIntosh (2013), the Dingo refused the material wealth offered by the Macassans. The refusal of material wealth at the cost of cultural continuity became a symbol of the Yolngu value for their technology and ways of life (McIntosh 2006 in McIntosh 2013). The connection between the rejection of the Macassan technology by certain clans and the proceedings reflected in the Gumatj (Yirritja moiety) triumph over Rirratjingu (Dhuwa moiety) in the 2011 Gove Agreement (Taylor 2014), its overpowering influence over the affairs of many other clans in North East Arnhem Land may be interpreted and understood as a ripple effect of the internalisation performative elements of the Bayini and Dingo philosophies.

What remained consistent was, the unwillingness to adapt to change, had brought a potential for both downfall and prosperity. When change was rejected in ‘similar stories from all the Bayini peoples (Yirritja Clans along the coast) it caused the irreversible downgrading in both status and skin colour (to black) along with ‘poverty, powerlessness and immobility in relation to the Macassans and
subsequently Japanese and Europeans’ (McIntosh 2013, p. 103). It is possible that Yolngu today were compelled to adopt new technology and began to improvise from Europeans to avoid remaining impoverished and inferior.

When Gumatj consulted their lawyer from a non-Indigenous law firm in Darwin, they stepped outside of the traditional Yolngu bounds of honouring the law. The Rirratjingu leaders, on the other hand, relied on a lawyer (non-Indigenous) from the Northern Land Council (NLC) and accepted the lawyer’s ‘word’ of a fifty-fifty split. It appeared to be that the superior clan was the one that had changed with the times, and become more ‘White’ (European), for they triumphed over the lesser Yolngu clan who did not adapt and instead chose cultural ways of strengthening the strings of manapan-mirri (joined, connected, linked [together to each other]), and of the groups or want any-nura ([at] one) (Blakeman 2015).

In June 2015, I was invited by a senior elder to Galiwin’ku for a discussion on young men’s camps. I was accompanied by a linguist from the region that assisted me with grasping difficult Yolngu spiritual and theological concepts, including Yolngu words from Macassans. My Bukulatjpi neighbours had moved to Galiwin’ku from Birritjimi in the previous year and lived in a house built on stilts with other family members. I saw the flags of the Lion of Judah and the state of Israel flying from 20-metre poles, high above the roofs of the houses in the front yard. I thought about this phenomenon and learnt from the head of the family that the Christian theology of the ‘chosen clan’ or ‘the chosen people’ was a continuation of the ‘sacredness of Unbirri’, where the Bayini child was born.
Although this clan may now appear to be in disorder, it would one day be remedied, and a future of a paradise (Dhariny) will one day be realised (McIntosh 2013).

According to Burrumarra, the Yolngu however, didn’t want to become ‘White’ (European) once again (McIntosh 2013). Building on Burrumarra’s theoretical discourse, I reconciled what I saw in Galiwin’ku, the hoisted flags of the state of Israel and the Lion of Judah, as a symbol of the self-anointed ‘chosen clan’ and a reflection of this unattainable goal of becoming less impoverished and less inferior. The discussion on the ‘Yindi Dhawu’ and ‘Yindi Rom’ (Big Stories and Big Law) (McIntosh 2013) was not an attempt to reduce Yolngu knowledge into a western logic. Instead, the purpose of this discussion was to demonstrate cultural relativity in human relationships (Feinberg & Ottenheimer 2001). Whether in amassing wealth, in procuring new technology, acquiring status and power without compromising the strings of interconnectedness (Blakeman 2015), Yolngu were conscious at the same time, of the necessary sacrifice of other strings of connectedness, to progress socially and economically. The other strings of connectedness may be specific cultural practices and gender roles that were slowly changing. The example of a young girl being sent to boarding school interstate is just one way of describing this sacrifice of other strings of connectedness for the sake of social and economic progress.

In this socio-economic and political climate, evolving traditional structures although influenced by decades of Christian Missionary (Morphy 2009) doctrine were seen by the people who worked with Morphy to rapidly evolve along with changes on the broader society. The new technology was no longer intimidating
and the loss of culture into other symbols of culture, for continuity was well
received by young people. Changes were enacted discreetly and opportunistically
through the use of mobile phones and social media, despite protests from elders.
These tools soon became embedded in the life of Yolngu adolescents, giving them
a personalised tool to engage the globalised world. Some young people in Yirrkala
could now explore their identity and relationships without feeling marginalised by
their non-Indigenous peers in Nhulunbuy or other urban centres in Australia.
However, these tools were not available to all young people, and the lack of access
to these tools was felt acutely by those who did not have the resources to procure
them.

In this chapter, I have drawn on historical, current and Yolngu theoretical discourse
to paint an approximation of the cultural and political life in Yirrkala to provide the
reader with the adequate context to situate the new and emergent technology in
remote Aboriginal society. I introduced eminent Yolngu philosophers and leaders;
I discussed the engagement between Yolngu and Macassans, and their exchange of
new technology and how it influenced Yolngu culture. I brought into this chapter
the Land Rights struggle that saw the application of both old and new ways of
communication. I juxtaposed the Land Rights struggle against the current plea of
Yolngu leaders for a continuation of mining investment in their region despite the
palpable social and economic marginalisation between the non-Indigenous and
Indigenous people of North East Arnhem Land.

The social marginalisation and being ‘black’ was used as a Yolngu theory to discuss
the social marginalisation now impeding the advancement of Yolngu society. I
bring to the reader’s attention an approximation of Yolngu heterogeneity and clan alliances in a globalised, capitalist world, to draw a parallel between the process of Aboriginal de-communalisation and a consumerisation of Aboriginal lifestyles. The next chapter will showcase the confusion between public health practice that still holds the perception of Yolngu as consumers that may be enaptured by emergent technology and allow for the health messages to be adopted and put in practice.
CHAPTER 3 - THE LURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND MOBILE TECHNOLOGY IN HEALTH PROMOTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

‘The central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization.’

(Appadurai 1996 p. 32)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the adoption of social media and mobile phones has become a coveted tool by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, non-governmental and governmental health services (Senior, Helmer & Chenhall 2016; Carlson et al. 2015; Owiny et al. 2014; Brusse et al. 2014; Kral 2014). Several assumptions by service providers were made on the use of mobile technology and social media by young people, with little evidence to show for its effectiveness, especially in remote Aboriginal communities (Kral 2014). For example, Brusse et al. (2014), argue that mobile phones and social media enabled young people’s utilisation of new technology to access health information and advocate for their health needs. It has also been assumed that there would be an online movement amongst peers (Kral 2010; 2011), which would amplify a stand against bullying and sexting, as lateral violence in Aboriginal communities (Langton 2008; Wingard 2010; Carlson et al. 2015).
Kral (2011 p. 4) argued that ‘the rapid development of new information and communications technologies, an increase in affordable, small mobile technologies and the penetration of the Internet and mobile telephony over the past decade account for an explosion in new modes and channels for communication and multimedia production’. This explosion of new modes and channels was discussed earlier by Appadurai (1996, p. 32) when he argued that ‘the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood regarding existing centre-periphery models’. Building on Kral’s findings (2011) and supported by Appadurai’s (1996), this chapter aims to situate social media and mobile technology in public health practice with findings from Brusse et al. (2014) in the Aboriginal context, a complex and geographically distant from urban centres, now a complex heterogeneous community. The discussion is born in mind that some scholars may hold to the standpoint that ‘one man’s imagined community, is another man’s political prison’ (Appadurai 1996, p. 32). Perceiving Aboriginal communities as a heterogeneous entity provided my interview participants with the opportunity to expand beyond the confines of a
predetermined context of remoteness and Aboriginality, allowing a plurality of lifestyle and opinions to be documented in this study. I ask the reader to look beyond the anthropological tradition in that this thesis was written by one who was ‘studied’ for generations, now attempting to provide a subaltern perspective. Repeatability is not guaranteed unless you are also a product of colonisation, like the author.

In Brusse et al. (2014) mobile technology and social media were found to be highly useful in health promotion in remote communities, particularly for engagement and health education. Therefore, I will begin by exploring and critiquing the practices mentioned above within a remote Aboriginal context, with an attempt to explore the relationships between new technology and the public health agenda. I will also argue in this study, that the values encompassed within health promotion may be at odds with the traditional beliefs and practices of Indigenous people (Reid 1983; Senior & Chennah 2008; Yunupingu & Muller 2009; Coburn et al. 2013; Moreton-Robinson 2015). Through this ethnographic study, and collaboration with community members, key informants and in-depth interviewees, I will draw on their contributions to produce a series of arguments ranging from cross-cultural communication inconsistencies and intellectual exploitation (Horst 2015).

In the international context, developments in ethnographic inquiries into youth and their new social practices surrounding social media and mobile phones have led to changes in public or policy discourse (Kral 2011). I, however, argue that there are insufficient understanding and acknowledgment of the difference between Indigenous engagement of and processing of health information and non-Indigenous health education (Coburn et al. 2013; Martin 2014; Moreton-Robinson
2015) strategies. This has been an issue, because of a lack of ethnographic studies being accessible to Aboriginal participants, due to a lack of time or fly-in fly-out researchers, contrary to my being in fieldwork through the course of my study, to allow for the community to affect the study results, its arguments and conclusions (Horst 2015).

These changes in public or policy discourse have been slow to take place in the remote Indigenous youth context because of the fly-in fly-out practice of health professionals. Young people had resorted to episodic events that gave the impression of agentive participation and new pathways of learning and the production of knowledge and practice that had assured health services to be conducive to engaging Aboriginal youth on healthy lifestyle and behaviour change programs (Kral 2011). I also argue that these episodic events disappear as soon as the last sausage was eaten and the last health professional had flown back to Nhulunbuy or Darwin.

I will then explore the use of innovation in the engagement of Indigenous communities and critique the notion of common health promotion strategies. The strategies’ general focus was to develop the right hooks (novelty effect) to draw people in so that the health-promoting messages can be heard and ‘hopefully’ or ‘theoretically’ adopted (depending on whether any behavioural theory was used on the design). Relatively little ethnography, according to Kral (2011) and Horst (2015) is available on how Indigenous youth are shaping the creative process of health communication in their contexts and whether or not these efforts are taking effect (Brusse et al. 2014).
3.2 THE CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF HEALTH PROMOTION IN THE
COMMUNITY – CASE STUDY

Indigenous health and research institutions have created and deployed health programs, and now digital applications (apps) and tools without having an in-depth understanding (Dillon 1992; Petersen 2014; Carlson et al. 2015; Dingwall et al. 2015) of social media and mobile technology use in the community. The design of digital content for social media and apps for mobile technology by health professionals (Petersen 2014; Dingwall et al. 2015) has possibly supported and authorised what appears to be a growing trend, according to Fessler (1980), a practice familiar to public health since the 1980s. The design of digital content by health professionals who aligned themselves with anti-racists (Kowal 2015), and focused on the attributes of specific minority groups without realizing their indirect reinforcement of essentialist racial identities (Kowal, Franklin & Paradies 2013) had resulted in an accentuation of Aboriginal ‘otherness’ as discussed by Petmann (1988) in Kowal, Franklin & Paradies (2013, p. 5).

The history of lateral violence and the internalisation of European power structures by Indigenous leaders (Langton 2008; Gonzales et al. 2013) was seen today as the influence of ‘dominant men and women’ in the Northern Territory communities within the context of public health efforts and health promotion programs. These key personalities use their influence to channel the delivery of services and access, while government officers and researchers become dependent on them for the provision of information both at the program design and evaluation stages, thereby, possibly creating an environment of nepotism and inequity as discussed in Bennet (1982). The influence of dominant people in the community was a strategy driven
by ruling elites rather than grounded by research as per an earlier discussion in

Chapter 2 from Coburn et al. (2013) on Indigenous-led research. The study of
digital apps in the Indigenous context of health care delivery by Dingwall et al.
(2015) for example, supported a study of a mental health app that evaluated features
such as acceptability, visual appeal, ease of use and perceived cultural relevance.
Petersen (2014) on the other hand argue that a Hi-Tech Mental Health Intervention
may cause even more harm than good because of the ability of Internet-based
communication to exacerbate feelings of anxiety and depression (Clerkin, Smith &
Hames 2013; Van Orden et al. 2010).

Between 2010 and 2012, I observed two events unfold with Yolngu in Arnhem
Land that involved social media and mobile technology. The case studies were
chosen not only because of the media coverage they both received in the Northern
Territory and nationally but also the comparison is provided between structuralist
approaches versus a grounded grassroots approach (Horst 2015) to engaging youth.
Case 1 is a grassroots movement that began independent of a program or
organisational agenda, whereas Case 2 was a fully funded Federal program with an
aim to improve health outcomes in remote communities through citizen journalism.
Case study 3 is a deployment of pre-recorded health messages on posters and in
books that would play in a loop when activated, from an inbuilt speaker located on
the body of the poster. These events are presented as case studies in the following:

3.2.1 Case 1 – Djuki Mala

Yolngu youth in Galiwin’ku on Elcho Island, a remote community in North East
Arnhem Land used a mobile phone to record a performance by young men who
combined an improvised traditional Yolngu dance with a traditional Greek song (Healy 2013). The young men organised a dance group without any program and agency support. According to Healy (2013), the Yolngu have in the past few years started using mobile phones and camcorders to share and broadcast images on YouTube of everyday activities, cultural and community events and even music clips that used artistic compositions that made political statements. The men from Djuki Mala practised their dance on the community basketball court by connecting their mobile phones to a loudspeaker. The recording of the final dance during a community gathering was filmed and subsequently uploaded to YouTube.


Two million YouTube views later, this group is known today as Djuki Mala had become a global sensation. According to widespread Yolngu perception from my discussion with young people and elders, the young men in the Djuki Mala dance troupe had achieved social recognition and economic success through the Internet and hard work (Healy 2013). The power of social media and mobile technology to create an agency in Aboriginal men was presumed to be a recipe for their achievement (Ginsburg 2008). This perception may be compounded by a simple conclusion made by many government and non-government agencies, that Indigenous agency can be generated artificially (Paradies & Cunningham 2009; Kowal, Franklin & Paradies 2013) through the use of emergent technology.
3.2.2 Case 2 – NT Mojo

A well-devised, multi-stakeholder effort through the use of mobile phones and YouTube was deployed in 2011 to 10 youth through training programs in a remote Northern Territory region (Healy 2013). During the training of several young people in citizen journalism or mobile journalism, an anticipation of a rise in the number of Aboriginal youth using mobile phones and social media to access health information was anticipated. The outcome of the training was that the young people enabled to use iPhones and to conduct simple video edits to be then uploaded onto YouTube. The purpose of the material was to showcase and discuss Aboriginal cultural heritage, traditional bush medicines and health issues in the community for a specific local audience.

Approximately six months since its launch, the project curated by the Batchelor Institute, a tertiary institution of learning that targeted Indigenous people in the Northern Territory, ceased to produce any material that was available for viewing on YouTube. During an online search in May 2012, the dedicated website to this project (https://ntmojo.com.au) was no longer available, and its YouTube channel along with its collection of Aboriginal youth media productions was removed in its entirety, leaving no traces or explanation of what happened and what lessons were learnt. The absence of program continuity in the Aboriginal context may have also reinforced the stereotype amongst the Indigenous youth of the futility of self-determination efforts where programs struggled to be sustainable. The youths’ embrace of media according to Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod & Larkin (2002) was perceived as an example of Indigenous expression and symbolised an increasing sense of empowerment for Aboriginal people. Both case studies alluded, to the
objectification of ‘empowerment’ and Indigenous agency that resulted from the use of social media and mobile technology. Health promotion messages and social marketing campaigns soon began utilising social media and mobile technology with a simplistic objective of creating Indigenous agency and to change individual behaviour and encourage healthy lifestyles without acknowledging the community and kinship structures (Marika, Ngurruwuthun & White 1992; Marika & Isaacs 1995; Yunupingu & Muller 2009) that dictated micro, meso and macro level behaviours, naturally intertwined and cross-cutting influence.

3.2.3 Case 3 – Talking posters

The assumption that a successful public health effort from a non-Aboriginal youth context may work with some Indigenous modifications was often considered as innovation, in Indigenous public health practice. In the community, the use of posters, pamphlets and flyers, both in Yolngu Matha and in English were, according to my informants, noticed but generally ignored. Printed health materials that were hung on walls became litter on the streets a week later and eventually thrown into bins, and forgotten. According to Sean from Yirrkala, ‘posters, flyers and pamphlets usually end up as toilet paper or fire lighters’. Sean is a mentor and community youth worker for many of his younger Yolngu peers. He has engaged and managed several programs with young men, and his opinion was shared with a tone of disappointment. Many of his programs had struggled for funding when thousands of dollars had been allocated to printed materials in other government agencies from Darwin that attained no cultural relevance to the Yolngu project.
The idea to transform the generic printed material generally used in public health efforts was ‘revolutionised’ through the incorporation of the Territory’s own ‘Talking Poster’ by One Talk Technology.22 Sean and his friend James recalled how interested everyone was when the Talking Posters first showed up in the community, pinned on a wall near the store. The posters spoke in Yolngu Matha when initiated by a touch of a button. James said: ‘The best I saw was the talking posters and talking books about drug use and smoking. It’s quirky, new and it’s a novelty’. But as I probed a little further about the life of the talking poster and book, about whether they were instrumental in changing behaviour, a basic goal of public health programs (Petersen and Lupton 1996; Lea 2005), Sean explained that as soon as it wears off they’re not interested in it again. The posters just get holes punched in and torn down. Talking posters lasted a few weeks before getting torn down. The buttons had an average of a thousand presses before the batteries wore off. They had replacement batteries, but the posters were already getting torn down.

I understood the frustration of community members, especially youth workers like Sean and James, who were always forced to hear the voice of the new Missionaries instructing Yolngu to ‘be healthy’ and ‘wash your hands’ and ‘eat healthily’. Patronising posters from government agencies contradicted the image of the Aboriginal person as injured within but morally pure and knowledgeable about culture (Warren & Sue 2011). The top-down communication strategies from campaigns was a constant invasion of their ways of being, as argued by Senior and

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22 One Talk is a commercial organisation dedicated to improving communication and social wellbeing for Indigenous Australians in rural and remote Australia. One Talk talking posters are IP protected. [http://www.onetalktechnology.com.au/#about](http://www.onetalktechnology.com.au/#about) accessed 18th May 2016
Chenhall (2012) and Kowal, Franklin and Paradies (2013). It reminded me of the projected hologram of Comrade Stalin above the Kremlin during his reign. Sean recalled:

People walked through the door and heard the same message, a repetitive voice telling them a story. They all have a minimal lifespan and value to people in the community and about what they [the posters] are there for.

3.3 CONSIDERING THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH IN HEALTH PROMOTION

In the 1960s Moodie (1973) argued that health interventions were focused on a biomedical approach and emphasised a clinical perspective to health and illness. When the limited impact of this approach became apparent, researchers like Moodie (1973) began to question and study the effect of “environmental and social conditions, colonial history and dispossession”. The doubts that led researchers in Moodie (1973) to study the effects of factors outside the biomedical model were due to its overwhelming failure to suggest sustainable solutions (Senior 2003; Senior and Chenhall 2008; 2012).

These social determinants of health were particularly scrutinised for their effect on the health of young people living in remote locations in the Northern Territory by Senior (2003), Burbank (2012), Senior and Chenhall (2008) including Senior, Chenhall & Daniels (2006). The health of young people was particularly crucial not only because of the high rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases affecting the transition of adolescents into adulthood (Senior 2003; Senior & Chenhall 2012) but more importantly, the high rates of youth suicide in the region.
(Parker & Ben-Tovim 2002; Hanssens 2007) and across Indigenous Australia (Carlson et al. 2015). The suicide rates of Indigenous people (36.7) were significantly higher (p<0.001) than that of their non-Indigenous peers in the Northern Territory (Pridmore & Fujiyama 2009).

In their landmark contribution to the understanding of the social determinants of health, Marmot and Wilkinson (1999) stated that the health of populations is related to features of society and its social and economic organisation. They explained that the financing and management of preventative health programs have continued to focus on the provision of evidence based on medical services and the dissemination of information through health-promoting messages and social marketing campaigns. These programs, although acknowledged the difficulty in changing behaviours, still required the agency of Indigenous clients (Deveson 2011) and their empowered self to overcome their current predicament of poor health outcomes and to strive to make better choices (Lea 2005; Kowal & Paradies 2005). In their efforts to separate public health from clinical services, Marmot and Wilkinson (1999) raised the awareness that social and economic factors are elements that affect the health of all people regardless of age, gender and socio-economic status.

The discussion of the correlation between the impact of social and environmental conditions on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians included a reflection on colonisation, when the historic ‘dispossession and exclusion from land and its economic and sacred gifts, from family and culture, and from full participation in the social, political and economic life’ as argued by Saggers and
Gray (2007 pp.16-17) is still a lived reality for many remote Aboriginal communities (Langton 2008; 2011). Turrell and Mathers (2000a and 2000b) in support of Marmot and Wilkinson (1999) proposed that the vital role of government agencies at the macro level was to create enabling environments and conditions for healthy lifestyles by addressing the socio-economic status of its marginalised population. Remote communities in North East Arnhem Land were further disadvantaged, according to Carson et al. (2007), due to their reliance on the welfare economy and public sector funded services. The combination of these factors created a systemic problem that required systems thinking approach to problem-solving.

Anderson (2001) in Carson et al. (2007) specifically argued that government agencies should play a relatively more significant role in the improvement of health outcomes. Instead of improving the relationship between the state and Yolngu as individuals or as a community, health education and self-determination policies became the typical answer to the complex challenge for Closing the Gap in Indigenous health (Anderson 2001). The utilisation of acute and chronic health services rather than the utilisation of health education and preventive care were a form of dependency with deep roots in Aboriginal culture, according to Sutton (2009). A dependency that Sutton (2009) argued had disabled Aboriginal people of their ability to care for themselves or each other and created a culture of passivity. This culture of passivity had resulted not only from a condition of dependency but also from chronic disempowerment since colonisation (Langton 2008; 2011).
As the links between chronic disease and individual behaviours became increasingly important, 20th Century public health in Western countries relied on individual motivation to adopt healthy lifestyles and changed individual behaviours (Bandura 1977; 2001). The increased uptake of healthy lifestyles, nutritious food and physical activity amidst the reduction of smoking, has been more successful in the non-Indigenous population (Kowal & Paradies, 2005), where personal motivation is a cultural norm (Bandura 2001). In the context of my research and Indigenous knowledge systems (Christie 2005; Coburn et al. 2013; Moreton-Robinson 2015) gained from interview participants have led me to believe that personal motivation was usually directed by kinship; law, discipline, demand sharing, obligation and moving as a communal whole instead of living an individual-centric lifestyle. Without acknowledging other ways of being (Senior & Chenhall 2012), and by addressing the lack of adoption of health information and preventative care, public health through the Ottawa Charter (WHO 1986) had developed goals and strategies to motivate individuals to take control of their health. I argue in this chapter that the efforts of public health professionals had become entangled in a confusion of cultural relativism, structuralist theory and Indigenous agency.

This entanglement was observed within the emergence of the ‘culturally appropriate’ and ‘culturally sensitive’ approaches to Indigenous health. In the application of culturally appropriate and culturally sensitive public health on the premise of cultural relativism (Feinberg & Ottenheimer 2001) and being anti-racist (Kowal 2015), public health ideology had ignored the differences and contradictions between the Indigenous health model and the Western biomedical
model (Senior & Chenhall 2012). The Indigenous people, on the other hand, negotiated the ideology of the Western biomedical model in a relativism that (Feinberg & Ottenheimer 2001) enabled Indigenous people to decide on what the prevailing discourse on illness and death (Reid 1978; Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011) was, relative to their subjectivity. The discourse, like a black market of Indigenous knowledges, lay hidden as it was considered unscientific by the Western biomedical model (Christie 2005).

Aboriginal Medical Services were established as an Indigenous-led version of the Western biomedical model and as a culturally appropriate health service provider for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. The Indigenous primary health care provider in North East Arnhem Land utilised health-promoting messages and social marketing campaigns that targeted individual behaviour premised upon a notion of Indigenous agency. The health promotion strategies were ‘Indigenised’ to achieve a superficial form of ‘cultural appropriateness’ without an acknowledgement of the complexity and richness of Indigenous medicine (Reid 1978; Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011). There was yet to be a clear understanding of public health and Indigenous agency. What belonged within public health programs and when do Indigenous Australians become accountable for their health (Kowal 2015)? Kowal and Paradies (2005) proposed Indigenous-led public health practice was often seen as structuralist without an adequate balance and emphasis of the Indigenous agency. Often colonisation had become causal explanations where cross-cultural interpretations of health and illness (Reid 1978; Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011) were categorised as problems and consequently thrown into the ‘too hard’ basket and ignored during the design phase of public health interventions.
Sutton (2009) argued that causal accounts and the widespread agreement that many Indigenous health and social problems have resulted from the after-effects of colonisation (Matthews 1986) were simplistic and fatalistic (Kowal 2015; Chenhall & Senior 2017). The architectural edifice of cultural relativism and the biomedical approach to public health and its offspring, health promotion, aspired to bring meaningful and positive outcomes for Indigenous people by a supposedly Indigenous-driven agenda. It ignored the contextual complexity of Indigenous health and self-determination and also fluid and ever-changing (Senior and Chenhall 2017). In my opinion, this was already a point of discussion more than a decade ago according to Christie (2005) and Yunupingu and Muller (2009), in that this western biomedical approached lacked consideration and empathy towards Indigenous values of medicine, health and illness, as observed in North East Arnhem Land by a wide array of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers (Reid 1978; 1983; Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011).

3.4 A CRITIQUE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR HEALTH PROMOTION IN THE REMOTE ABORIGINAL CONTEXT

The notion of empowerment was reinforced by its biomedical roots of the 1970s through the aid of social media and mobile technology and considered a fashionable and trendy channel for broadcasting and engagement with Indigenous communities (Brusse et al. 2014). According to Lock and Nguyen (2010), by changing the shape of material things, we inevitably change ourselves. The fabrication of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion to utilise ‘empowerment’ as a tool to promote health was aimed at encouraging people to ‘take control’ (WHO 1986) of their lives and
foster communities. The use of material things in public health to change
Indigenous individuals and their family was to enhance self-help and social support
systems (WHO 1986). I agreed with the works of researchers in Indigenous health
that the enabling technological features (Christie 2005; Petersen 2014) of social
media and mobile technology potentially lacking in sensitivity to Aboriginal ways

Empowerment and self-help came into coexistence in contemporary public health
practice with the assumption that new technology could break through and
intervene directly with individuals and groups in the name of health promotion
(Lock & Nguyen 2010; Petersen 2014; Dingwall et al. 2015). This framework was
also an extension of community development, which according to Marris (1985, p.
158) was where the colonial discourse ‘of empowerment is employed for utilising
the agency of citizens in fulfilment of particular governmental objectives’. The
following section of this chapter will draw from the expertise of Associate Professor
Tess Lea, who spent considerable time as a researcher in the Northern Territory
brings to the fore a discourse on representation and media in public health efforts.
Lea’s fundamental research interest is with issues of (dys)function in policy
enactment and how Aboriginal families share their narratives and commandeer
policy opening and closings that satisfy their needs.

According to Lea (2005), the enormous task of implementing health interventions
with intentions to reduce the high rates of Indigenous morbidity and mortality had
resulted in the application of cultural relativism (Feinberg & Ottenheimer 2001) by
public health professionals to be culturally appropriate. Cultural relativism
appeared then to include the involvement of White anti-racist agendas, who were reluctant to claim any Indigenous agency in improving Indigenous suffering (Kowal 2015).

The public health professional was placed in a position that required them to ‘empower’ Aboriginal people to assume control over their ‘health and wellbeing’ instead of merely directing or marketing behaviour change. This imagined practice of empowerment took shape through sharing scientific knowledge in accessible ways that utilised different forms of media broadcasted on social media sites, for example, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, including mental health apps (Dingwall et al. 2015).

The people who promoted this process, however, refused to acknowledge the complexity of public health’s biomedical viewpoints and the assumed knowledge standpoints on health and disease of the Aboriginal people they wanted to help (Lea 2005). Lea (2005) argued that the absence of healthy behaviours had often been deduced as a sign of lack of knowledge or information to produce the former, an opinion that suspiciously frustrated the agency of Yolngu and ignored their sophisticated knowledge of medicine, health and sorcery (Reid 1978; 1983; Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011).

According to Lea (2005), new technology was utilised as the ‘new microscope’, and the premise was that if people could see the germs, they would begin to believe in the western biomedical model. Similarities could be drawn into the idea that if Yolngu watched their brother rap or talk about healthy lifestyles on social media...
and mobile phones, the health-promoting messages would be easily accepted and
adopted. Variables such as ease of use, perceived relevance and visual appeal were
commonly (and conveniently) perceived as a proxy for Aboriginal people’s
acceptance of Western interventions as evidenced in Dingwall et al. (2015).

The study by Lea (2005) suggests mobile technology and social media have been
adopted as carrier pigeons by public health professionals. Unable to train and recruit
sufficient youth workers and implement specific youth health policy; music and
health messages were used as proxy tools for health education. The solution, in the
eyes of public health professionals, according to Lea (2005), was in the empowering
effects of motivational and aesthetically designed content. Those tasked with using
cross-cultural communication theories to migrate health messages were taught to
assume their recipients to be someone without expert knowledge in the biomedical
sciences or even about germ theory but came with a wealth of knowledge in
traditional culture and ancient mythology (Lea 2005).

Public health professionals took great care in using the right texts and colours and
used colours of the Aboriginal flag to engage their young Indigenous clients (Lea,
2005 p. 1315) as being sensitive to the ‘feelings’ of Indigenous people with poor
literacy skills. The simplification of health information and the distillation of
intentions of well-meaning assimilation to Westernised behaviours, i.e. personal
hygiene, in the name of improving health and well-being became the end goal and
at the same time, the means to its attainment. Evident in the work of Lea (2005, p.
1316) was that cultural relativism was modified into a ‘tutelary processes [that]
cannot depend upon politically and informatically naïve recipients’. This excerpt
from Lea explains that the oversimplification of health promotion or public health messages is underpinned by the assumption that the Indigenous recipients of this message have traditional knowledges and systems inherent in their culture that enable good health and wellbeing, but these do not fit well with the Western biomedical model. Some reasons for this may include a lack of a measurable evidence base and the inability of Western practices to place credence on Aboriginal knowledge in health and healing (Christie 2005).

Video material and flip charts, in the form of cartoons and sterile, generic images of brown and black people, have now migrated into the online world and could be accessed through mobile phones and tablets. Health promoting messages that implored Indigenous people to quit smoking, to use condoms for safe sex and ‘avoiding fatty, salty or high sugar foods, with sensitive and accessible explanatory narratives’ (Lea, 2005 p. 1317) had become a cookie cutter approach to Indigenous youth health policy. Only the process of content creation and descriptive agency were matters of focus in this process of health education (Lea 2005), but the tools (mobile phones and social media) that acted as carriers for the content were considered by public health professionals according to Lea (2005) to be culturally blank.

Sean was an advocate for the old-fashioned, less technology is best, approach to engaging Yolngu (Petersen 2014). He acknowledged Yolngu theories of communication (Marika, Ngurruwuthun & White 1992; Marika & Isaacs 1995; Yunupingu & Muller 2009) and suggested that the best way for the community was the:
Door to door, sit down, sit in a group, have a cup of tea, talk to people, that’s always been the most effective, because it comes back to that relationship building and that trust and you don’t get that one through a phone or computer or some automated voice telling a story.

The design blueprint of these messages was based on the assumption that our Western views and interpretations were not identical, possibly contradictory (Reid 1983; Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011) but had the ability to become culturally appropriate when embellished with emergent technology (Dingwall et al. 2015), Indigenous vocals and tone (Petersen 2014). This, and a procedure, elegantly described by Lea (2005, p. 1317) as: ‘an aesthetic of exaggerated signs morphed with the racialised effects of visualising the optics of Others’. The culturally blank tools (Lea 2005), i.e. social media and a mobile phone, were a modern version of the Message Stick (khayu). Instead of a piece of wood with etchings, it is now a composite of metal, plastic and silica that rings, plays music, takes photos, sends text messages, does video calls and streams the latest Hollywood blockbuster. The messenger and the message were no longer separate, and both were stored as narratives in a tiny piece of plastic called the memory card. Amidst these complexities, public health messages stood in contrast as ‘simplistic media and exaggerated signs’ in the social context of engaging Indigenous people for ‘sharing information in appropriate ways’ (Lea 2005, p. 1317). The perceived appropriateness of sharing simplistic public health information was unlikely to be meaningful when positioned against the depth and complexity of Yolngu health knowledge (Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011).
Lea continued to call these health-promoting or public health efforts a ‘pantomime
where exaggerated characters overwhelmed the interpreting spectator toward
unmistakable cause-effect messages’ (2005, p. 1317) and confirmed the findings
from previous Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers such as Reid (1978) and
Vass, Mitchell and Dhurrkay (2011). The Indigenous view and knowledge of
Indigenous medicine, pathology and physiology as discussed by Reid (1983),
Senior (2003) and Vass, Mitchell and Dhurrkay (2011) were not taken into
consideration at the planning stages of health promotion programs or during the
community consultation phase. The major programs of health promotion in the
Yolngu context had been a cause of tension and conflict especially within
community circles (Senior & Chenhall 2012).

Visual pedagogy as a dominant force of behaviour change was assumed by health
promoters to act as an instrument of change especially when the individual Other
now held within their grasp the (mobile) technology and an Indigenous (and now
rarely a non-Indigenous) voice and image for interpersonal engagement. It is not
unfair to say that very little research had been conducted to “explore the cultural
assumption being brought to bear in the creation of public health artefacts (Lea
2005, p.1317). Generally, the Indigenous images, voices and participation (in
partnership) sufficed as criteria of effectiveness and acceptability which was then
deployed to all Indigenous populations assumed to be ‘homogenous’ entities
(Appadurai 1996).

‘This double absence’ according to Lea (2005, p. 1317) is the premature assumption
of Indigenous people's ignorance of western science coupled with the lack of
‘empirically grounded critique of the representational tactics being deployed’. In this misunderstood intersection, public health professionals were convinced in the process of creating behaviour change content, that the very little of what Aboriginal people may understand and accepts as bio ‘medicine’, was a ‘flawed imitation of the mature western complex’. Is it possible that this culture within the public health profession according to Kowal and Paradies (2005) and more recently from Kowal (2015) was related to the limited training provided in conceptual tools needed to unpack the postcolonial nexus of fourth world health?

During the reflexive process and discussion with interview participants on the inferred ignorance of Indigenous people on the western factual and ‘real’ science, I understood that the crux of this project lay within this question: real for whom, as argued by Leach and Davis (2012). As a health professional myself, I had never considered ‘for whom certain understandings, or observations, or practices are knowledge, and what translation have to occur for them to be formally or officially recognised as such’ (Leach & Davis 2012 p. 211). The authors clarified where I had misunderstood. They argued that ‘taking up effect rather than veracity and certainty' when instead what ‘we need to be focusing on' are not a discourse ‘over truth value as such, but over transformations from one kind of effect, for certain actors, to others' and to ‘look at the transformation that occur when a social process is called knowledge' (Leach & Davis 2012 p. 212).

3.4.1 The social context of public health professionals as a contributing factor
Lea (2005) and Kowal (2015) draw our attention to the often overlooked social context, in which guilt drives public health professionals, whom they argue, have come up with answers encouraged by a moral imperative to assist Aboriginal people. At the same time, they also strived to minimise their ‘inherited structural dominance’ over the Indigenous populations (Lea 2005, p.1310). In this context, post-colonial governmentality turns a blind eye to negative projects, but thrives with the idea of effective ‘facilitation and partnership with health, longevity, well-being, independence’ and safeguarding some aspects of ‘community control’ in the project (Lea, 2005 p. 1310). This implicitly straightforward consideration of cultural appropriateness is at ‘the heart of a series of compounding reifications that works to hold the problems of intervention in a permanent state of irresolution’ (Lea 2005 p. 1315).

Moberg (2012) recalled the work of Bourdieu and brought my attention to the creative role of social actors and agents in the process of reproducing and transforming society while rejecting the assumptions that individuals acted based on rational economic decisions or optimal decisions. Bourdieu and the binary of rationality and irrationality were perhaps too reductionist to explore Yolngu theory in this thesis effectively. However, Bourdieu’s description of the human motivation of decision-making became more interesting within an Indigenous cultural and economic context as Reid (1983) and Senior (2003) argue; different culture and knowledge created tension where unexplained or irrational behaviours were rejected instead of being deconstructed for meaning and categorised as trans-rational to allow for in-depth reflection. Indigenous research in the social science alone can contribute to a much richer understanding of how culture, values and
knowledge creation can attempt to place and deconstruct behaviours and meaning (Coburn et al. 2013; Moreton-Robinson 2015).

The use of “Prospect Theory” by Kahnemann and Tversky (1979) described decision-making process based on their evaluation of losses and gains without the limiting ‘all or nothing’ perspective discussed in Moberg (2012), initially built on a subjective notion of ‘rationality’. I agree with Moberg (2012) that rationality is generally a westernised imagination and may be entirely different to the Indigenous subject of rationality as discussed by Reid (1983) and Vass, Mitchell and Dhurrkay (2011). The need to label behaviours as irrational when they don’t fit the Western public health imagination was often overlooked in the Indigenous context. Modern science has done little to decide birth, death, illness and health for Yolngu (Reid 1983; Senior 2003; Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011).

In the climate of competition with Big Media for attention from young people, public health professionals attempted to insert their ideologies in often lack-lustre messages. At the same time, Indigenous children were being affected by globalisation where public health professionals have to compete in a world that they can’t win. The force of mainstream youth culture, the African American influence through ‘Gangsta’ Rap and Hip Hop had created hip-hop inspired Indigenous youth culture. Yolngu youth strived to be just like the other foreign ‘Yolngu’ (African American Hip Hop artists) they watched on television whose music was admired but distrusted by the older generation. Joe said:
And there is all that rap, Tupac influence. Families never wanted that. I remember when that started rolling out here when the kids didn’t really listen to rap music. They [Senior Elders] all hated it; they [senior elders] said it’s all gonna give em’ [youth] bad influence. They [youth] are going to start associating with the African American attitude.

Joe was a male community worker engaged with temporary work with the Shire. He recalled how Yothu Yindi and country music were the only influence, in youth culture in Yirrkala before the emergence of ‘Gangsta Rap’ and Hip Hop in the region. He said, ‘Before all that the kids would listen to Yothu Yindi and country music. Reggae little, but not popular and there wasn’t the attitude and the violence’.

Adding to the complexity of the public health professional, entangled in the judgement of what is rational and irrational in the Indigenous context, Harding, Lamont and Small (2010 p. 208), defined the community as a place for ‘social roles, statuses and rules for behaviour’. Behaviours that involved ‘transactionalism’ (Harding, Lamont & Small 2010) was noted in the literature to appear where the public health professional engaged with Indigenous people in made up of a series of exchanges between individuals, each pursuing their outcomes and desires (Harding, Lamont & Small 2010). Although the concept of exchange or “Ganma” (Yunupingu & Muller 2009) as discussed in Chapter 1 was referred to in the early stages, it appeared, unfortunately, to be a didactic process, void of Yolngu intellectual content (Lea 2005).
Cindy, a mother and community development worker, explained that young people incorporated the mobile phone as personal property, and had deviated from the Yolngu norm of property ownership to become part of a broader community of contemporary Indigenous people. She said: ‘Mobile phones: they see it as participating in the current trend as if any young person wants to be considered a part of the contemporary society’. When I discussed an Indigenous anti-tobacco social marketing campaign that was designed as a contemporary Yolngu message with a young Indigenous health worker, I asked about the use of technology in creating trendy messages that supposedly promoted behavioural change. Thinking carefully and recalling the project that only ended less than a year ago, she said:

I think the people heard the message but didn’t really take it in. So yeah, if there was another health promotion, I would want [it] to be catchy like that with excellent choreography and dancing, a lot of young kids involved and they usually have the best ideas, and it attracts attention in the communities.

The adoption of a ‘tobacco’-free lifestyle, to quit smoking in exchange for a healthier Yolngu community and culture was interpreted as a success because of its wide acceptance. The use of Yolngu rappers and Hip Hop situated in the Yolngu community was crucial in engaging Yolngu youth who considered themselves as contemporary agents engaged in a globalised world. The evaluation of the anti-tobacco message in the eyes of Indigenous community members was in stark difference to the intended effect initially planned by the public health practitioners who produced the video material, to inform Yolngu on the harms of smoking and encourage quitting. I asked if she had heard comments about the video from her
family and networks. Cindy commented while shifting her gaze to the left and upwards, and said, ‘I’ve heard comments like “oh that’s a good funny clip, are they gonna be doing any more?” But I haven’t heard much comment about people wanting to stop smoking’.

This Aboriginal mother and senior elder acknowledged the community’s input into the video and commented that it had a limited impact amongst individuals. She said:

To be honest, we just released a report in […] its rising [the rates of smoking] and just have a video like that it’s not gonna send [the] message, its gonna take a lot more things to change. More innovative stuff”. Maybe it’s effective, but it’s an issue that not gonna be solved by sending one video around. More consistent, more innovative, more targeted to young people”. And it’s got to be realistic [relevant]. Very tough. So Yolngu see a white person on the side of the cigarette packet, and it just means nothing to them, you know. It’s the white person sickness.

Returning to the social context in which the public health professional must operate, we bear in mind the nature of the game that social actors and agents have agreed to play with public health professionals. The interactions between social actors and public health professionals does negate the possibility that in their discourse of losses and gains, Indigenous people see public health practice and ‘research in Indigenous communities as neo-colonialism and advocate for a minimal role of non-Indigenous people in Indigenous health research’ as argued in Kowal & Paradies (2005 p. 1348) and again in Kowal (2015). The perception of public health practice as neo-colonialism had created an ‘ambivalent and contradictory subject position vis-a-vis the postcolonial context of Indigenous public health’ (Kowal &

I agree with the general sentiments towards public health professionals described in Kowal and Paradies (2005) and have reflected on my own professional experience as a public health practitioner prior this study. This transactional practice (Harding, Lamont & Small 2010) in public health, albeit presented in the rhetoric of consultation and empowerment (Lea 2005), was according to with the findings from Lea (2005), a path of repression. It was, according to Petersen and Lupton (1996), where it became evident to me that public health was a professional practice enabled the creation of expert knowledge on people and society to control their way of acting in the name of health and the avoidance of illness and premature death. This constraining of thinking and action is exacerbated by the exclusion of Indigenous knowledge of health and medicine in public health practice (Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011). A somewhat unfair approach considering the history of Indigenous people here in Australia and internationally, of which I, am a member.

There is an invisible force deployed by public health in Indigenous communities with a goal to persuade Indigenous people to adopt a particular course of action in
the process of addressing systemic problems affecting health and wellbeing (Petersen & Lupton 1996). The authors Petersen and Lupton (1996) confirmed my observations that health experts have engaged in a didactic mission in the promotion of health messages that aim to change societal behaviour. At the same time, Indigenous communities in Arnhem Land have come to see the ‘community-government’ consultations as a burden, although the process claimed to be found in the process of empowerment and the eradication of inequalities.

Community consultations led by government bureaucrats required individuals and their networks to adopt a western point of view of what it is to be ‘healthy’. The consultation was wrapped in an intangible reciprocal relationship that entailed fulfilling obligations or expectations that required large amounts of effort and willpower to bear any results. Such efforts in reality only enable a forced re-creation of the Indigenous agency as responsible citizens with aspects of the Protestant work ethics; self-control, discipline and diligence (Petersen & Lupton 1996). Indigenous knowledge systems need to be adopted into our ways of engagement with the community and argued that ‘Aboriginal knowledge was a way of life derived from an ontology that has sustained Aboriginal people for eons’, where Aboriginal ways of knowing are ‘more than information or facts and are taught and learned in certain contexts, in certain ways’ (Martin 2014 p. 294).

This description of a Western biomedical reality in an Indigenous context was once the bedrock of Missionary work during an era referred to as ‘Mishin time’ (Mission Time). This argument was brought to my attention by a friend and Ngapipi (uncle) now in his sixties, during an informal discussion of the “No germs on Me”
campaign implemented across the Territory by the Department of Health. The fundamental campaign goal was aimed at encouraging Indigenous people to wash their hands. Reflecting on the government's educational method, it seemed to me that the elder's thoughts returned to his childhood when he said that Bapa Sheppy (a Church Minister on Elcho Island) always tried to change Yolngu ways (Kowal, Franklin & Paradies 2013).

3.4.2 Is public health practice culturally insensitive?

In theory, the practice of public health according to Ashton and Seymour (1998) in Petersen and Lupton (1996 p.4) was an approach that brought together ‘environmental change and personal preventative measures with appropriate therapeutic interventions, especially for the elderly and the disabled’. It went beyond an understanding of human biology and recognised the importance of those social aspects of health problems that were caused by lifestyle choices. In this way, it sought to avoid the trap of blaming the victim (Kowal, Franklin & Paradies 2013). Many contemporary health problems were therefore seen as being social rather than solely individual problems; underlying them were concrete issues of local and national public policy, and what were needed to address these problems were ‘Healthy Public Policy’ –which in other words is a systems thinking approach that currently lacked the contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (Christie 2005).

The ‘new’ public health as described by the previous paragraph has replaced or sanitised its outwardly patronising strategy through the application of cutting-edge marketing techniques of the 70s and 80s to develop a honeycomb of government
and non-governmental agencies. These agencies subsequently reached out to engage disadvantaged and non-compliant populations as described by Rowse (2012) instead of a separate ‘people and cultures’ through community participation, health promotion, health education, social marketing, healthy public policy, and inter-sectoral collaboration (Anderson 2001). These agencies also triangulated and measured their efforts and outcomes with epidemiology, biostatistics, diagnostic screening, immunisation, health advocacy and health economics (Petersen & Lupton 1996).

Petersen and Lupton (1996p. 15) argue that ‘in recent years, public health “theories” posit one or more aspects of the “conditions of modern life” as a causative factor in ill-health and as an object for reform’. Lack of exercise, over-consumption of specific products and poor diet were main causes for ill-health that had inspired public health practice to educate the ‘Other’. In this case, Indigenous people as a population in need of health interventions were targeted with behaviour change campaigns (Petersen & Lupton 1996), to improve health outcomes. Indigenous people have been dehumanised and referred to as a ‘population’ (Rowse 2012) in public health strategies that were generally concerning intervening in healthy lifestyle choices. Petersen and Lupton (1996 p. 15) summarized the public health ideology as such that ‘life should be lived rationally, in a profit maximising way, with no room for such excesses as drunkenness, overeating, gambling, idleness, and thriftlessness and so on’ The Weberian Protestant ethic linked with the rise of capitalism had indoctrinated the public health professional with the notion that the individual is a ‘rational, calculating actor who adopts a prudent attitude in respect
to risk and danger’ and ‘in respect [they] are closer to missionaries than to the uninterested scientist that they believe themselves to be’ (Petersen & Lupton p. 41).

3.5 ABORIGINAL CRITIQUE OF TECHNOLOGY USE IN PUBLIC HEALTH

A not-for-profit Indigenous organisation had led the technology innovation in public health with the use of music videos laced with health messages for ‘Bluetoohing’ between teenagers in 2009. The use of Internet Communication Technology (ICT) was a popular terminology among government and non-governmental organisation between 2009 and 2011, well before the use of Facebook Pages. Jenny recalled how using technology attracted attention from young people and said, ‘I think that there is excitement about ICT and it engages young people and therefore within that excitement they’re gonna listen’.

My informants and interviewees discussed the secret sauce for the engagement of young people and technology. They observed that engaging with user-generated content through the use of technology in artistic and musical ways, seemed to appeal to teenagers in Yirrkala. The service providers worked shoulder to shoulder with young people, in a constrained health agenda (Lea 2005) to create music videos to improve awareness of healthy eating. Jenny relayed the experiences she had from working with youth. She said that ‘they were the ones in control, where that information was going, and they were the ones who were in control of creating that information, I’m talking 17 years old’. Jenny, being a media specialist and entrepreneur critically reflected and said that she was not sure ‘whether they [the young people] took it on as information for healthy foods’.
The knowledge generated from medical and epidemiological discoveries, categorised as facts were commonly presented as truths to Indigenous people (Lea 2005; Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011). The general caution taken by researchers and authors in their respective peer-reviewed journal articles, when aware of the correlations or associations they had identified (Petersen & Lupton 1996), still made solid recommendations based on their findings. Unfortunately, according to Petersen and Lupton (1996 p. 43), ‘the translation of their research into forums to which the majority of the population have access often dispense with such caution’.

Void of arguments and reflection on the subjective and context-bound nature of associations (Petersen & Lupton 1996), science was often translated into absolutes and was preached to Indigenous people in the same manner as Missionaries whom civilised Indigenous people through forced living in houses and imposed western notions of hygiene practices (Attwood 1989). Epidemiological research, according to Petersen and Lupton (1996 p. 44) was further hampered by ‘its reliance on probabilities and post-hoc observational studies that attempted to relate health outcomes to exposure to hypothesised ‘risk factors’ that preceded the outcome’.

The term ‘public’ in public health practice refers to a segmented group in a society based on the risk of acquiring specific diseases or disabilities (Petersen & Lupton 1996). The individual was bounded by unspoken rights and obligation to the new public health ‘clan’ and respective ‘totems’ (flipcharts, videos, posters, pamphlets and apps), to accept and conform ‘to the imperatives of expert public health knowledge (Petersen & Lupton, 1996 p. 61). Public health called its approach ‘holistic’ without giving due thought to what is included in the term ‘holistic’. A
holistic approach required attention to be given to the ‘environment’, according to Petersen and Lupton (1996 p. 61), which incorporated ‘human relationship with their spatial, temporal, emotional psychological and social dimensions’ in the material world. It should also include Yolngu knowledge of health and medicine (Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011).

This public health approach inadvertently placed other humans as risk factors; whom you live with, your neighbours, your clan elders, your uncles, cousins and people you share a drink with at the Arnhem Club on a Thursday night, puts you at risk of disrupting your pathway to health and wellbeing. Societal change may only occur when a certain number of individuals apply diligence, self-control and discipline to improve their health and wellbeing through the adoption of healthy behaviours. The programs that I reflected upon in Arnhem Land could be summed up as public health programs with a goal to change societal norms by relying on individual diligence, self-control and discipline. This agentic approach was assumed to affect a network of change that will eventually have an impact on society, community or clan. These strategies have been studied and empirically concluded to be unsuccessful, according to Senior and Chenhall (2006, 2008a, and 2008b).

The Yolngu individual was burdened by a dual ‘cross’. The first was to function as an individual who chose to practise healthy lifestyles without an enabling environment. The second ‘cross’ was the expectation of a responsibility to change or influence community or clan to live healthier lifestyles and take on the role of an Indigenous leader. The analogy of the ‘cross’ was used to draw a possible parallel...
between the intentions, expectations, attitudes and strategies of Missionaries and the new public health professional. Moving on further into the arena of forced participation, affected representatives of Indigenous populations (Rowse 2012) were consulted before being thrown back into the Colosseum of their community, to counter the impact of history, culture, norms and social inequality stemming from chronic socio-economic deprivation. In the name of community development, citizens have also been encouraged and offered to partake in ‘decision-making processes only insofar as this is in line with predefined and delineated governmental objectives’, according to Petersen and Lupton (1996 p. 148).

Participation of community members in public health activities thereby has become a synonym for empowerment. Through the enabling efforts of public health experts, the motivation and engagement of citizens, supported by relationships of mutual transaction, sausage sizzles and freebies have become the ‘correct’ interpretation of the loosely defined concepts and processes of enabling and empowerment, so widely cited in the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion by the World Health Organisation (1986), according to Petersen and Lupton (1996).

I suspect that the lack of explicit definitions of the processes of enabling and empowerment in the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (WHO, 1986) was evident in the literature’s description of barriers to participation in public health programs. Barriers such as a lack of individual and community awareness, skills and the capacity for problem-solving was simplistic and detrimental to the very goal of ‘empowerment’ set out in the first instance by the Charter (Petersen & Lupton 1996). According to Petersen and Lupton (1996), the lack of expertise or
‘knowledge problems’ “are seen to compromise such faults as a lack of ‘awareness of the extent of the problem’, or a lack of ‘awareness of other agencies and group activities, or ignorance about how to gain access to information”. In may very well appear to be that the process of empowerment, required power structures to relinquish their superior status, privilege and decision-making through the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge of medicine and health (Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011).

Indigenous people have been blamed for taking insufficient control over their health outcomes and lives (Petersen & Lupton 1996). The lack of self-determination in healthy lifestyle choices was the commonly identified source of ‘misunderstandings’ and ‘conflicts’ that arise between experts and lay people as a result of differences in the way they approached decision-making. Whereas [public] health professionals based their judgments on scientific ‘objective’ knowledge, so one argument goes, lay people employed common sense, [or] ‘subjective’ evaluations” according to Petersen and Lupton (1996 p. 153).

Delving again into strategies to improve ‘voluntary’ community participation to take ownership of health problems, was the discussion on community development, where the health departments and agencies have “sought to mobilise citizen involvement” as argued by Petersen and Lupton (1996 p.154). The genesis of ‘Community Development’ as a movement, according to Marris (1985 p. 137) in Petersen and Lupton (1996 p. 157), was installed by the “British, French and Belgian colonial administrators in Africa and Asia as a means of stimulating local leadership and drawing local factions into cooperation, and for securing resources”.
3.6 CONCLUSION

This colonial logic, now entrapped in the public health practice under the guise of cultural relativism (Feinberg & Ottenheimer 2001) and ‘community development’ according to Marris (1985) and Lea (2005 p. 1310) underlined the discourse of empowerment as a tool masked in superficial tones of Indigenous agency in order to fulfil government objectives (Petersen & Lupton 1996) to improve health outcomes without reconciling Indigenous health and medicine (Reid 1978; 1983; Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay 2011) with the Western biomedical model. It has become apparent in this study, that in the case of the Indigenous communities and the individual, involvement with public health programs ‘presupposed’ and possibly forced a prerequisite of a ‘whole range of personal attributes, skills, attitudes, and commitments, as well as detailed work upon the self of the Other’ (Petersen & Lupton 1996 p. 157) in order for programs to thrive, succeed and become sustainable (Dodson & Smith 2003). The individual must become somewhat assimilated into the dominant non-Indigenous culture before he or she can decide what it is to be a healthy Indigenous person.

Unfortunately, for public health practice, Mackenbach (2012) insisted that the enduring conditions of socio-economic inequalities in health, particularly between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and (from the interview participants have discussed) now within Indigenous communities, is a testament to failures of public health to create social change. In and amongst this brief discourse of a lengthy subject on public health practice, the idea that social media and the use of mobile technology as a useful tool to harness the agency of Indigenous
individuals to take ownership and control of their health and their destiny within their current social disadvantage seemed to appear contradictory (Rennie et al. 2016). It seemed to me that this type of public health practice had set up the oppressed people to fail at the onset. Although communication technology could be persuasive (Fogg 2002) in specific contexts, mobile technology and social media were often assumed to have the power to change personal behaviour without the consideration of the influence of history, culture, kinship and the environment of the individual and the community.

According to Kowal (2015 p. 17) ‘a range of scholars including Indigenous Australian academics, have questioned whether identities rooted in the past and present oppressions could only reinforce their marginalisation'. The reinforcement of Indigenous marginalisation, depicted as health narratives in the health promotion effort, albeit done with transparent and accountable motives, has entrapped Indigenous health in a cycle of deficits (Thrift, Nancarrow & Bauman 2011; Kowal 2015). The effect of this on my research was twofold. Firstly I had to become more reflexive and skilful in language and culture in order build a more extensive network (kinship-led) than earlier envisaged, to capture the intellectual discourse of not only Yolngu leaders, and the feminist discourse but the unheard voices of men, who were often unsuccessfully engaged by the public health and health promotion communications strategists. My second challenge was to accept, document and discuss my position as a researcher on a doctoral scholarship (although a descendant of a Tamil Indigenous tribe and had grown up in a developing country), and the implications for engagement, entirely different to the
familiar dichotomy of Indigenous or non-Indigenous which Yolngu were accustomed.
CHAPTER 4 - THE MACASSAN RETURNS AS RESEARCHER

(METHOD SECTION)

'The cross-cultural perspective is a critical part of anthropology.'

(Agar 1996, p. 73)

The ethical conduct of research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is underpinned by six core values that have been a guide in this study and will be evident in the engagement and maintenance of relationship before, during and after this study. In the first core value, one that binds the other five values together, I have shown respect to the Aboriginal people of North East Arnhem Land, precisely through the study of the different languages and following the Yolngu law of kinship and reciprocity. In this thesis, I have put together a short history of the leaders and traditional owners whom I have acknowledged as having had considerable influence on my research and the understanding of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

In the second value of demonstrating cultural continuity, the reader will see that as a research, my reflexivity and relationship with Yolngu mentors, leaders in the Aboriginal Medical Services, including those who had accepted me as kin and member of the Rirarrtjingu clan, were the foundation on which my research and analysis is based upon. Here the reader will see a gamut of narratives that capture both the communal as well and the diverse or heterogeneous identity in the Yolngu community.
Aboriginal culture, history and impact in the scholarly world is also well documented and weaved into a discussion on the social life of things and the imminent globalisation in North East Arnhem Land. In my efforts to redistribute my perceived benefits and the apparent knowledge that I have gained, I continue to support Aboriginal Health Practitioners in professional and personal efforts. After this research, I have involved one community member to be paid, in a joint research project. Before completing this study, the broader Yolngu community and I collaborated on an ethnographic film to showcase Indigenous Knowledge Systems and an Indigenous Health Promotion Effort around tobacco control. The details of this story are available in Appendix 3.

The efforts to incorporate reciprocity into my daily routine and learning as well as sharing of my resources and knowledge are weaved into the pages of this thesis with humility and thankfulness to the community. My engagement has been responsible and guided every step of the way by Yolngu mentors and senior elders. Consent that was free, prior and informed in all aspects of my research procedure was attained without any coercion, force or the withholding of service and assistance. Ample time was provided for participants to consider and withdrawal from the research was processed immediately. The formal study of the Yolngu language groups and cultural competency courses I attended during my work in the Department of Health in the Northern Territory Government and upon commencing my doctoral study at Charles Darwin University was reinforced by courses conducted by Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation and seminars at the annual Garma Festival.
As ethnographic research is void of research protocols that rigidly trap and confound the exploration and meaning making process with apriori assumptions, I request the reader to apply a systems thinking perspective in studying this thesis. Just as information systems scholars may use confessional ethnography (Schultze 2000), critical ethnography (Myers 1997), postmodern ethnography (Harvey 1997) and Netnography (Campbell et al. 2009), system thinking scholars posit that we need to see how things are connected to each other within an entity (Baskerville & Myers 2014). Rather than relying on implicit models or assumptions of how functional elements of a given phenomenon are connected to each other as well as how things will turn out from an intervention (as discussed in Chapter 3), Peters (2014) argues that as researchers we must strive to improve the quality of our perception of the phenomena as a whole including its parts, and especially how its parts interact within and between each other. In order to achieve this I have used ethnography, a methodology that is now becoming quintessential in engineering design, social innovation, information systems design and organizational change with a hope that these sciences will be incorporated into public health system thinking in the future.

4.1 THE STRANGER

I was the new ‘stranger’ to Yolngu in the Gove Peninsula between July 2012 and January 2013. Nhulunbuy, a small transient town with long-term non-Yolngu residents, kept to small circles of friends, so those who recently arrived were commonly grouped as ‘new strangers’ compared to those who were ‘permanent strangers’. One can tell the new stranger by the way they engaged with Yolngu and the way they succumbed to buying art in front of Woolworths or felt pressured to
lend someone money. The other strangers were superficially friendly people who kept to themselves in a close network of colleagues, neighbours or community club members.

The surf club in Nhulunbuy was where all the Balanda (European) congregated for a drink and a burger, every Friday night. ‘Goveites’, as residents of Nhulunbuy, socialised within their networks, discussed work and leisure activities without any participation from the Yolngu community. It is possible that the membership fees of the surf club endeavoured to produce that effect and rendered this non-Indigenous community an exclusive setting.

The director of public health of the regional Aboriginal medical service, invited me to show her my draft of the research proposal and offered to help me engage the Miwatj Board (the regional Aboriginal Medical Service) in a discussion of my research intentions and request a letter of support and provide recommendations and guidance to my study. I accepted her offer, and we consulted on the proposal, outlined the questions that would be of use to the public health program at Miwatj Health and made a list of key contacts to consult. The director of public health was also keen on experimenting with mobile technology and had applied for a grant to trial its use with the men in the Strong Fathers Strong Families Program in Yirrkala.

She suggested that I applied for a position as the Regional Tobacco Coordinator, which I declined to dedicate time and ethical practice to my research. According to Hine (2015 p. 5), the ‘ethnographer can best focus on understanding modes of life through immersion in them, learning their values and practices from the inside, and
focusing on making active and strategic choices about what to study and how to study it’. I saw employment with an Aboriginal Corporation as a challenge for my immersion. Due to specific policies and practices, the employment structure would have created a conflict of interest and raised complex ethical concerns that would negatively impact on the study.

During my first field trip to Yirrkala, I worked closely with a public health practitioner and socialised with Yolngu community activists; particularly John and Jack. On the second field trip, before relocating permanently to Birritjimi, I spent four weeks where I consulted stakeholders about my research, documented their suggestions and concerns and offered them the opportunity to participate in the critique of the research question during its draft stages (Appendix 2).

I made appointments over the phone and struggled with the fear of rejection as I had been repeatedly told that non-Indigenous researchers were not welcome in the region. Some organisations were friendly and found at least thirty minutes of their time to meet with me, while others never returned my calls or replied to my emails. The period of being a stranger lasted only briefly as I implemented a strategy to learn and understand as many critical historical accounts (Warner 1958; Thomson & Petersen 1983; Marika & Isaacs 1995) of prominent leaders of the Yolngu world, both past and present. I learnt from past anthropologists that to understand the culture and the law, is to show respect to the Yolngu people (Reid 1983). Showing respect to my Yolngu acquaintances was not an easy task even though I was in awe of their culture, and their language, which sounded almost like Tamil, sprinkled with Malay lexicon, even though I found the languages and customs very
complicated. Here, there is no Lonely Planet book for tourists or adventurers. I tried to connect to the Yolngu community through volunteering with Djarrak Football Club, through my friendship with Bakamumu Marika, the leader of the Rirratjingu clan and my Yolngu friend and mentor, Waninya Marika.

4.2 OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF REJECTION

Having grown up as one of an ethnic minority in Malaysia, I was trained to ‘know my place’ in society. As a product of a post-colonial society steeped in institutional racism (Wilford 2007), I could not help but feel inadequate and undeserving in asking the government and non-governmental organisations for a meeting and especially a letter of support for my research. This process made me nervous and disempowered. I made appointments and attended meetings and wrote letters of requests for a supporting letter, attached with an executive summary and with the correct methodology (Agar 2004; Yunupingu & Muller 2009; DeWalt & DeWalt 2010; Coburn et al. 2013), explicitly stating how the research was culturally appropriate and culturally sensitive. I sought support from the Centre for Disease Control; the former workplace where I had initially begun my study of social media and mobile phones for health promotion. The director showed little interest in my research proposal and remarked that by the time my study was completed, Facebook might not exist as things were changing so rapidly. The challenges that came from initiating this study sometimes seemed insurmountable.

The more I tried to be present in the community and take note of my observations, the more my ‘ideas and notions were challenged and resisted by the actions and words of those (non-Yolngu) within the setting’ as discussed by DeWalt and
DeWalt (2010 p. 15). The expectation of my Yolngu observers was for me to engage in pure participation, described by Jorgensen (1989) in DeWalt and DeWalt (2010) as ‘going native’ and ‘becoming the phenomena’, a standard position and expectation held by many Indigenous people from interstate and non-Indigenous sympathisers of Yolngu.

The Traditional Owner of Yirrkala, Mr Bakamumu Marika returned my request for permission to conduct my research with a different perspective; a positive and supportive outlook with the hope that his people might benefit from our collaboration. In an email sent from his iPhone, he wrote; ‘Dear Kishan, it is my honour and privilege, to allow you to do research in my community and to help my people, please feel free to email me or contact me on my phone’. Bakamumu’s letter and support during the subsequent years in the Gove Peninsula were instrumental in co-creating meaning in my ethnography.

4.3 BECOMING PHENOMENA

My family and I drove into Birritjimi from Nhulunbuy Airport at ten in the morning with a carload of personal belongings, mostly clothes and books, when doors to the twenty-five decommissioned Rio Tinto dwellings that constituted the community, were still shut and everyone was half asleep. These houses were considered to be in one of the most vulnerable areas to cyclone strength winds, which we, fortunately, escaped in 2015. Only the dogs came out to see the new arrivals. There were only four or five dogs and to my relief, they were not as many as the camp dogs I had first encountered in Alice Springs three years earlier.
The name Birritjimi was used interchangeably with Wallaby Beach by Yolngu and non-Indigenous residents. It had been Wallaby Beach until after the houses were handed back to Rirratjingu traditional owners. Birritjimi was twenty kilometres away from Yirrkala, the Rirratjingu clan’s administrative capital. The ‘Sugar Bag Man created Birritjimi’, and it was here that the mining company set up two rows of houses for their managers with a bicycle trail leading to the refinery to the West and Nhulunbuy to the East of the Gove Peninsula. The road to Yirrkala from Birritjimi was sealed, comfortable and scenic. The big trucks took the dirt road, and carried the bauxite, as did the conveyor belts carrying more to the refinery.

Over the months I observed, as I became, the observed. My Yolngu neighbours and colleagues sophisticatedly regulated my participation and even observations. They answered some questions willingly, ignored others comfortably, provided ‘trans-relevant’ answers to a few queries enthusiastically and brushed away my curiosity during certain occasions. I showed my anger and frustration in the open just as my neighbours did, and learnt to decline in the same manner of sophistication bordering on dishonesty with ample courtesy and tact. My Yolngu friends and neighbours most likely experienced a similar difficulty regarding my behaviour. Customary as it was in my culture to entertain guests at a table over a meal; I had embarrassed the male guests by cooking in the kitchen and served them food. To my benefit, it was my ‘Ngapipi’ (uncle) from Elcho Island who was bold and confident enough in our relationship to question my position in the household as the cook.

Luckily, even though I did not attend Hindu Temples, I drew on the function of the priest who also acted as a cook to raise my status in the eyes of my Ngapipi (uncle)
and Malu (father). I stressed that another man could only do the preparation and serving of food for essential men. My male guests were happy with this explanation. I tactfully assured my male friends, that I was not disempowered by my Balanda (European) galay (wife). During one dinner with my wife’s colleagues from Galiwin’ku, a senior Galpu man with relatives in Birritjimi was obliged to answer his mobile phone every three minutes on average with polite replies of ‘bayngu rrupiah’ (no money). He answered the phone politely, with no signs of frustration. These experiences taught me how to decline and yet feel comfortable and to question Europeans norms that I have grown accustomed. Travel out from the community for work always attracted lucrative per diems was known as T.A (travel allowance) and relatives had become aware of this extra cash flow and would call to ask for financial assistance. That was why my guest was compelled to answer his phone not to send the wrong message that he was hiding his money from them, a hypothesis which he generously confirmed over dessert.

4.3.1 Engagement - building connections and expanding networks

In the colder days when the sun began to set, I practised standing between Gerry's house and ours, cautious of two community dogs, shirtless and barefoot. I forced time to slow down and my vision to re-sensitise to this new environment, where I observed a different pace and beat in the community. I noticed the number of people who had woken up as I started to wind down for the day. The young parents in their early teens and twenties walked past our house with their children, and often visited the Tongan shop stocked with Coca-Cola, flour and sugar. I memorised words and sentences from my friends teaching me Gumatj and used Gupapuyngu from a textbook gifted by a professor to me before the relocation to Birritjimi. A mix of
both these languages became my tools for making friends, demystifying my presence and introducing my ethnographic research in the community. Beginning with a greeting and asking the passers-by the name of their clan, and what can be hunted and whether there were mud crabs available, had a positive effect on growing my connections and networks.

I became inquisitive when I discarded my ideas of professionalism and university qualifications. To every person I met or was introduced to, I asked for their Yolngu name soon after they mentioned their English ‘yaku’ (name). I typed their names, where we met, their clan name and skin name directly into the Notes application of my iPhone 4. I was guided by the need for researchers to show profound respect by Reid (1983) and that shaped my method of engagement to acquire and incorporate a childlike fascination for everything from the history of tobacco, to hand signals and stories of Macassan heritage, which helped pave the way to learning from Yolngu. I shared with my friends a few intimate and significant personal stories of conflict in my own family in Malaysia, broken relationships, sibling rivalry, jealousy and anger. More interestingly, we discussed the power imbalance between black and white people, our shared experiences of inferiority and submission to a post-colonial reality. To avoid standing out in Birritjimi and making others feel inconvenienced by our benign ‘invasion’, we consciously left the yard in front and around the back of our house untouched, mirroring the same conditions of the yards of our neighbours. Imitating the way our neighbours ‘cared’ for their land and property, we focused on the stunning views, the serenity, peace and relationship which life in Birritjimi provided. But after six weeks, a cyclone ‘clean up’ motivated us into a spring clean.
We could no longer ignore the piles of dried leaves in the backyard and the possibility of snakes hiding between the leaves endangering the children who played there all the time and cultivated a desire to see a patch of green lawn again. When my wife returned from a conference with her Yolngu colleagues in Canberra, she brought a hose and a sprinkler with her because we noticed our immediate neighbour on the left had begun watering her lawn. She had also placed on erected logs about one metre high from the ground, giant oyster shells as decoration, seven of them in total, which drew a covert border between her property and her neighbours. She also had a few potted plants of which none had flowered. After setting up our sprinkler in the front yard, we started clearing up the backyard. This effort immediately resulted in the erection of a black tarp, an iron curtain between our house and the neighbour on the left with the giant oyster shells on display.

Figure 4.1: The pile of leaves against the tarp fence
We could not understand why the tarp had gone up when we were only cleaning up
the leaves. Were we colonising their space or invading their privacy? I endeavoured
to be aware of our presence and the potential effect this may have on the neighbours
and as a result looked for opportunities to soften our dominating presence.
Nevertheless, our relationship gradually grew, and we had other opportunities to
build trust and friendship. The hospitality of my neighbours extended as far as their
front door, the porch and the sandy beach, the sunset and friendships our children
made with their grandchildren. We never entered a home, and neither were we ever
invited, but gladly accepted guests and playdates with the children in our home. The
windows in our house encouraged our movements to be followed and reduced
suspicion (Reid 1983). My neighbours’ windows, however, were always covered
on the inside with curtains, newspaper and left-over duct tape from a previous
cyclone threat. Many windows had been replaced with wooden boards making the
already oven-like dwelling hotter in the wet season. The kids roamed around the
community as they would in a playground, barefoot, shirtless, and swam at the
beach claiming that it was shallow enough to spot a crocodile to escape in time.

The legs of the children had a few wounds. Some healed well, and others left scars.
One ten-year-old fell on an open fire, as had his ancestors during the Mission days,
as Ella Shepherdson (1981) had recorded in her diary, where she treated adults and
children who rolled into the open fire in their sleep. Somehow, resiliently, open
wounds healed with little scarring, but another quiet and life-threatening illness took its place, scarring the heart, kidney and skin, resulting in a lifelong dependency

Rheumatic Heart Disease
on the clinic, and even surgery for rheumatic heart disease and kidney failure (Currie & Carapetis 2000).

My son fell on his back on the road in front of our house. It was only a superficial wound, so familiar in Birritjimi that the other kids, usually very careful of the welfare of the younger ones, urged the games to continue without stopping to alert us at home. A week later, he was tested positive for Streptococcus A. My son was fortunate that his father was capable of requesting a specific test because of pediatric medicine training, but this was not at all an everyday skills set in the Yolngu community. It taught me how much risk the children were at contracting Streptococcus A. This was puzzling because I recalled how much attention was given to a more complex aetiology of being infected with, for example, scabies as discussed in Currie and Carapetis (2000).

The immersion in Yolngu history became a newfound passion and gateway for more profound and more meaningful engagement. I made it a point to identify my Yolngu friends' clan, moiety and ancestors based on their surname, after having
learnt the names of all the elders and their respective clans through the study of Warner (1958), Thomson and Petersen (1983), Marika and Isaacs (1995), Reid (1983) and the collection of interviews from Ian Dunlop’s Yirrkala Film Project. Ian Dunlop’s ethnographic films helped me understand the context and history with its rich visual frames filled with background noise, movements, discussions, and body language.

Although many people were friendly and accepted my presence, still many more were suspicious and avoided my acquaintance. They chose to have nothing to do with me. Several senior men and women refused to exchange more than a glance with me even though we shared mutual friends but when out of the Yolngu public gaze (usually at the Captain Cook Shopping Centre), they conversed freely with me or made eye contact. The politics between and within Yolngu families were elaborate and sophisticated. In this context alliances and loyalties could sometimes be questioned without relevant pretext. With this conclusion, I managed to free myself from the feeling that I had spoilt a relationship and moved on and focused on those who were comfortable with me. It was not possible to comprehend everything. It was around this time that my reflections and questioning led to an awareness of clan affiliations (Rowse 2012) or ‘Ringgitj’.

4.4 CULTURAL IMMERSION

My attempted immersion in the community was punctuated by phases of shock, anger and awe (DeWalt & DeWalt 2010) as I realised that participation in the life of my informants became a reflection of the words of Geertz in DeWalt and DeWalt (2010, p. 29); ‘You don’t exactly penetrate another culture, as the masculinist image
would have it. You put yourself in its way, and its bodies forth and enmesh you’.

The enmeshing of my ‘self’ by my Yolngu informants began the deconstruction of a capitalist modus operandi that challenged everything I had learnt, particularly my desensitised view of the post-colonial repression of Indigenous people including my colonial heritage (Rowse 2012).

After six months, the emotional involvement from the cultural immersion began to take shape. An understanding of who to ‘know’ and how much participation was necessary became clear from the kinship networks and affiliations between the Marika family, volunteering with Djarrak Football Club in Yirrkala and the nights out in town. I became physically ill from the stress engendered by the steep learning curve. As someone who had seen suffering and marginalisation but had become desensitised, the plight of the Yolngu in Birritjimi and Yirrkala was opening up old wounds and this disturbed me both emotionally and mentally. The injustice heaped upon women, children and some men in the community were challenging to understand. The children played amongst rusted and discarded cars, eating very little, while their mothers resorted to buying tinned food, flour and Ngarali (cigarettes) that appeased hunger temporarily and made the best of their predicament.

‘Who adopt you?’ was what I assumed to be the Yolngu approach to determining what kin relationship held us together and how we would refer to each other; whether as ‘wawa’ (brother) or ‘ngapipi’ (uncle) and other familial designations. At one point I felt that my adopted brother had exclusive rights to my resources where other Yolngu especially from other clans, as a result, were not encouraged to
share in that connection. Many would walk away without explanation or conclusion after hearing that I was adopted into the Rirratjingu clan. Brice, a Dhalwangu man, my beloved friend from Birritjimi was beyond ‘adoption’ and superficial kinship ties and was always affectionate to my family and me.

Yolngu volunteered sporadically to become part of my life in Birritjimi, and sometimes their involvement ceased or refrained temporarily. I assumed this had to do with the economic, social and political dramas that ruled the lives of Yolngu, not knowing which affiliations will see them through their current or future hardship. My lack of a traditional office space made time for me to walk around in the town square where I was accepted to ‘hang out’ with Djarrak boys, or danced amongst them at the Arnhem Club and posted Facebook photos of my grandparents, great-grandparents and family in Malaysia until I became predictable and familiar to Yolngu. I was often overwhelmed with information, much of which was lost by the time I made it to a quiet corner to type what I could remember into my iPhone. Pen and paper, although useful tool, would have disabled my identity as a learner and projected the image of a potentially malignant researcher stealing information from Yolngu only to misrepresent it later.

4.5 EXPLAINING MY RESEARCH, JUSTIFYING MY INTRUSION

I practised explaining my research with Yolngu opportunistically. I tried different syntaxes and sentence structures, using words that did not merely convey my intentions but created a well-balanced overview of my study. It was customary for most men to be engaged in work with Rio Tinto Alcan, government departments,
Miwatj Health or with one of the many businesses and it confused Yolngu when I said I was a university student. My replies to Yolngu’s inquiry about my study evolved and became more complicated as I refined my relationships in the community, which in turn affected the formulation of my research questions. These were some examples of my responses when asked about my research activities:

- I’m here to learn Yolngu Matha and Yolngu culture to study in university.
- I’m now learning about Yolngu history, about Mawalan, Wandjuk, Milirrpum and Roy Marika, leaders from Yirrkala.
- I’m here to learn how Yolngu used the new technology brought by Macassans to Arnhem Land.
- I’m here to learn about how Yolngu use new technology like mobile phones, Facebook and YouTube in Arnhem Land.

I learnt to diversify my cultural advisors, informants and networks as widely as possible. Limiting my study to a few select people would not allow for a well-rounded understanding of the social life of the community and its actors, especially the personalised tools they used so discreetly, i.e. mobile phones and social media (Blakeman 2015). Eventually, suspicion from both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents in the Peninsula was resolved through repeated interactions and the sight of my children and wife. I established my presence at the town shops, on the oval three times a week and during late night conversations at the Walkabout Hotel and the Arnhem Club. My Yolngu friends began to formulate their definition of my doctoral study. To them, I was interested in foreign objects that did not belong to Yolngu. I was not interested in ‘manikay’ (traditional songs) or ‘bapurru’
(traditional ceremony), and instead, my questions and interests were about trivial yet discreet (Blakeman 2015) objects like Facebook and mobile phones.

My conversations with Yolngu opened with an acknowledgement of the great leaders of the past like Mawalan, Wandjuk, Wonggu, Munggurawuy, Daymbalipu and Narritjin. Yolngu always welcomed this topic without suspicion, and even the quiet ones were able to come out and speak with great fondness of their forefathers. The ethnographic films from Ian Dunlop were also shot at the same Walkabout Hotel, where the young people, still unemployed were spending their welfare payments and time “de-Missionizing” their past and becoming globalised, more autonomous and merely doing what they liked doing (Burbank 2006). It became apparent to me that such a setting was more conducive to talking to men, some who were senior elders while other were youth and emerging leaders. Together, we worked diligently to theorise on the adoption of new technology speaking comparatively of the processes that took place during the Macassan era and generating ideas on how best for me to operate as an ethnographer.

This ethnography was mainly influenced by Wandjuk’s use of the typewriter (Marika & Isaacs 1983) and by Mawalan’s legacy. The latter had taught his oldest daughters to create works of art for economic sustainability. The adoption and use of wireless radio by leaders of the Djapu clan during the homelands movements of the seventies was also attractive to the study. By connecting these stories of their leaders using new technology and Mawalan’s social innovation, I was able to hear from my informants and interviewees and took note of their analysis of the current use of mobile technology and social media amongst Yolngu.
4.6 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING - A NON-REDUCTIONIST APPROACH

The unreasonable demands of any research work with human beings and the ethics committee required a reductionist approach to the standard age and gender categories. At draft stages of my proposal, I thought of young people like teenagers and young adults. Teenagers were boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 19, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), when young adults were people between the ages of 18 and 3424. This slight overlap but the stark difference between teenagers and young adults was evident. In my research proposal, I chose to look at the social life of the mobile phone and social media amongst teenagers and young adults, with the overlap mentioned earlier, as including 18 to 34 year-olds.

According to the categorisation of age, in the Yolngu system, there were no words for teenagers or young adults. Yolngu have not appropriated English words for teenagers in the same way they have taken ‘mutikar’ for the motorcar. For example, a male Yolngu was raised from ‘you’ (baby) to ‘djamarrkuli’ (child) and then became ‘dhirramu’ (man). It was obvious to me after receiving ethical approval and living in Birritjimi that the ‘dhirramu’ cohort I was following ranged from 12-14 years to a man in his early 40s, but not a senior elder, traditional owner or ‘bungguwa’ (leader).

Adding to this layer of complexity was the kinship designations that intertwined different roles and relative seniority amongst Yolngu men and women (Williams 1986). An uncle, grandfather, or nephew was simultaneously a senior relative to an older man even though still a teenager. People lived their lives relative to each other (Feinberg & Ottenheimer 2001), not merely based on ‘age’ differences, but according to Yolngu system of Gurrutu – kinship (Williams 1986). The ‘mother-child’ relationship or ‘Yothu Yindi’ (Williams 1986) is a central organising and negotiating structure, according to Christie & Perret (1996) in Muller (2012). A lateral supporting structure to this form of central structure (Christie and Perret 1996 in Muller 2014), were defined by women. Williams (1986) refers to the ‘mari gutharra’ (grandmother-grandchild) relationship which together with ‘yothu yindi’ relationships created ‘a set of interlocking rights and duties and provided the structure for a comprehensive set of checks and balances in the Yolngu’ world (Williams 1986 p. 52).

Guided by Williams (1986), my sampling strategy became geared towards interviewing a sufficient number of informants with a ‘yothu yindi’ and ‘mari gutharra’ connection. Since many of my engagements with Yolngu men were temporally sporadic, informal and during the late hours of the night, my ability to engage them was due to the absence of the colonial method of pen, paper, consent forms and tape recorder. A traditional anthropological approach would have reduced the interaction into an exchange of possible guesses of right answers to what would have been perceived as European inquiry.
I had ample opportunity to discuss and cross check all my learnings between men from different clans with a yothu yindi and mari gutharra relationship to me and therefore allocated my in-depth interviews with people who were harder to talk to but were available during business hours in an office or formal setting, particularly women. Here, the participant information sheets and consent forms were used with interviewees who complimented the open masculine discourse with Indigenous feminist perspectives. Countering the fears of Marika, Ngurruwuthun & White (2009), my position as a non-Indigenous researcher was reversed in that sometimes I became the ‘object’ of research under the subjective gaze of the Indigenous people and therefore claimed no expertise in the outcomes of this ethnography. It is obvious to me that as I became objectified under the subjective Indigenous gaze, the writing of what I saw and how I participated, the answers and analysis that I recorded was based on the ‘objectivity’ conferred upon me by my Indigenous informants. In brief, I go so far as to claim that this ethnography was a joint effort of participants, observers, the observed, the non-participants and the non-observed.

I interviewed a total of twelve people through in-depth interviews that lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. Community members who expressed their wish to participate in this study voluntarily were given the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 5) and Consent Form (Appendix 6) for their consideration. When the potential interview participant had had enough time to peruse and think about their commitment as well as discuss within their families, and a decision was made, they would contact me via mobile phone or Facebook and arrange for me to collect the signed documents.
The initial interviews were formal and required a lot of time to explain my research purpose, privacy and confidentiality and the use of consent forms, and that a participant can withdraw from the research at any time. It took several interactions and meetings, which also included coincidental meet-ups with common acquaintances at the shops that enabled them to agree to an interview.

The interviews were organised after mapping out services and programs in which interactions with young people or teenagers took place. Follow-up informal interviews were held opportunistically for comments and insights as events and observations unfolded between 2013 and 2015. The comments and feedback between interviews and informal follow-ups based on current events provided complexity and depth to the ethnography. Between five and ten potential interview participants rejected my request to be interviewed but were happy to discuss the subject over informal interviews that took place opportunistically over a period of two years. They participated by verbally sharing their screenshots of conversation and comments made in the online space. The quotes that have made it into the thesis with the expressed permission of the interview participants have been paraphrased to avoid identification and the breaking of confidentiality. We conducted interviews in the town library, at the Walkabout café, in a private room at Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation Office, over the phone and at the Yirrkala primary school.

4.6.1 Limitations of Ethnography

The two fundamental characteristics of this research method, firstly make it quite conducive to partnership and the empowerment of research with Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander people as it requires the researcher to immerse in the context entirely. Examples of such immersion, the study of history, culture and the language of the Yolngu were provided in this chapter and alluded to from time to time in the body of this thesis. A cross-cultural perspective was sometimes referred to enable a distinct perspective to the white non Indigenous research having never experienced the other end of colonisation (Hammersly 2018; Orr 2016; Pink 2015).

The reliability of this study, however, is a question that will trouble the reader as it is measured by the ability of another researcher to replicate this study. Because I was the first and to date, the only non-Indigenous researcher from a developing country my approach and method had minor variations that make reproduction difficult. Unlike other research where the external variables are well controlled, ethnographic research does not have this facility but can be better guided by the community and the events that occur and the effects these events have on the narrative, rather than a sterile living lab that provides little context and complexity of the phenomena (Hammersly 2018; Orr 2016; Pink 2015).

Table 4.1 in the following pages is a summary of my in-depth interview participants.
Table 4.1: Table of In-depth Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Interesting features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3918</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Part-time app developer. Trained in Yolngu cultural protocol in health service provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3917</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Community worker, manager</td>
<td>Provided the first Internet service and computer training program for Yolngu teenagers, and financial counselling for young adults and elders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3916 James</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Men’s program manager, youth worker, Drug and alcohol workshop organiser</td>
<td>Accompanied the growth and development of several young people from childhood to young adulthood in Yirrkala. Lives in Yirrkala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3915</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Agriculturalist</td>
<td>Worked in partnership with strong women in Yirrkala, and mentors their grandsons. Lives in Yirrkala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3914</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Financial counsellor and trainer for Internet and phone banking in North East Arnhem Land.</td>
<td>Studied Facebook as an honours project for her undergraduate degree. Worked closely with Yolngu men and women to use Facebook Pages to source free resources and air charters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3913 Sean</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior management in Aboriginal Corporation. Lived in and worked in remote Aboriginal communities.</td>
<td>iPad and internet project developer for young men in Yirrkala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Interesting features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3912</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Youth sport and recreation worker moved from a remote community to Nhulunbuy.</td>
<td>The organiser of a remote community football league.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3911 Cindy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior woman. Entrepreneur.</td>
<td>Worked closely with Yothu Yindi and other youth projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3910 Janet</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Daughter of late Yolngu leader. Manager of the well-being program.</td>
<td>Insight into the lives of teenagers in the community pre- and post-mobile phone and social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3909 Sam</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior female elder. Manager. Mother of teenagers.</td>
<td>In-depth analysis of relationships and the dynamics of jealousy between romantic partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3908 Joe</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cultural advisor, interpreter, chairman of the Aboriginal board.</td>
<td>A young adult with experience of the first introduction of the mobile phone in the community. Uses Facebook to engage the European and Yolngu community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3907</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Senior elder is orbiting between two remote communities including Yirrkala. Called me up to inform about Galka. Doesn’t believe in Galka. Health worker.</td>
<td>Mobile phone Facebook use. ‘Hangs out’ with the young adults.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5 - YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR EXPLORATION OF TECHNOLOGY

The Buku Larrnggay Mulka Arts Centre provided four Apple iMacs available for the use of the community. A small room with a long table for the computers was purpose-built against a glass window looking into a theatre. It was an after-school ‘technology playground’ for teenagers and children. Instead of footballs and boots, young people brought a pair of headphones and cables to connect smartphones, Samsung flip phones and MP3 players to the computers when their music playlist needed an update or to watch videos on YouTube. The facility was air-conditioned, and some young people chose to escape their boredom into the cold comfort of the Arts Centre for a few hours, instead of sitting at home under old fans that moved hot air around. The Mulka Centre was established to protect the cultural knowledge and cultural capital of the Yolngu of Northeast Arnhem Land under the management of Traditional Owners and community members. The centre provided a training ground for future Indigenous leaders, employment opportunities for youth and a production house for Indigenous inspired art and media.

According to Taylor (2012), a digital divide has long existed for residents in the remote Northern Territory, but since the roll-out of the Internet-enabled ‘Next G’ mobile network from 2006, its affordability had allowed organisations to share their Internet access with the broader community, as seen in Yirrkala. Although the Indigenous residents in the Northern Territory made up a third of a 230,000 (Taylor 2012) and were more disadvantaged especially from a socio-economic standpoint
when compared to other Australians (Taylor 2012), their recent access to the
Internet had become ubiquitous (Taylor 2012; Brusse et al. 2014; Carlson et al.
2015).

The theatre in the media room was connected to one of the iMacs. A variety of
favourite Yothu Yindi music videos and Yolngu Boy (a film about young men and
petrol sniffing in Yirrkala) were often screened. The football grand-final between
Djarrak, Gopu or Nguykal were often played for kids who watched their brothers
and uncles perform acrobatic stunts on the oval. Amateur dance competitions were
also screened in the theatre with young people who choreographed and performed
their version of contemporary Indigenous youth culture. Benches were built into
the theatre for seating and under the large screen on stage was a stage enough for a
small four-piece band. Kinship, men, history from Ian Dunlop’s documentaries and
sporting victories of the past were celebrated through the aid of YouTube videos
played in the theatre for a growing young generation in the process of identity
formation. The Mulka Project, responsible for recording the events at the Garma
Festival and family funerals, made and archived the videos for everyone in the
community, according to Gurrutu (kinship).

The Mulka Project had many instruments; cameras, iMacs and computer servers of
professional standard and quality. They also acquired a drone amongst their well-
equipped inventory. The equipment was purchased from grants, and some were
gifted as a symbol of partnership and solidarity. Behind the director’s desk was a
photograph of Wonggu Mununggur. Wonggu was a Djapu clan leader, who had
twenty-five wives and was a symbol of power and revered by young and old, a story
I learnt from reading Thomson & Petersen (1983). He took what was not ‘his’ through the aid of his spear and gained prestige and power for his clan. The Indigenous director, in his forties, spoke English intertwined with ‘Dhangu’ (a spoken language in Yirrkala), chewed Nicorette, and was uninterested when he met a researcher or ‘do-gooder’ as he called me.

I imposed myself on him as a Tamil with a Malay education instead of a doctoral student from Menzies School of Health Research. When I thought I had his attention, I opened up to him about my research intentions and asked for his opinion. He walked into the media room, turned on a computer, and started a search through the archives. When he finally found it, he suggested that he had the answer to all my future inquiries. He played a YouTube video clip of an anti-tobacco social marketing music video with three teenage girls and young men. The production of the video clip was based on a familiar template generally used in remote Indigenous communities. Hip-hop music in Yolngu Matha was performed by a group of six teenage boys and girls with this call for action: “Yaka, Yaka, Yaka, bunjjurrngarali” (Don’t, don’t, don’t smoke tobacco).

I watched the video clip carefully, trying to pick out what he wanted me to understand, and tried hard not to be found out that, compared to him I had a minimal idea of how to read the hidden behaviours of this well-choreographed video clip in a cultural context more complicated than I was accustomed to. He carefully pointed out to me certain faint elements in the body language, which he interpreted as being contradictory to the message in the song. Having raised his children in Yirrkala, he interpreted the attitude of the performers based on his experience of almost twenty-
five years of community life. He explained how these young people disregarded the
message they had sung and how the process of raising awareness on the harms of
smoking, was instead a futile activity and waste of precious resources enriching
everyone except people in Yirrkala. His advice to me and everyone else coming to
Yirrkala as do-gooders were this; to leave the young people alone, focus on
providing jobs and stop telling them what to do. He was not angry in his approach
to the development of healthy behaviours, but he suggested leaving ‘teenagers'
alone without health promotion messages. I did not initially realise that his words
would prompt me to think about public health and health promotion differently, as
discussed in Chapter 3. In the meantime, the four iMacs sat elegantly and waited
patiently for me to explore the digital footprints left by the majority of young users.

I used open and publicly accessible records available on the browser history in the
computers on each computer to get an idea of the iMac users’ recent web activity.
These applications were created as a quick and easy way for users to navigate to
frequently used websites. They do not reveal any personal information. There were
four-to-five weeks of ‘browser history’ on each of the computers in the Arts Centre.
I mustered the courage to ask the director for permission to view the browser history
on the iMacs. He had already returned to his desk, quite happy with himself after
proving to me that music videos benefited no Yolngu teenager. As Hine (2015 p. 8)
argued, ‘no single solution to doing ethnography for the Internet will be found,
because what the Internet is can vary so dramatically’, made me think about
diversifying my methods of investigation and exposure to the social life of mobile
phones and Internet activity on social media websites for the formulation of my
research question.
My request, formulated with a tone of apology and hope, instead of curiosity and excitement seemed to make him consider, and we continued our discussion. He changed his trajectory from his desk and the phones that continued to ring, as the dry tourist season was approaching, to a mounted iPad at the entrance of the exhibition hall. The iPad was mounted and locked with a particular case that provided users with access to the Arts Centre's digital information portal. The lock on the iPad made it impossible to return to the 'home' screen, with all its other applications, and therefore access to the Internet. These iPad fixtures in galleries and exhibitions were an interactive tool designed for the curious tourist and visitor, enabling them to watch and listen instead of reading pamphlets and brochures. Without hesitation, I whipped out my iPhone, interrupted his introduction and with his permission, started to film what he called a groovy story of how young people interacted with an iPad purpose-built as an information portal to the artefacts and artwork on display. The young adopters he said, ‘Within twelve hours of setting up the system, had hacked it, and completely subverted it [and] made the system suit their desires, and their desires were to see images of themselves’.

‘They subverted the plan’, he said with a proud conviction. ‘These young people have not been trained in this, they do not have access to a home computer, they do not have a photo album, they do not generally have a mirror in their house,’ he continued trying to paint a pictorial context of my benefit. As prolific users of mobile technology, young people in Yirrkala were subverting the plan to suit their exploration of a world within and outside Yirrkala. According to the director, it was a futile attempt to force a plan or agenda onto young people in Yirrkala and believed
that they cannot be directed, persuaded or coerced with seemingly superficial benefits. He said, ‘Just give them access to the technology’ implying that technology would either entertain or provide jobs and improve standards of living in Yirrkala.

The questions I considered were:

• What empowered these young people to ‘subvert the plan’, appropriating the technology which was meant for public use into a device for entertainment?

• Were they having fun or creating?

• Why was this interpreted as a discourse on power instead of a set of low expectations of young people?

These were young people who also used YouTube as an archive for videos made from Samsung flip phones to Android or Apple smartphones and shared with family members across the different communities in North East Arnhem Land. What other plan have they subverted, in this instance? The browser history data showed that the young people were not using the Yirrkala Arts Centre computers to watch social marketing video clips or resources on numeracy and literacy (Appendix 4). Was subverting the plan a conscious resistance to social and economic expectations that the broader society had placed on remote Indigenous communities to assimilate? Was this equal to the resistance to the Methodist Mission's goal to change Yolngu into gardeners (Thomson & Petersen 1983), teaching Yolngu ‘white man skills’ in order to make that transition from a traditional lifestyle into a European way of life,
only to strengthen the progress of white invaders in the Northern Territory
(Thomson & Petersen 1983)?

The mobile phone and social media may represent the 21st Century versions of tea,
sugar, flour and tobacco (Rowse 2002), I considered as I reflected on the words of
Thomson & Petersen (1983) that Yolngu were only attracted by ‘flashy and
superficial, the less important, the material things – tobacco, clothes, alcohol and
objects of material wealth’. Thomson & Petersen (1983) went further in warning
the authorities (Commonwealth Government) in the late 1930s that Yolngu will
sacrifice anything to gain possession of superficial material objects and will
eventually die in a ‘state of spiritual and cultural agnosticism, adrift in no man’s
land between the world of the white man and the black’. According to works of
scholars who have worked alongside Yolngu scholars, the concern for the Yolngu
appropriation of new technology (Thomson & Petersen 1983) was not consistent
with the appropriation of Macassan technology over 200 years, which contributed
to the creation rather than the destruction of cultural knowledge (McIntosh 2013).

5.1 DJARRAK FOOTBALL CLUB YIRRKALA 2012
Ronaldo came to 7 Wuyal Road to pick me up for the drive in his four-wheel drive
to Yirrkala. A Torres Strait Islander man in his forties with a muscular physique,
Ronaldo loved his turtle meat and apologised for coming late as he was scrubbing
his hands from the particular smell that didn’t excite the non-eater of turtle meat.
Dean was in the driver’s seat and blasted ACDC loudly from his CD players as
though he was sixteen, not sixty-one. Dean had spent most of his life in Indigenous
communities and was ‘married-up’ more than once to a black woman. He assisted Ronaldo, and I, in turn, assisted Dean with the bi-weekly football training sessions.

On Thursdays, it was harder to attract players for training sessions when the Arnhem Club and the Walkabout Tavern conducted another type of training for men and their women. Men between the ages of fifteen and thirty participated in football clubs that were affiliated through kinship structures and alliances. They prepared themselves for the intense Saturday matches despite being exhausted from late nights in town. The men stayed up often until closing time at three in the morning where they socialised away from Yirrkala or Birritjimi or even from their romantic partner.

Djarrak Football Club was synonymous with the Rirratjingu clan. The players were the warriors who ‘protected’ the reputation of the clan and upheld the banner of pride for their family members, on the oval. Playing for Djarrak was held in high esteem; their players were considered as future Rirratjingu leaders. A player gained the attention of senior men and the members of the board of directors from the Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation on the oval and ceremonial practice. These senior men were their fathers, uncles and grandfathers, who barely had time to spare during their early years, where engagement was scarce due to funerals or conflict. Many young men also became estranged with the senior men due to massive engagement in Yolngu land rights and advocacy movements in the past, as well as Aboriginal Corporation and board trustee responsibilities.
Dehydration from a hangover, hunger, exhaustion and interpersonal conflict with
their partners never stopped a player from a match, unless the police made an arrest.
The men showcased their leadership, strength, speed and acrobatic skills as a group
of teenage girls sat with their backs slightly turned away from the oval. They
somehow followed the game, albeit at a safe distance away, lest they are accused
of flirting with another woman’s man. At the Yirrkala oval, my role involved
organising water bottles and balls for the players. After several weeks of silence, I
eventually received more interaction when I heard the words; ‘gapu ga!’ (water!),
which triggered me to run towards a player with a five-litre bottle of cold water.
Holding on to a pair of boots in overcrowded houses and playing an intensely
competitive game under lack of nutrition, I felt ashamed of my privilege.

5.2 BLUETOOTH INTO RESEARCH

According to Hine (2015 p. 19), “ethnography is distinctive in its use of embodied
experiences of the research as one of its primary means of discovery”. Unlike other
research methods, the goal of this study is to “celebrate the involvement of the
researcher in the whole process of engaging with the field, gathering data and
interpreting results. “Yo, yo, Ma!’ was the response I received from Jimmy the
captain and I understood as ‘yes, yes, ok’ when he gave me permission to make a
video from a collection of stills and live footage of the team. I had to fight the urge
of asking every player because Jimmy was the captain and doing so would have
undermined his authority. I wanted to engage as a researcher from a variety of roles
in order to diversify my perspectives. With an announcement to the team by the
coach, he iterated to the men that they have the option to refuse being photographed
or filmed. The captain replied ‘yes, yes, ok’, as a spokesperson on behalf of his kin indirectly reaffirming his status as a son to the Traditional Owner of Yirrkala.

I edited a visual journal using iMovie on my MacBook Air after a week of taking photos and videos. For almost four weeks my only interaction with the players was triggered by their call for water, ‘gapu ga!’ but on this day something else happened. I arrived at the same time as Lenny who had a brand new LG smartphone. Other players with phones kept them hidden; making it a challenge to visually ascertain what type and level of technology were being used. Lenny mentioned his battery is very low as he used it earlier for Internet banking (Taylor 2012,) in order to buy a present online (ACMA 2008 in Taylor 2012).

One player realised that his Bluetooth was malfunctioning on the phone that he borrowed from his grandmother, while two others shared a phone with their partners and were not sure of the password to activate the phone and could only answer phone calls. These men just carried the mobile phones so that their partners could call and check up on them. The mobile phone had been instrumental in assuring lovers and partners of each other’s fidelity. The young men in this situation seemed to be tied to a phone, which functioned as a ‘leash’ or a ‘chastity belt’ in the modern Yolngu relationship. Here, the cultural conservatism of women worked against the polygamous traditions men had assumed traditional rights to and the mobile phones acted as an innovative surveillance tool and symbol of trustworthiness.

5.3 A YOLNGU THEORETICAL VIEWPOINT
Referring to the use of film, the late Wandjuk Marika, a Rirratjingu elder, considered the usefulness of technology to immortalise first-hand sources in the Yolngu oral tradition in knowledge transfer. From Marika’s audio transcripts, we know that he encouraged the use of film when he said; “before we never look the old person who passed away. There is a new way to operate today” (Marika & Isaacs 1995). Marika was excited at the opportunity to record and view the photos and videos of people who have passed on. I think he was excited that his life’s work and that of his illustrious father Mawalan would be preserved and accessible to Yolngu youth of the future.

The fight against the mining giant Nabalco and the government in Milirrpum versus Nabalco and the Commonwealth Government in 1971 saw Wandjuk Marika the nephew of Milirrpum and other Yolngu leaders use the ‘flashy and superficial’ in the case of the typewriter to engage the dominant structures at play (Marika and Isaacs 1995). Through an old typewriter, Wandjuk became the main link between his father Mawalan, the senior elders of the clan and other White Australian who were closely associated with the political strands of power in the land rights struggle (Marika and Isaacs 1995). Together the typewriter and the bark painting (Brigg & Maddison 2011), the old and new forms of communication became the Yirrkala Bark Petition that amplified the Yolngu voice for recognition of their ownership over land and sea (Da Costa 2006 p. 670; Yunupingu & Muller 2009). ‘The typed text of the petitions in both English and Gumatj languages were framed by paintings of sacred clan designs communicating ancestral narratives of creation and the land and sea estates of the Yolngu’ (Brigg & Maddison 2011, p.1; Yunupingu & Muller 2009).
The Bark Petition, typewritten by a Yolngu man, did not reflect a state of spiritual and cultural agnosticism as feared by Thomson in the 1930s (Thomson & Petersen 1983). Tapes, cassettes, video and television, however, according to the first chairman of the Indigenous Arts Council, pushed the mind away from Yolngu culture and law and gave rise to antisocial behaviour (Marika & Isaacs 1995). The cultural conservatism that I observed was applied broadly, and exceptions for technological innovation were made when it served the purpose of cultural continuity. The autonomous individual, the Yolngu youth in Yirrkala today was forced to negotiate the cultural conservatism as predicated by Yolngu elders and the late Wandjuk Marika himself.

The cars for hunting, the phones for video calls between romantic lovers, a photo of a deceased grandchild on a Samsung flip phone, the knocks on the door for chilled drinking water from a refrigerator, the Android or Apple tablet that live streamed a funeral ceremony in the homelands for a sick relative in hospital in Nhulunbuy and the near concealment of one’s own mobile phone number were examples of the messy, uncategorised, yet to be deconstructed osmosis of innovation and cultural conservatism in the lives of everyday Yolngu. The strong currents of change did not allow Yolngu the space or the freedom from oppression in order to interpret and categorise, theorise and debate, as they probably did when the Macassan seafarers arrived with alien artefacts and tools. Yolngu had the months during the dry season to theorise about Macassan tools and ideas. It is possible that between the stimulus of the adoption of individualistic technology like the mobile phone and social media, the response of applied Yolngu traditional
knowledge systems is yet to include new tools within Yolngu cosmology fully, and thereby caused the gap between opportunity, experimentation and disorder.

5.4 FORMULATING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

A growing number of anthropological studies of media use among marginalised people (Miller & Slater 2000) provided examples that enabled a more unobstructed view of what was happening on the ground. Such work had already shown the promise of challenges to "theories of communication and technology as bringing about modernity and individualism” and homogenization (Tenhunen 2008, p. 531).

In the context of the latter possibility, ethnography such as Deger’s (2006) counters fears that the cultural specificity of Aboriginal perception will be erased as it demonstrated instead that their culture acted as a guide for their media use. Does one’s culture act as a guide at all times in the production and use of media during the adolescent phase of identity exploration (Senior 2003; Chenhall & Senior 2011)? Alternatively, is the feeling of ‘belongingness' to globalised youth culture (Kral 2010, p. 14) the principal motivation for the use of mobile phones and social media by Yolngu youth?

Foucault (1980) in Bevir (1999) proposed that written and spoken forms of communication are influential in creating the world into existence in the same way as material things, such as the production and distribution of goods and services. Using the term ‘discourse’ to describe this as a social process (Foucault 1980 in Bevir 1999); he argued that it always involved power. My research endeavoured to find out what created the reality for people in Yirrkala using mobile phones and
social media. How did the mobile phone and social media shape or amplify their thoughts and behaviours?

Other questions that I aimed to uncover were:

- What was the role of the mobile phone and social media today? Will it be combined with the old ways of communication, as was the creation of the Bark Petition?

- What were the prevalent attitudes towards mobile phones and social media in the community? Is it a binary of positive and negative attitudes as explained by Krech, Crutchfield & Livson (1974) as a result of complex emotional processes?

Elders who were against the presence of the mobile phones in the community had moved back to the homelands where phones were redundant due to the lack of mobile connectivity (Taylor 2012), while other elders were compulsively communicating with the broader Australian society. Their (senior elders and traditional owners) use of mobile phones, the local and national newspaper as well as social media in order to participate in the political, social and economic life of the nation was becoming the norm.

- How do these new objects belong in the Yirritja and Dhuwa moieties, within the Madayin ceremonies (Keen 1990; 2006), in the kinship system of Gurrutu and the Yolngu law or ‘Rom’?

- How did sorcery or ‘accusations and suspicions of sorcery’ as ‘prominent strands in the cloth of Yolngu thought, conversation, gossip and social life’
(Reid & Williams 1984 p. 126) interacted with mobile phones and social media?

- Did the training of Yolngu teenagers in ‘Raypirri Dhukarr’ discussed by Gaykamangu (2012) include the use of mobile phones and social media under the authority of ‘Ngarra (Yolngu parliamentary) Law’ by default?

During the formative stages of my research, I was convinced that a social marketing campaign for behaviour change in health promotion that used mobile phones and social media would satisfy the needs of a community challenged by literacy and stigma. It was only through living and deeper connections with my Yolngu neighbours in Birritjimi and ‘family' in Yirrkala that altered my perception and re-formulated my research question. As a field researcher strapped with little financial assistance, my methods had to be feasible and pragmatic. Any method of inquiry that interested me was a 'system of strategies and operation designed – at any time – for getting answers to certain questions about events' (Hine 2015)

I discovered how my original understanding of mobile phones and social media had clouded my perception of the remote Indigenous mobile phone and social media use. As funerals came and went more often than the change of seasons, movement between the homelands and Yirrkala, Yirrkala and town, the perceived reality of the life of Yirrkala for the leaders and Yirrkala for the followers, my perception of order in the context of Yolngu and communication technology began to take shape. I wanted to tell the story of Yolngu through their use of social media and mobile phones as I became aware of their plight for social equality and opportunity. I
practised how to bridge the ‘experience-near’ forms of description that people used, to talk about their world and the ‘experience-distant’ concept that inhabited academic texts, abstracted from the specificity of situations and allowed for comparisons to be drawn between them” through several drafts and conference presentations (Geertz 1973 in Hine 2015, p. 27). This proved to be difficult when I found myself limited by a minimal understanding of the many Yolngu languages. I could only try in the words of Geertz (1973: 58) in Hine (2015, p. 27); ‘to figure out what the devil they think they are up to’.  

My formulation of the research question was penned on my phone one Saturday morning, after a tearful exchange with a young man from Yirrkala outside the doors to the ‘pokies’ room. He heard his best friend’s voice bid him farewell through the mobile phone before taking his life. I wondered if the mobile phone had not existed, would he have been able to look his best friend in the eye and reinvigorate hope (Syme 1998) when instead the mobile phone became the conduit for disconnection to life itself. It was also the first time that I learnt of the Lost Boys and their use of technology. Indeed, as Hine argued (2015, p. 28):  

The internet (in this context, the use of social media) and the digital (mobile phones) were not available to us in any transcendent sense but were emergent in practice as they were realised through particular combinations of devices, people and the circumstances.  

It was my intention to foreground my relationship-building experiences, and personal exchanges in Appendix 2 as Moberg (2012, p. 41) described Lila Abu-
Lughod’s (1995) ‘A Tale of Two Pregnancies’; a foregrounding of the anthropologists experience [as] a significant break from the third person, omniscient narrative style employed in traditional ethnography’. Having freed myself from ‘objectivity’ as some postmodernists argue, I found myself to a degree politically engaged, quietly using the strength of my analysis to ‘give voice to the silenced Other, particularly having identified sources of oppression (racial, colonial, gender, sexual) and theoretically championing the liberation of the oppressed’ (Moberg 2012, p. 41).

Young people and some of their elders did not want to be forced to follow social rules. The Lost Boys played with rules, bending them as far as possible to create opportunities for themselves (Moberg 2012). The Lost Boys were not sterile victims of change imposed by colonisation or globalisation but as Moberg (2012) argued; ‘had instead come about as people recombined, and reorganised cultural elements' and therefore attempting to write objectively on such complex phenomena is a difficult task. This chapter, however, had attempted to give a three-dimensional description of how mobile technology was used but limited by the instrument of qualitative interviewing and participant observation. Scheper-Hughes (1993, p. 170) points to this so accurately, and she described her ethnographic work in these words: ‘my analysis must be taken as incomplete and contradictory, like reality itself’.
CHAPTER 6 - MOBILE PHONE AND GURRUTU

6.1 THE MOBILE PHONE AS AN ADOPTED ENTITY

Young people, who slept through the hot afternoons, were often seen with their babies having a stroll at five in the evening. A mother with a mobile phone tucked under her t-shirt often pushed a stroller and knocked on the door of the Tongan shop to buy a can of soft drink for three dollars and a sausage roll for ten dollars. The mobile phone seemed to be part of the Yolngu person, like a digital dilly bag that carried information as the ‘new message stick’ sweetened by memories, photos and music.

I observed young parents in their early twenties with their first-born who was as old as their youngest sibling. According to my Tamil cultural script, to be married with children required a man first to acquire some material comforts and potential for employment to sustain an adequate standard of living. In the Indigenous context, contrary to my own beliefs, I was amazed at how little young parents materially required for raising happy and healthy children. In addition to the cost of food, power cards, take away fried chicken and chips, taxi fares or petrol for the ‘mutikar’ (car), young people today had taken on the cost of owning and maintaining a mobile phone. The high uptake and adoption of mobile phone among Indigenous Australians (Brusse et al. 2014) were observed in Yirrkala and Birritjimi. Mobile phones were the most adopted form of ICT among young people in remote communities, which according to Brusse et al. (2014) surpassed “television, video games and another form of technological access to the internet.
Customarily, everything purchased was shared amongst close kin and members of the household. The mobile phone, contrary to other material items refused to part from the hands of the owner as quickly as a fifty dollar note or a share of the turtle or dugong meat. Parents, however, were generally accustomed to sharing their mobile phones and iPads as toys for toddlers and children. The technology entertained their cousins in their adolescent years, older relatives and sometimes grandmothers in the household. The grandmothers have become accustomed to mobile phones and played video games on tiny screens. A new tradition of consumerism (Arnould & Thompson 2005) had created a yearning to own mobile phones, to talk to relatives in another community and to listen to songs and videos bought through an online store. The words of Appadurai, accurately reflected my thoughts; ‘if a global cultural system is emerging, it is filled with ironies and resistance, sometimes camouflaged as passivity and a bottomless appetite, for things Western’ (1996, p. 29).

The global cultural system was showing itself in what seemed to be the beginning of a demarcated class system as documented by Schein (1999, p. 347) albeit in China, as ‘the emergence of ever finer calibrations of social stratification indexed through key objects or styles of consumption’. From my perspective, limited opportunities and employment pathways were compensated with the ownership of mobile phone, video games, music and social media. Unlike Nhulunbuy with its BMX track, an 18-hole golf course, an Olympic size swimming pool, two gymnasiums, a patrolled beach, two squash courts, three tennis courts, a basketball court, a mountain bike track, several parks and playground equipment, there was only the mobile phone and social media to keep the Aboriginal community engaged.
and entertained. The inhabitants of remote communities had very little to keep young people engaged, their talents cultivated, their youthfulness invigorated and their happiness sustained.

6.1.1 Individual ownership and aspirations of things Western

The individual ownership of a mobile phone conferred an identity that sets a person in Yirrkala apart or differentiated themselves as individuals from the communalism of their traditional ways of life (Schein 1999). As the acquisition of most material objects for the average Yolngu person was out of economic reach, the acquisition of mobile phones became a way of constituting selfhood against communalism that some resisted (Schein 1999) while others remained confined to. The global consumer culture aimed to cultivate individualism and created an ‘aura of individuality by offering tantalising objects and media products to be manipulated in the production of selves’ (Schein 1999, p. 367). Schein (1999, p. 367) quoted Ian Angus25 who argued that:

It is not so many goods that are for sale nowadays as lifestyles. Moreover, here, it may well be, the inner logic of industrialism reaches its apogee: not good for the individual, but ‘individuals' produced through the staging of goods. Cultural identities produced industrially and exchanged at will. The previous cultural homogeneity due to the uniformity of production methods has been displaced by a diversity of cultural identities focused on consumer choice.

With more than one person employed in the household, the opportunity for an adolescent or young person to own and manage a mobile phone became more achievable and pragmatic. There was less competition for other essential resources. ‘What comes into being is not only a culture of individualism but also a culture of desiring, consuming individuals yearning to be fulfilled’ (Schein 1999, p. 368). Young people ought to be fulfilled not only through the ceremony and cultural events but also through the acquisition of material objects provided by their kin or purchased themselves.

Over the course of three years, I witnessed how young people celebrated their 21st birthdays at the ‘Arno’ (The Arnhem Club) with shirts, suits, dresses and DJs. There were presents and ‘shouts’ of drinks and food from family members and friends. Their children, some old enough to play by themselves, bounced against the walls of the blow-up jumping castle together with their uncles and aunties only a few years older than them. The parties were filled with flashes from mobile phone cameras, and Facebook was littered with moments, which seemed happy. Photos’ were captured and shared, tagged and commented, liked and celebrated online. The guests were not whole clans, not extended kin, but a nuclear family made up of fewer than twenty people. Was this reality on Facebook merely a curated identity for an online version or an aspiration for a second life, an unfulfilled goal and an attempt to mask the stress and frustration of growing up with little resources and opportunities? Lattas (2000, p. 342) used Marxist theory an explained that ‘people were created through their products, and through objects that we develop as subjects, for they create us as much as we create them’.
6.1.2 The challenges of individualisation

There is a perceived need by non-Indigenous people that in this Yolngu community young people wanted to differentiate themselves as a teenager and to project an image of a modern youth equipped with employment and a mobile phone. This aspiration may seem ordinary, just like the other non-Indigenous people in town, but to Yolngu youth, it betrayed the concept of ‘Yolnguness’ (Marika & Isaacs 1995) and to show off was culturally inappropriate. The Yolngu youth explored this process of differentiation as the “objectification of subjects and the subjectification of objects” in a situation in which subjects (Yolngu) were ‘internalised into objects and objects (mobile phones) internalised into subjects’ (Lattas 2000, p. 342). The interruption of Yolngu lifestyle by modernity and the appearance of affordable new objects (mobile phones) disrupted the natural course of their Indigenous ‘subjects away in different directions, allowing individuals and communities to become something other than themselves’ (Lattas 2000, p. 342).

Could this be a modernity that Marika (Marika & Isaacs 1995) and Thomson (Thomson & Petersen 1983) feared, would be forced onto Yolngu? Martin (2014, p. 294) rightfully argued that ‘Aboriginal social mores are essential processes’ that guide the Yolngu to ‘live, learn and situate themselves’. Some young people, on the contrary, aspired to an individualised system of ownership of new technology for the sole purpose of regaining control in their lives, in ways determined by them (Collin et al. 2011; Third et al. 2011). The youth, globally, made deliberate use of mobile phones, according to Madell & Boyd (2015) to control peer-to-peer and family interactions, albeit consistent within the existing offline social context.
This challenge to cultural values regarding personal ownership through the adoption of digital technology should not be underestimated. For many, the prolonged personal ownership of a mobile phone became a source of conflict and resentment within family circles and extended youth networks in the community of Yirrkala. The mobile phone, therefore, sometimes, dependent on the status of its owner, had to become a transient possession in order to quench the flames of conflict that resulted from the need to preserve the principle of communal ownership (Hogan et al. 2013).

6.2 THE TRANSIENT MOBILE PHONE AS A SYMBOL OF MODERNITY

The mobile phone became the resource that filled Yolngu dwellings with access to information, photos, music and news. The shattered television that once broadcasted Yolngu media similar to their Central Australian cousins (Michaels 1986), the broken-down vehicle that sat for years by the road unfixed, the lack of money for a charter aeroplane to visit family in other communities, were now being replaced by video calls. Phone calls were used to ask for lifts and cigarettes, what I called ‘cyber humbug’, also included the ability to share things by copying and pasting, without necessarily losing ownership and decreasing commodity. ‘I think in Yirrkala every teenager has a mobile phone and they know how to use it, how to download music, they send it from another person’s phone using Bluetooth’ was a clear description of the digital user landscape, according to a young person called Jenny who recalled being the first Yolngu teenager to own a mobile phone in the Gove Peninsula.
For the first time in Yolngu history, downloading and sharing music, Bluetoothing media, copying and pasting photos and making videos did not result in a reduction of the owner’s resource or capital. Every item of digital media could be copied and shared. Digital resources could remain in the hands of the owner despite copious sharing, and in fact sharing of such resources also included the possibility of improving one's status (Senior & Chenhall 2012; Boyd 2013). When mobile phone credit was low or depleted, digital media such as songs, photos and videos were shared via Bluetooth. In the past, an axe or a dugout canoe, when shared, left the owner with nothing in return but a cultural ideology of reciprocity or exchange (Ganma). Now copies of artefacts were made before sharing, and the practice of sharing could occur without the loss of the original object or resource. Although mobile phone content could be replicated and shared, the mobile phone itself must be purchased, repaired when broken or replaced when lost. Despite these challenges, the mobile phone was considered a necessity for many young people in Yirrkala, as it reflected their ‘coolness’ through practices of consumerism, adhering to favourite trends and youth culture (Hebdige 1979; boyd 2013).

Cindy talked at length about what she thought the meaning of mobile phone appropriation meant to youth. She said, ‘mobile phones: they see it as participating in the current trend. As if any young person wants to be considered a part of the contemporary society’. She explained that the youth wanted to be connected to the Internet, were prepared to spend their savings and often invested in a liability in the form of a mobile phone, which according to Sean, a community health worker and coordinator of the Strong Fathers program, ‘often grew a pair of legs and walked away’. Sean, with a tone of disbelief, said, ‘I barely know a Yolngu who has kept
the phone for more than a few months. People always knock em off’. He wondered
why some health and research institutions got on the technology trend and ‘dumped
apps and videos’ in a broad scale speculation that a popular tool will have a
behaviour-changing or knowledge-enhancing effect.

Phones were known to get lost when parents or older siblings were engaged in social
activities or work, away from their unlocked rooms that lacked furniture to keep
valuables safe. ‘Kids get into your room, they get the phone’ said Sean, when he
described the common room in a Yolngu household, with few social boundaries for
children, who often did as they pleased (Burbank 2006). Sean said, ‘Children get
the phone they drop it, or they take it outside, and it gets left out in the rain or gets
lost. The parents think "Oh the phone is not there anymore, I will just go buy another
one"’. Sean recalled during the interview how having lived for many years in the
community. He had become accustomed to updating the phone numbers of his
mates several times in a year.

Sean explained how it got a bit confusing when keeping in touch with his Yolngu
peers via mobile phones; ‘It’s like my phone or my galay’s (wife) phone. Whose
number is it really? For a while, I was ringing up one of the boys, and I would get
the Mrs because they were sharing a phone until they got another phone’ he said.

Phones break without any opportunity for repairs or replacement of parts. Only the
community stores or the post office sold phones and Yolngu could not make claims
within the warranty period or fix their broken devices. Cindy, on the other hand,
did not see phones that exchanged hands as a problem. She said:
They [family] might want your phone, but I don't see that as much as an issue, I think it is because you can get locally such low-cost phones, 79 dollars. I mean, I have seen seven years and 6-year-olds with the phone. They don't have credit, so they use them more as mp3 players.

Young parents juggled adolescence and parenthood amidst financial constraints, and as a result, were burdened by the daily grind of episodes of conflict and negotiations with their partners. Daughters and their mothers from late teens to mid-thirties, only half a generation between them, competed for mud crabs, mobile phones and prepaid credit or social media time. Like older siblings, they explored a world they had to adjust to and negotiated with their traditional needs and traditional roles. Money was shared between generations, mother and daughter whom both raised children and who held on to as much money as possible for their individual needs.

Jenny said that 'there are many families where money is just an object, it has no value and so were phones, they are things that can be replaced' but conflict arose between family members in the prioritization of monetary resources (Hogan et al. 2013), which was sometimes seen as compromising the children. Jenny explained that it was not uncommon when some parents 'got money and the kids crying for a phone they might take that as a priority over a baby at home needing nappies'. Even senior elders seemed to have caught up with this trend and desired to be in touch with their grandchildren over mobile phones and Facebook. They too, like their grandchildren, struggled to keep their mobile phones. Jean said 'This one lady, she's not on FB (Facebook) but loses her phone four to five times a year. Everybody
(loses their phones), I reckon it also involves other people taking phones, and there
is no follow-up because of that whole culture of sharing. I'd say that more the case
than actually losing it'.

The challenge many service providers and families encountered with transient
mobile phones was that the phone number usually became redundant. During the
three years of fieldwork in Arnhem Land, only a small handful of contact's phone
numbers remained unchanged. My adopted Yolngu brother bought a new phone
almost every six months, and every time it came with a new phone number. Mobile
phones were in a continuing cycle of being lost, broken or replaced but the
complexity with renewing one’s mobile phone was exacerbated by the renewal of
mobile phone numbers, which reduced the reliability of owning a mobile phone.
Part of the acceptance of constant renewals of mobile phone numbers in the
community was the unspoken desire to inhibit family members ‘humbugging’ for
help (Petersen 1993), for money, power cards, tobacco or food.

6.2.1 The mobile phone as a tool for demand sharing
Jenny was accustomed to the constant calls from a family with mobile phones and
access to her phone number in order to ask for power cards. She said that her
concern was not as much the ‘humbug’ which her position in the community
allowed to circumvent (the pressure from kinship), but ‘it makes people lazy and
if they didn’t have my phone number they’d just walk from one side of the
community to the other and knock on my door’. For others, the mobile phone often
went missing when ‘humbug’ became unbearable and was the reason behind why
some Yolngu refused to own a mobile phone for fear of being harassed by family.
The stress that some families endured from constant negotiation through phone calls from extended family members to ask for money affected many social relationships in Yirrkala. The mobile phone became interpreted as a gateway that extended the pressure from family to share in the economic resources. Stan, who worked with Indigenous clients, commented:

Clients were getting calls like humbug with the Gurrutu (kinship) system of responsibility. So I was thinking about my client. It’s probably increasing the access for humbug via mobile phones. They'll call to see if they've got some money. It is speeding up or facilitating a cultural tradition that’s already in place.

In order to circumvent this ‘cyber’ humbug where family can call you at any time of day and demand things from you, one can only repeatedly reassure the relative on the other end of the phone that whatever resource they were requiring was simply not available or ‘bayngu’ (don’t have), as it was impolite in traditional terms to say ‘no’. Some people resorted to social media in order to indirectly shame and vent about the pressure of humbug. Unlike a packet of cigarettes, where cigarette sticks could be stashed in different pockets and shared on certain occasions with specific kin, the mobile phone cannot be shared in the same way. Men socialised at night, played games on their phones, watched movies on the television or on their mobile phones, chatted on Facebook and enjoyed a few ‘short ones’ (dumbulu – smoking the last inch on a cigarette) with their siblings who bought a packet of Winfield Blue and then stashed the rest of the cigarettes away, but the mobile phone is harder to hide.
Once the mobile phone had made an appearance, it would be considered impolite to keep its presence hidden from siblings, children and senior members of the family, especially when internal resources within the household were scarce. A young person in this context may have been under pressure to give up his newly acquired mobile phone to appease traditional obligations towards uncles or other senior family members. Yolngu youth who used mobile phones with memory cards were able to circumvent the transient problem of mobile phones when demand sharing was entrenched and resulted in violence. Sammy said:

They’ve got memory cards as well, if the uncle said I’m gonna take your phone and I’m gonna give it to you, later on, they just go ‘tick’ (shows her phone with gesture of taking memory card out) and put it in their pocket and their data is in the little memory card.

The fixed-line phone was made for a family to share within a public and accessible area in the house. It was also more robust and endured many hands and playful children. The mobile phone, on the other hand, could easily be broken when tampered-with in the wrong way or dropped. In this instance, young people with Android phones were able to rescue their memory cards, on which private and personal photos, music and videos were stored, and were able to keep them safe until a new mobile phone was purchased or gifted by a relative. According to Jenny, young people also used pin numbers to protect their personal and private content on mobile phones. She said:

Kids have pin numbers on everything. You can ask for the phones and they’ll give it to you. They know that the only thing that you can access is the dial pad, and everything else is locked, they’ve got pin numbers on it. This is even on flip phones, and they’ve got privacy locks. If you go to ‘messages’, ‘gallery’, ‘songs’
and stuff. The phone is going to be useless to the uncle if he takes it. He can only use it for calling. He can’t access anything else. Because he probably doesn’t know that it’s locked. When they return to ask for the password, they’re gone by then.

The transient nature of mobile phones was eventually remedied through the utilisation of memory cards when young people began to take other peoples’ memory cards for their use. Young people worked out by themselves the value of information-laden in memory cards that soon became a prized commodity. A frustrated Joe confirmed this observation when he said in a follow-up interview:

You won’t believe it; I’ve had four memory cards stolen this year. Well, mainly [by] family but because my memory cards, cause I got music off my laptop and all my family contacts and they take it because I got a lot of music and photo, they take it and whatever they like they keep, everything else they delete and claim it as their own and add whatever they want in there.

The transient nature of mobile phones in a climate lacking opportunities, resources, employment, simultaneously amidst the emergence of Yolngu middle-class families with air-conditioning and rights to royalty payments, employment and better education, had added more stress and frustration to young people as they strived for modernity. They were commanded by their elders to uphold traditional values of communal ownership and obligations according to Gurrutu (kinship), but when they see no economic benefit and a widening social gap between families with connections to Aboriginal Corporations, hope faded into anger. As Scheper-Hughes (1993 p. 169) argued for the people of Alto do Cruzeiro in the following words; ‘their lives are marked by a free-floating, ontological existential insecurity
in which there are never enough resources and opportunity to be shared around the campfire and to satisfy the generational thirst for basic needs’. Young people, their parents and elders from Yirrkala who lacked a mobile phone, considered themselves to be victims of chronic deprivations that caused some to be nervous and insecure and in turn, made adults compete with their children for resources (Scheper-Hughes 1993).

6.3 THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MOBILE PHONES

6.3.1 The Individual Yolngu case

During the week, I fell into the pattern of giving my neighbour a lift into town for work. He was thrilled with the arrangement. After two weeks, he broke the silence of the ten-minute journey to work when he talked about hunting and that a particular type of flower had bloomed, which signalled the fattening of the stingray, ready to meet his pointy spear and satiate his craving for seafood. Initially, this young man was unsure of my ‘Yolnguness’ and considered that I might be ‘jealousing’ my wife26When he talked to her about Yolngu Dhawu (knowledge), but as we enjoyed spending time together on weekends, his concerns were dispelled.

This was a young man who often cried and said that he had no-one to care for him. His mother died when he was young, and despite having close kin, he lamented being neglected by the broader Yolngu community and struggled with gossip and

26. The author is referring to an emotion of suspicion and anger towards his partner in the context of engagement with other men.
jealousy, which spread not only by word of mouth, but also facilitated by the use of mobile phones and text messaging, Facebook and Divas Chat. What he experienced as the constant surveillance of his life by the members of his community became a burden for him. Stories of him having sexual relationships with women from the wrong skin worried him. These digital stories were being texted and spread to other youth in different communities via social networking sites and SMS (Short Message Service). The wide distribution via mobile phones confirmed a rumour into a believable truth. Eventually, he moved into a unit and spent more than half his fortnightly salary to pay for his own ‘space’ and privacy. By moving out of his aunt’s home, he showed independence. As a symbolic act that defied the conventions of culture, and constantly being visible and accountable for one’s activities in order to ward off suspicion, he was bold and frustrated, but he explained that he valued his personal space over cultural norms.

The mobile phone kept him engaged with his social networks on his terms. It enabled his own economic needs to be fulfilled as his money was spent on online shopping. He conducted private chats with friends and maintained a long distance relationship via a Facebook app on his mobile phone. He was able to avoid being alone by communicating with friends and family via mobile texting and Facebook without being under the surveillance of neighbouring youth and extended family that were jealous of him.

6.3.2 The outliers

Brice’s family was strict with their children’s school attendance. Brice and his wife both had mobile phones and used them daily to manage their work, conduct art sales
and talked to family in different communities. Their oldest, Jason had already been
a father for three years when he took a break from married life to be back at home
with his parents. He had an iPhone with headphones in his pocket that kept boredom
at bay, an iPad for his three-year-old and looked forward to Christmas when he
would give it to her. He got a lift to Yirrkala every morning where he worked at the
Arts Centre and the Mulka Project. His cousin Charlie worked two jobs and got him
a second job with the ‘night patrol mob’. That kept both Jason and Charlie busy
from eight in the evening to about midnight.

These young men who worked a full day’s job occasionally played footy, but rarely
did I see them hang out with young people who were unemployed. They orbited
between the community and urban towns in the Territory and made rare
appearances in the Gove Football league in order to play and socialise with their
uncles and close relatives. Their lives seemed organised despite the chaos around
them. They shopped online and got their clothes, caps and shoes sent to a business
address they have sourced themselves. Their phones gave them the economic
independence that allowed them to save their hard-earned money through online
purchases instead of the inflated prices in town. It was also an opportunity to stand
out amongst their peers with more modern clothing, while others only had access
to used or donated clothes.

Jason and Charlie’s lives were shared daily, on Facebook and the old lure of AirG’s
Divas Chat, no longer excited them or met social engagement needs. Facebook was
the new Divas Chat for the employed, individualistic, modern and fashionable.
Their mobile phones were not as transient as was common amongst their less
independent peers. The young men’s families supported their independence and protected them from demand-sharing with extended family networks. Charlie tried to cook and eat what he desired. He had a pot and a pan in a kitchen shared by ten people, a rare asset in a kitchen where take away food, tinned food and two-minute noodles was the norm or the staple. He used a spoon to toss and stir the two-minute noodles from Indonesia in a bowl.

He bought packets of protein powder from Woolworths to gain muscle mass in order to look active and fit. He lamented the difficulty of being a single cook in a household where nobody supported him but demanded that his food be shared. Two-minute noodles and white toast was a staple, and when extra money was available, the Tongan shop was only a stride away for a sausage roll or a pie, followed by lollies and soft drinks. Even though he was happy to share his meal with his cousins, he told me that life in his partner's community was more comfortable as they did not have to share everything with family. Charlie hoped to move to another remote community in the Central Desert or an urban centre, with less overcrowding, or even to Darwin where he might eventually have more autonomy. He looked forward to saving up his money to buy an Android tablet or maybe a laptop but only when it would be safe from misuse and sharing. He told me how many young people were afraid of work because they got harassed by their relatives for money, primarily via mobile phone calls. He suppressed his frustration and anger with a brief cynical laugh at the culture of demand sharing, as he rejected my suggestion to take up a position at the local petrol station when I also offered to help him craft a job application and address the selection criteria. His mobile phone was the only visible tool that belonged to him, that contained his hobbies, his
preferences, and photos of his loved ones. He escaped into his space in the mobile phone, where he felt in control.

With several bank accounts and ATM cards in possession by a Yolngu adult, Charlie told me that some accounts were deliberately empty and some secretly-held money for Christmas presents or for a rainy day. These young people had learnt from their elders how to manage their traditional obligations in a world in which technology allowed them to circumvent obligation and ‘Gurrutu’ (Kinship). The mobile phones’ access to Internet banking made the convenience of personal financial planning and management an opportunity for some but a burden to others. In certain households, the extended family called on the mobile phone and insisted on a transfer of money to their accounts and for any excess resources to be shared. When they were refused, citing empty bank accounts, some relatives insisted for proof via screenshots that confirmed the bank account was empty.

6.3.3 The entrepreneurial youth

Birritjimi revived its football team and became a strong Galpu (Dhuwa clan) team in the Gove Football League through the initiative of an entrepreneur and musician. The Galpu clan in Birritjimi were not politically or economically as powerful as the Rirratjingu clan in Yirrkala or the Gumatj clan in Gunyangara. They were all affiliated with each other through marriage but the men from Birritjimi, I assumed, wanted a distinct identity and so the Baywarra Football Club became a pathway to assert themselves as they gradually emerged from the shadows of two giants, the Rirratjingu and Gumatj clans.
The team's captain was a young entrepreneur who used mobile phones to take photos of the footy matches and organise training and transportation to the oval in town. The mobile phone acted as his personal computer and personal secretary and with a fence around his house, his mobile phone was off limits to demands of Gurrutu and demand sharing. The mobile phone was particularly crucial to the young entrepreneur who stored new songs that were composed and recorded in the studio. The entrepreneur had access to music editing software and could post music clips on YouTube or Facebook. He used tablets, and music editing software streamed from the Internet via his mobile phone to sell instruments online. Instead of a modem and a broadband connection, the mobile phone with a large data package was practical and financially manageable in the context of his community.

6.4 THE YOLNGU BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORTED TECHNOLOGY USE

6.4.1 Dhimurru Rangers

At eight-thirty in the morning, a Dhimurru vehicle pulled up in front of the Peninsula Bakery as I ordered a coffee. The young men spoke ‘Aboriginal English’ mixed with Yolngu Matha. They were dressed in grey uniforms with the symbol of Yirritja and Dhuwa cockatoos on their shirts. They picked up a few bottles of Gatorade, Paul’s ice coffees and sandwiches. Then off they went to locations where they conducted land and forest conservation, smiling and cheerful. They were rangers based in the Gove Peninsula.
The men were engaged in conversation while listening to music with one ear-phone plugged in their Samsung flip phones or smartphones and the other dangling over their collar. These young men worked under challenging conditions and high temperatures, with sometimes only one meal in the morning. They may have considered a snack later in the afternoon, at one of the four takeaway outlets in town, before coming to the Arnhem Club for evening social drinks.

The Rangers used their phones conscientiously and were aware of the perils from excessive use of Facebook and Divas Chat. Their posts contained little content on personal relationships or girlfriends, work or community issues, according to one of my interview participants who spent a few years working with them. Their focus instead was on mateship, sports and recreational activities, especially in the homelands during the dry season. They were well-supported young men who spent quite a lot of time with their parents, who also enjoyed a drink at the pub and hunting on weekends with their children. They kept their relationships hidden from the surveillance of other community members. They were protected by the political and socio-economic clout of their parents, grandparents and uncles, and this dictated their own culture around mobile phone use.

To these young people, the mobile phones were less a symbol of modernity than a tool for communication and were used for keeping in touch with close friends and family. Their phone numbers often remained intact within their inner circle of friends. They often engaged in social activities in private, uncrowded homes, away from the gaze of the broader community, or in the homelands hunting with their
parents’ four-wheel drive. They kept their relationships away from community surveillance.

6.4.2 Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation

Leaving the Woollies (Woolworths) car park in a four-wheel drive with 250 dollars’ worth of food for the weekly Strong Father’s Cooking Class, were the Miwatj Health Strong Fathers team; the four Yolngu men and one Balanda – a non-Indigenous program manager. They made up a well-respected and competent team that worked together for about three years. Between international travel, live performances and cooking classes for men, these Strong Fathers formed alliances with a selection of young men who often socialised at the Arnhem Club. The patterns were hard to predict, as friendship and kinship, challenging to follow and objectify, were in constant flux. The men did not see mobile phones as a status symbol and neither did they have a personal Facebook profile. They were experienced celebrities and would one day become community leaders. I was invited to one of their classes to conduct a session on cooking a traditional Tamil dish. I had twenty-five young men that evening in five different cooking stations. Each station was made up of men with a strong bond between each other. They either shared a house or were in alliances that shared resources together.

The mobile phone in this context was a tool that belonged to professional men with critical traditional roles in the community. They were economically independent and a symbol of balance between a traditional Yolngu lifestyle and modernity. They
were inspired by Yothu Yindi band members and travelled with senior elders for
corsets and press conferences. The mobile phone enabled them to be in touch with
family, mainly when they travelled interstate or overseas. Their young wives were
often concerned with the celebrity status of their male partners, and some relied on
mobile phones in order to dispel any suspicion, gossip and jealousy that often
plagued young people who dared to stand out from the crowd and challenge the
status quo.

6.4.3 Yirrkala as a holiday destination for youth from the homelands

Yirrkala can be likened to the Bali of North East Arnhem Land for Yolngu from the
homelands. A trip from the homelands and the indefinite stay with families in the
already overcrowded houses in Yirrkala provided young people with easy access to
takeaway food, health services, and shops, banking facilities, two pubs, footy grand
finals and traditional ceremonies that were predominantly funerals. The homelands
youth had five free entries to the Arnhem Club after which they had to be sponsored
by members and pay an annual membership fee. The other convenient option and
free for everyone was the Walkabout Hotel.

The youth at the Walkabout Hotel were a mix of local Yolngu from the Gove
Peninsula and some from the region, as far as Ramingining and inland as far as
GanGan. They looked much leaner than their peers from the Peninsula, spoke less
English and were less materially affluent. They had simpler phones and were
considered more ‘traditional’ by others living near Nhulunbuy. Here in the town of

27 Remote outstations where Yolngu reside on their ancestral lands (Altman 2010).
Nhulunbuy, a young person from a more remote Yolngu community became attracted to the pervasive use of mobile phones by youth from Yirrkala and was often seen in town unboxing their new phone. The youth from both the homelands and Yirrkala often saw the mobile phone as a symbol of wealth. Someone who could afford a more sophisticated smartphone began differentiating themselves from the more common Samsung flip phone owners and achieved a superficial form of Indigenous stratification. The flip phone was not just affordable, but easier to part with when required by family and was often never to be returned to the original owner. According to Bourdieu (1984, p. 213) in boyd (2013), ‘taste also serves as a mechanism and marker of distinction, and people’s tastes are rooted in class distinctions’. The class distinctions observed here were slowly forming themselves, and supported the claim from Appadurai (1996, p. 16) that ‘geographical division, cultural differences and not boundaries tended to become isomorphic’.

6.4.4 Mulka Project and the Yirrkala Arts Centre

There were a small but enthusiastic number of young people who engaged and worked with the Mulka Project and the Yirrkala Arts Centre. It was not as much a revolving door as it could have been for many. Young people who came to work with this Indigenous employer and who had to juggle their priorities and demands of relationships in the community were able to receive culturally sensitive and appropriate support. Whether from their partner, family or culture, young men were forced to live up to expectations as a provider. The Yolngu ex-hunter had to be employed to provide resources for living in the Yirrkala of 2015. These young men turned to employment at the Arts Centre as an opportunity for positive relationships and little or no stress. They worked with Indigenous filmmakers and artists. They
had the support of reliable and established families who toured with Yothu Yindi or held art exhibitions in Sydney and London. These men dressed differently and possessed a style that was a fusion of contemporary Australian and African American culture. They ran international marathons, debuted their films overseas, and some were interviewed by the SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) television network or awarded the Northern Territory Indigenous Youth-of-the-Year award.

These men were provided with support workers who mentored and groomed them for future leadership. They lived in the same house as Aboriginal Corporation Board members, chairpersons and managers of Yolngu enterprises. They were the direct descendants of the men who signed the Bark Petition and engaged in the court proceedings against Nabalco and the Commonwealth Government. Young men who worked here were surrounded by the inspirational and spiritually uplifting Yolngu art and history. Their mobile phones often could be heard playing traditional song lines from a recent funeral they had attended.

Although surrounded by technology, and with a mobile phone in their pockets, these young men received much support and mentoring from the traditional Yolngu artists who arrive from different parts of the region. Their close connection to Yolngu art and history was a form of rehabilitation for many who felt excluded and marginalised.

6.4.5 Youth under the radar

At the Garma festival of 2013, I barely saw young men or teenagers. The Yolngu community at the festival site was made up of older men and older women who
arrived with their partners, children or grandchildren. Young people were rarely seen although there was a free public bus provided by the town administrator. Young students from Victoria and Canberra who participated in the Indigenous youth forum at the festival were bereft of the company of youth and teenagers. Their only engagement with Yolngu was usually with elders and senior elders who worked for Aboriginal Corporations. When I drove into Yirrkala one night with Lester, he helped me realise how young people were continually evading the suspicious gaze of their fellow community members while trying to be an adolescent and young adult. They felt their actions were monitored as they explored relationships, dated, Facebooked and chatted via Messenger or listened to music together at the basketball court from mobile phone speakers while their parents, elders and younger siblings slept through the night.

Tommy was scared of his wife’s reaction when we offered him a free seat on a flight to Gove for his nephew’s funeral. His wife said, out loud, that Tommy had a girl in Yirrkala and that was his motivation to attend the funeral. I wondered if Tommy, who looked like he was in his 50s, had a girlfriend. He just stood outside his house at eleven-thirty at night and lamented the loud hip-hop music that drifted on the night’s breeze from the basketball court in front of his house, while his son and girlfriend swiftly walked past him into the house. The practice of the betrothal of ‘promised wives’ where older women were marrying younger men, had been unofficially discontinued by young people in Yirrkala. In the relatively new context of being able to choose one's partner, the mobile phone was central in organising ‘hook-ups’ between teenage romantic partners and even senior men who longed to engage with other partners in different communities. Trust between romantic
partners and established couples became a scarce commodity, since opportunistic romantic affairs became more organised and convenient, thanks to the mobile phone.

Women faced a different type of challenge when they went to work and left their unemployed husbands at home. For some women, their husbands ensured that their wives did not look attractive to another man by preventing them from showering, or self-grooming. One of my close friends, who lamented her husband’s addiction, could not help but undergo feelings of stress from the jealousy and insecurity of her partner. She said ‘I am at police station making a statement for my partner that being threatened and cheated on me because he got jealous of my career and what I have achieved in my life and trying to pull me down’.

6.5 THE MOBILE PHONE AS A SOURCE OF TRUST AND INFIDELITY

Charles recounted a shared experience between teenage lovers:

P and G both couldn't go to work. They just were jealous of each other and couldn't be out of each other's sight. You know what happens, they just start to bicker and argue, and we did talk about it.

The teenage couple kept a close eye on each other and checked their mobile phones ‘contact list, call and text messaging history under suspicions of infidelity. They were almost convinced that their partner would cheat on them because of the ability of the mobile phone to transcend ‘place’ and seek out interested parties for romantic engagements.
Romantic partners borrowed each other’s phones to look at their partner's contact list on their mobile phone and then posted on Facebook a warning to potential admirers of their partners, for example; ‘If any of M girls gonna meet my man I’ll folk’ sz the shit of you Bitch’. The presence of mobile phones in the relationship of the couple mentioned by Charles created much pressure and distrust. Charles showed me the screenshots of the anonymous text. The young romantic partners resolved the tension and distrust with shared mobile phone pin codes and Facebook passwords. The sharing of pin codes and passwords allowed the mobile phone to continue to be part of their lives and reduced the opportunity for inter-relationship suspicion and jealousy. Families who were involved in the conflict and confusion between young romantic partners, according to Beth, took ‘sides over teenagers’ fights’ in which ‘kinship is taken on board’ and ‘kinship will demand uncle’s support’ the teenager and take action. Beth was concerned about some families in Yirrkala. She said that in Yirrkala there were some families who are really down there in the food chain. They get harassed. That woman with her two kids that died recently through suicide was because of bullying and harassment by adults. She was lower on the food chain and was always copping it.

I probed further to understand this system of social hierarchy. Josephine kindly explained; ‘like when your mum and dad should not have married for cultural reason (wrong skin) where they sit in the kinship system. I know of individuals who were gang-raped because of wrong way and your offspring cops it too’. According to Freire (1972) in Clark and Augoustinos (2015, p. 22), ‘maintaining a culture of silence was common to oppressed groups and indicated that silencing was destructive as it inhibits its members to look at their world critically or to collaborate
with others'. Unfortunately, in the Indigenous history of resistance and speaking out against lateral violence (Langton 2008; Gonzales et al. 2013), were issues often ignored at official and political levels (Sutton 2009) and therefore speaking out became a deterrent (Freire 1972) and silence, a sign of defeat.

6.6 MOBILE SMARTPHONES AS A PRECURSOR OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN YIRRKALA

The Yolngu young people were the protagonists in this story of the mobile phones in the Gove Peninsula as they managed their traditional roles amidst the tradition-defying capability of the mobile phones to create gossip, suspicion and conflict amongst youth and family (Hogan et al. 2013; Carlson et al. 2015). The young people came together and socialised at different locations in town, their lives intersected, all kin, connected to song lines that told the story of their beginnings of the Djangkawu and the Wawilak sisters (Marika & Isaacs 1995). Now my heroes and heroines lived out their stories through mobile phones’ predictive texts and autocorrect.

Indigenous art was slowly being replaced with youth culture’s digital photography and video production. The youth who had gone to school in urban centres and were exposed to global culture became the cultural intermediaries for the import of the mobile phones and eventually social media into remote community life. Young people with employment and secondary education often preferred to own smartphones for easy access to Internet banking, Facebook, and YouTube.
Smartphones captured photos and videos and could store more copious amounts of media as a mobile media bank. However, smartphones usually had a shorter lifespan and were quickly dropped due to their large size and active youth lifestyle. Joey recalled when one of his neighbours posted an update late one night in approximately these words; ‘I can’t believe. My bloody iPhone screen smash, coz I was really blind drunk last night!’

Not all young people had equal opportunities and access to own a mobile phone or chose to own a phone. In my informal interviews and attempts to talk to these young people about the absence of a phone in their lives, I only found one young man during an opportunistic lift from Birritjimi into town that explained that the mobile phone created more problems for him. These young people, according to my interview participants seemed isolated, uncared-for and lacked community support. There was no uncle at home, to buy a phone for them, no grandmother to answer to their cries for a tool that helped them feel normal, like other Yolngu youth who were watching music videos on YouTube. A few Yolngu owned Samsung smartphones or the premium Apple iPhone. The Apple iPhones were harder to maintain because it was difficult for Yolngu to update their iTunes account or download apps without a credit card. The absence of credit or debit cards and a personal computer limited the use of the iPhone for updating software and backing-up contents.

Julie recounted a story that happened to her White Australian friend who wanted to facilitate a Yolngu friend’s experience with an iPhone. ‘She had a mum come in her house the other day who had just bought a new iPhone but had no idea how to
use it and needed an iTunes account to set it up’, she said, speaking quietly in the children’s playroom of the Gove library after she got off the phone trying to reinstall her iCloud account on her new MacBook Pro. She rolled her eyes, still in pain from the long telephone conversation with Apple customer service and continued saying that this was a huge ordeal for this Yolngu lady who struggled with this technology ten times more than we struggled with. So she is using my friend's iTunes account and that leads onto problems around buying music, whose credit card and privacy, other social media stuff that gets linked to your phones and computers and wanting to come back every day to plug her phone in the laptop to do whatever, to charge or to update apps or use Wi-Fi.

Based on her recent experience with Apple customer service and having worked with Yolngu for seven years, she confirmed that ‘there’s no way some of the Yolngu family [I know] will be able to sort out their phone like the way I spent five hours on the phone with Apple’. I asked Julie, what could be done to support young people to negotiate their interaction with contracts and online purchases. Without much deliberation, she said

You have to be pretty clued up on the stuff and if you're struggling to understand simple concepts that are hard enough for a young person growing up with English as a first language living in White culture let alone somebody that's struggling to read or speak English. Moreover, they go ‘click’ I agree to these terms and conditions.

The young people who use Apple iPhones were more often better educated and employed. They had the skills to navigate the rigorous requirements of credit cards and software updates, English speaking customer service representatives and last
but not least the hefty price tag. The Samsung flip phones were not as sophisticated as the Apple or Android smartphones and were commonly known as ‘Yapa Phones’ (Yapa meaning sister) which symbolised the more widely female client base and possible inferior status. All phones ran on prepaid sim cards, and credit was easily purchased in town. A relative with access to money and a corner store was able to purchase credit and text the details of the reload voucher to someone without money.

The Samsung flip phone was an essential generic communication tool. It was not as exciting as a smartphone but durable and shareable with family members. Owners were less attached to these $60 phones and could part with them to maintain relationships and satisfy demand-sharing by Gurrutu (kinship). The ownership of a flip phone was often associated with lower socio-economic status, rather than just a convenient and simple tool for communication. Very often even senior elders and traditional owners were seen to upgrade their Samsung flip phones to Android smartphones that enabled better photography and ease of use from the wider screen and user-friendly layout.

In the community, Android operating systems and Apple smartphones coexisted like middle-class relatives at a working-class family’s Christmas party. The owners of smartphones exuded a new level of sophistication, one that took them out of the ‘bush’ image that a Traditional Owner used for an example when motivating the Djarrak Football team before a game with Gapuwiyak. He said; ‘Don’t think they are from the bush, you can beat them easy, be careful’. There was a clear delineation between the urban Yolngu living in Yirrkala and those from the more remote
interior. It was this type of differentiation that smartphones enabled young people to acquire, and helped set them apart from each other despite the overwhelming gravitas of communalism and clanship. Young people continued to be influenced by globalisation and the media, sought to embrace individuality within the traditional context and negotiated the conservative attitude towards technology.

6.7 SORCERY AND MOBILE PHONE

Mobile phone numbers changed continuously, and only a small minority of people were able to keep their numbers safe from public knowledge. Just like cigarettes and money, safely stashed away only to emerge at the bar counter or when requested by a close and trusted relative, the mobile phone was hidden from the public eye. In the non-Indigenous world when young people met, phone numbers or Facebook details were most probably exchanged. In the community, phone numbers were not easily shared, when only girlfriends, partners, children and parents had one another’s phone numbers. The phone numbers were only for close kin and not to be shared in case they fell into the ‘wrong’ hands. Galka28 (Reid 1983) often called and threatened community members, forcing them to abandon sim cards and phone numbers, and left them no other option but to purchase a new phone number and sometimes even a new mobile phone.

28 Sorcery
Jones once called my mobile phone to inform me that he received a call from Galka. The caller introducing himself as Galka to which Jones replied with, “Fuck off”. He laughed as he recounted the story because he had decided that the caller couldn’t have been Galka. He made it very clear to me that he didn’t believe in Galka but didn’t explain why. This complexity of when a phenomenon was related to Galka cannot be objectified into a formula or predicted (Reid 1983). It happened organically and opportunistically. Simon explained his understanding of Galka in the age of mobile phones. He said;

People think that unknown calls are Galka calling you. They can send stuff to you via Bluetooth, and the Bluetooth got Galka. I’ve heard stories, but I’ve never really seen it. They say that Galka is using phones to get a hold of someone's number to say I'm calling, I'm coming to get you.

Since Galka’s use of mobile phones to raise fear, anxiety, conflict, and stress amongst community members, many Yolngu had begun involving the police in anti-cyberbullying activities. Soon news of the police’s ability to scan and track down mobile phone numbers threatened people and Galka’s supposedly cyber-bullying activities. Alleged perpetrators and even Galka had to now, find other means of communication to reach out to potential victims. Social media became the next avenue, as it was almost impossible to be traced, due to the practicality of creating fake online profiles. Signs of such behaviours were discussed both offline and online. An informant once posted the following warning to which he gave me verbal permission to cite:

Get a life low life dogs you mob wait think I’m dumb I’ll do it another way black magic so you black low mother fucking dogs will die from now on if you talk shit
to me will make you cripple black magic way this time if your family talk shit to
they will be on my list as well no jokes want to be six feet under try me all it takes
is one phone call fucking not joking.

In this chapter, I deconstructed the seemingly simple, mobile phone, whose only
general meaning was that which the technology had conferred through its enabling
features, such as to create and consume media and to connect people between vast
distances. The heterogeneity of actors in this community painted an approximation
of how the technology was used and the differences between subgroups that shared
one ‘communal’ culture and traditional law. The mobile phone was wrought with
ambiguity, caused social demarcations, inequality and lateral violence. The use of
social media in the next chapter extends this argument further.
CHAPTER 7 - FACEBOOK AND KINSHIP

Social media is a broad term that encompasses separate digital applications or websites such as text messaging, interactive websites, social networking sites, digital message boards, forums, blogs, microblogging (e.g. Twitter), wikis (collaboratively produced web content), ‘game modding’ (fans modifying computer games), video hosting sites and more (boyd 2013; Byron et al. 2013, Brusse et al. 2014). Facebook is a social networking site used by over one billion individuals as the world’s most popular online social networking site (Darvell, Walsh & White 2011). The purpose of Facebook, according to Darvell, Walsh & White (2011) was to ‘give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected’.

According to Mitchell and Ybarra (2009), there were constant shifts in patterns of Internet use that occurred rapidly, where this form of continually evolving technology that cannot be restrained, kept parents, health professionals, policymakers and law enforcement guessing where the next social problems like cyber-bullying would happen. A series of focus groups with youth and parents in Norway, a developed country with an Indigenous population similar to Australia, found that teens used mobile phones to create boundaries between themselves and their elders (Ling & Yttri 2006). The mobile phone as the conduit of online interaction according to Ling & Yttri (2006) was used to undermine family traditions and interaction in favour of peer communication. According to Jenny, a mother of teenagers in Yirrkala; young people in the community were
Not going to their parents for advice, they’re looking at the Internet. I guess it makes them ignore the important things and so they’re more interested in what their friends are doing and keeping up with whatever is “IN” at the time.

For most teenagers and young adults, social media use was influenced by a need to communicate with existing friends, which in turn has shaped adolescent development in new ways (Davis 2012). According to Ito et al. (2009) and Subrahmanyam and Smahel (2010) in Davis (2012), social media had become an essential part of adolescent experience of peer to peer relationship as well as how emergent technologies such as social media and mobile phones were used as a place to hang out and chat.

Adolescents believed that their online peer communications have a positive effect on the quality of their friendships, as confirmed by Subrahmanyam and Smahel (2010) and Valkenburg, Peter and Schouten (2006), but at the cost of severe intergenerational conflict and loss of parental control (Valkenburg & Peter 2011). The state of ‘co-presence’ according to Ito and Okabe (2005) created an opportunity for young people to maintain a sense of connection to their peers regardless of physical location or time of day. Davis (2012) argued that social media use fulfilled the developmental need of young people for belonging, but at the cost of developing young people’s abilities to remain with their feelings of boredom and draw on their inner resources to work through it (Brechwald & Prinstein 2011). Digital media, which included Facebook, had become a central way of communication and a way that adolescents experienced their peer relationships (Ito et al. 2009; Subrahmanyam & Smahel 2010; Carlson et al. 2015; Senior, Helmer & Chenhall 2016).
Facebook, in the remote Aboriginal context, had been adopted by male and female teenagers, young adults and senior elders. Social networking sites like Facebook allowed young people to explore their identities, extend their friendship networks and amplified their opinions; all of which are healthy aspects of adolescent development, according to Mitchell and Ybarra (2009), Carlson et al. (2015) and boyd (2013). In a general ward at the Gove District Hospital, Sam, a nurse trained to work with Indigenous patients and their families, noticed many young mothers and grandmothers who had ‘Facebook on their home screen, even on normal phones (Samsung flip phones)’. A young female community worker explained that her friends ‘hang out’ with family and friends on Facebook and reckoned that young adults over 25 ‘definitely use Facebook, they’ve got more access’ because ‘they’re employed and working’.

7.1 DIGITAL FRIENDSHIPS

‘There’s a boyfriend and girlfriend, and they have a list of friends’, Josephine said, showing her friend list on Facebook to me as I flicked open my own friend's list to mirror her action. She continued to explain the dynamics of the new Yolngu teenage love story in the world of social media and mobile phones, a ‘ménage à trois’ between lovers and their technology. Josephine discussed the conflict and tension young people experienced when engaged in romantic relationships. She gave me the impression that the conflict and tension had been accepted as a norm in the community. Could it be possible that social media sites like Facebook and Divas Chat facilitated an entrenched habit of surveillance in the community as an acceptable use of the online space? The ability to expand one’s networks and get to
know other interested parties for romantic affairs had become more convenient since the adoption of mobile technology. Josephine said that ‘every young people in Gove is fighting over jealousy with their boyfriend and girlfriend’ because of their ability to network with other youth. She explained that the contact list, or friends list on Facebook, did not fit in with the Yolngu law of kinship which takes into consideration the respectful relationship between poison-cousins as avoidance relationships. Adding to our discussing, Josephine concluded that a young person often struggled within a romantic relationship; They have a certain person that the girl or the boy doesn’t get along with. They think straight away that they’re talking to each other like friends and then they argue, asking why this person on your friends list?

Josephine knew that in general young people were intimidated by other youth and struggled to keep their romantic relationships stable. They felt that their partners were preyed on by other people in the community for a relationship or sex. The Facebook friends list was seen as a list of opportunities for their romantic partner to meet other girls or boys and thus created a relationship plagued with distrust and suspicion.

7.2 THE SOCIAL LIFE OF FACEBOOK

The Facebook wall on my iPhone 4 was quiet and still. All the protagonists were busy in getting to work, or still asleep. It was only seven-thirty in the morning as I prepared the children to be taken to school. I dropped my kids into a world in which the non-Indigenous kids and their families separated their friends into groups in
which some were ‘acquaintances’, others, ‘family’, but the unwanted news was
hidden or deliberately blocked from their Facebook feed.

This self-management of the non-Indigenous Facebook wall was not a common
strategy amongst Yolngu youth. From my observations and discussions with young
people, they were more vulnerable online due to a lack of knowledge of privacy
settings to keep unwanted people out. Young people added friends on Facebook
from within the region including people whom they had never met based solely on
the physical attractiveness of a profile photo and name valence (Greitemeyer &
Kunz 2013). I scrolled back on my Facebook wall to the contents of postings from
the previous night when life in cyberspace was filled with drama, emotions,
narratives and discourse. Facebook was aglow with exchanges between two people
who lived in the same house, and those as far apart as Sydney and Hobart.

Regional communities like Elcho Island, Ramingining, Maningrida, Millingimbi
and Groote Eylandt were also active with young people on Facebook, who shared
photos, music and videos, and commented on each other’s lived experiences.
Although kinship laws dictated the engagement between young people online and
offline, there were enough differences in opinion to generate interpersonal conflict.
When members of particular clans and their established alliances (Rowse 2012) or
Ringgitj (inter-clan alliances), interact and exchange ideas and discuss current
events whether offline or in cyberspace, a risk for disagreement, jealousy and
tension may be present. The clans interact with each other through a traditional
alliance, and often the young people engage in a competitive discourse about which
alliance or clan is superior. This often escalates from an act of bullying between
teenagers to a conflict between families because kinship will dictate that the elders protect the younger members of their family or clan. An interview participant who was also a senior Aboriginal elder explained that ‘for boys, it’s proving yourself to your brothers, everybody, your group, your friends, especially your brother’. A remote area nurse also commented on the importance of enforcing self-pride in the clan or family. She said ‘family relationships are so important to Yolngu and the communication that can occur and the problems that Facebook can cause’ when she paused and thought carefully with a frown of concern and then finished her sentence by saying ‘they just don’t understand those risks’.

Outside the boundaries of conflict, Facebook also managed one’s memories. Young people kept a digital album as a collection of videos and photos that could be shared with family and friends. Beyond the finite identities of clan, skin and Indigeneity, young people used their Facebook profile photo as an opportunity to differentiate themselves from the structures of Yolngu politics and reflected their individuality. Their first names were used interchangeably with a nickname but were always accompanied with a surname. The young people often identified with their paternal clan, except for a small number who decided to take on the surnames of their mother’s clan. They explained their change of protocol and cited the lack of support or engagement from their father’s clan and justified the use of their mother’s clan surname. The profile photos of boys and men, of flexed biceps and a muscular abdomen, included photos taken during social events at the pub, where young men posed proudly with a bottle of Bundaberg Rum or Jim Beam (Beullens & Schepers 2013).
The women favoured profile photos of themselves with a child or best friend. Their photos were often decorated with Japanese ‘purikura’, a digital photo sticker that decorated online profile photos. The younger girls typically used decorations with bright pink or orange coloured shapes, such as hearts and diamonds, and stars as borders. Though framed photos were never made, bought or hung on the walls in their homes, the girls were quite artistic in using Facebook to decorate their digital walls with photos of themselves and their loved ones. Profile photos in traditional attire often debuted just after the Garma festival in August or during a funeral ceremony in the homelands. Comments of encouragement and admiration naturally flowed beneath the photo including ‘likes’ for the photo itself and the comments made about the photo. This act was seen as being proud of their Yolngu culture and clan.

There was no other customisation to an individual's Facebook profile and users resorted to posting content to generate attention and to be heard and seen amongst the multitude of postings. I noticed how status updates on Facebook were sometimes written in different scripts and symbols: ‘Ya EveryOne I’m Here la Maninqridaa 2tt Putt a Biq Show Baa Y0u M0b (101’Sz)’. I assumed that there was an effort to demonstrate individuality through the written text, as argued by Foucault (1980) in Bevir (1999). Facebook came to life with discussions and comments on the events that played out after dark, interrupted by dawn and the obligation of work and eager children on their way to school.

My adopted Yolngu ‘grandson’ from Millingimbi sat in front of the steps leading to Westal Avenue with an iPad connected to a Telstra 3G Wi-Fi signal (Taylor
2012). He was not interested in the people standing in front of him nor raised his head to talk to them. Except for interruptions of the family who asked him for a smoke or ‘rupiah’ (money), he was not easily distracted from his iPad. When the battery ran out, he left the iPad for me to charge in my office while he went off to purchase chocolates, sweet and snacks for his children in Millingimbi. Next to my office was a store that sold everything from PlayStations to iPhone chargers, clothes to remote control cars. The shop was exclusively utilised by the Yolngu community, while most of the non-Indigenous community purchased their clothes, Christmas and birthday gifts online.

7.2.1 Community Facebook Pages

Yolngu who owned a vehicle sometimes visited the Gove Notice Board Facebook page where the non-Indigenous community discarded or put up for sale their unwanted material belongings through garage sales. This brought many Yolngu to the homes of middle-class non-Indigenous people in town, as they looked for a bargain. In addition to its role in advertising second-hand goods, the Gove Notice Board Facebook Page was often used as a mass broadcaster. A recurring example was when non-Indigenous residents had supplied or purchased alcohol for Yolngu friends. The family who was affected by the drunkenness used the notice board to warn non-Indigenous ‘do-gooders’ do not comply with such requests, as others were affected by the alcohol-fuelled violence and conflicts. Interspersed between Facebook users who posted, commented-on and liked the content was a significant number of people who lurked without showing themselves to others.
The unseen Facebook users consumed the media posted online and read the comments and were entertained by the discussions and arguments without open participation. The invisible Facebook users often engaged in private conversations in person or through private Facebook messages with friends outside the Gove Notice Board Facebook Page. When I casually queried my non-Indigenous friends, I found most of them were aware of the activities on the Gove Notice Board although no over interaction was visible on the actual Facebook Page and neither were they interested in exchanging their thoughts.

7.3 FACEBOOK, KINSHIP AND PUBLIC LIFE

According to Jones, an interview participant and senior elder, Yolngu added their ‘poison cousin’ of the same gender on Facebook while others added ‘poison cousins’ regardless of the traditional law, because there was no verbal exchange or physical contact. Being friends with the ‘poison cousin’ on Facebook merely took on a reflection of the offline world. For those unable to attend funerals, Yolngu Facebook users shot and shared photos for family members. Photos of dancers and men with bilma (clapsticks) and yidaki (didgeridoo) overcame the tyranny of distance and the high costs of chartering aeroplanes for funerals that occurred on large numbers in the region. During the funeral of one senior elder in 2013, there were photos taken and posted from inside the inner sanctuary where ‘the body’ (Burbank 1994) was kept, and only certain men were allowed in. This was another example of how other family members who were unable to make the journey for the funeral could still be part of it, via Facebook.
According to Christofides, Muise and Desmarais (2009 p. 341), ‘Facebook provided a unique research environment because of its constant usage patterns and its ability to connect online and offline relations’. This phenomenon was replicable in the remote community setting in North East Arnhem Land where both female, male and transgender teenagers and young adults have adopted its use as a result of the simplification of its applications and its availability on mobile phones for a price of forty to eighty dollars. Frances was a community support worker at Anglicare for many years and witnessed the adoption of mobile phones and subsequently social media by youth. She talked about the usability of technology that allowed for young people to be in control of their entertainment and connections with people through a screen in the palm of their hands. Francis said:

‘You've got a mobile phone these days, and it opens up the whole world to the Internet. The kids know how to surf the internet on their phone, they are not silly. Lola said one day that all these kids were sitting outside Anglicare one day because they hacked into the Internet and there were all these kids outside Anglicare they were using the Internet. One had figured it out and told the others. They found all these kids outside with their phones downloading songs’.

Some young adults have faced suspension and even been criminally charged from information posted on Facebook (Peluchette & Karl 2008). Public profiles of young people unaccustomed to privacy setting in the digital worlds display a lack of concern about the consequences of their online conversations, which they assume is merely an extension of their offline world. Having lived in the community for more than a decade and seen kids grow into adults, Sean noticed young people using Facebook to score drugs and was concerned that employers could have seen that.
He said: ‘I knew a young man who upon employment posted a photo of his contract, with the actual dollar figure of his annual salary followed by an afternoon drinks photo on the same day’ during business hours. Sean said some young people showed off to other peers in Yirrkala and was known ‘for posting photos of his luxurious meals, always with a side of salad, hanging out on fishing trips with his boss, on a long, expensive boat and not showing up to work on Fridays and Mondays’. These employed youth are often connected to ‘Big Men’ as discussed by Langton (2008) and were protected. The common reaction from my neighbour who saw the same string of posts on Facebook commented: ‘You have got an iPhone and I have just got a flip phone. You think you are good because you’ve got djama (work)?’

7.4 ONLINE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Adolescents in the community used mobile phones and social media to reinforce existing relationships. A mother in her late thirties with teenage and primary school age children, frowned when she recalled a recent discussion with her teenage children on Facebook use, where young people in Yirrkala were ‘absolutely distraught’ when they did not know what their peers were up to, every minute of the day. Reaction to curfews and constraints to checking the Facebook wall of their peers, ‘was pretty scary, too’ said Sam. This mother juggled work and cared for a family, and was also concerned about the wider social network of their outside-of-school friends. She said ‘there are probably more people that they [her teenage children] communicate with on Facebook than they would at school’. Christofides, Muise and Desmarais (2009) found that a large number of Facebook friends were interpreted as a source of high social capital. One particular young person in the
community was proud that he had 650 friends on Facebook and was surprised that
I had less than 100.

We shared our teenage stories of phone calls from fixed lines at home, describing
our feelings of being too embarrassed to speak into the receiver ever aware of the
curious ears of other family members who pretended to watch television or listen
to music, during an interview with Sam. She said ‘It used to be such a special feeling
when someone you had a crush on would call you, but today these relationships and
communication happened without restraint’, with perceived superficial intimacy.

Today, Sam sees the landline telephone intimacy replaced by a ‘group of kids who
either live to cause trouble or, you know, flirt with each other’ via Facebook and
mobile phones. The use of Facebook and Divas Chat has, however, been
instrumental for young people to keep in touch with family, partners and friends,
especially when they have to move away to another city for boarding school
(Christofides, Muise & Desmarais 2009). They still kept in touch to remedy the
longing of the heart to be on country through the exchange of stories and photos.

Joan, who worked at the hospital in Nhulunbuy, said ‘there was a woman who was
admitted and couldn't go home, so she ended up listening to the funeral through her
phone’.

The ability to relieve stress and social anxiety became contradictory when online
communication enabled young people to become vulnerable to sexual predation.

According to Subrahmanyam and Smahel (2010), this was exacerbated when youth
online communication replaced communication with parents and elders. Gross
(2004) found that ‘adolescents used instant messaging’, now a consolidated service
within a social networking application, or social media site such as Facebook, that enabled discussion and gossip which bordered on online bullying. A financial trainer who facilitated workshops for Yolngu on Internet banking and the use of email said that there was a similarity between issues faced by mainstream Australians and Yolngu; ‘I know that bullying is on there and that’s definitely a similarity between cultures. Yolngu suffer with that as well’.

‘I guess it has made them [youth] more independent’ explained Sam. Independence was profanity in the Yolngu communal life which neither allowed nor tolerated privacy, confidentiality and decision-making without the involvement of family and elders, mainly grandmothers. Sam confirmed my interpretation in the following words; ‘I would say [independence] is probably not a positive thing because Yolngu and Yolngu culture, things were done as a family’. Relationships with elders and critical decision-makers had been severely affected at the expense of maintaining online relationships and conflicts that were spread more rapidly than word of mouth. According to Sam;

All our strong elders move out to the homelands to get away from this sort of stuff.
They do not see their families and their grandchildren. They get tired, they get sick, and they lose or run out of energy with dealing with these issues.

Issues of conflict were made worse by the rapidity of information spreading along digital networks in a community. boyd (2007) discussed the downfall of digital communication and how teenagers were affected by this feature of ‘amplification’. She pointed out that the intrinsic limitation of privacy in social networking websites enabled young people to copy words and pictures in screenshots which were
subsequently shared with others who were not the intended audience (boyd 2007). An interview participant who travelled weekly on light aircraft to different parts of Arnhem Land said that her client (from another community) had been recently bullied on Facebook. She said ‘a girl was writing stuff about her on Facebook, here in Nhulunbuy. She was upset because things were being thrown on Facebook that weren't true’.

Joan explained that in the offline world you can still take your words back, but it is almost impossible online. She said ‘it is true whatever you write and it is out there straight away. Moreover, you can't take it back…, you can't do that when you write something on Facebook, and everyone has already seen it’. She had even spoken to the police about the problem of Facebook and ‘even Divas Chat; there's a lot of fights that’s starting from comments made’. ‘If I send a text or picture to so and so saying you’re a bitch, then many people will look at it and think it is Yuwalk (the truth), that it is true and believe it’ said Jenny. She heavy-heartedly recounted a story of a young man who took his life over text messages. ‘He'd been a sniffer; he'd done his time in Don Dale (juvenile penitentiary). He came back and was on the island, but the issues [bullying] continued when he got access to a phone’. The attempt to isolate him from his environment and negative peer influence by his family was thwarted by the pure ability of the phone to reconnect to old and abusive networks, which made him vulnerable to mean and hurtful comments regarding his past.

7.5 CONSTRUCTING ONLINE IDENTITIES
Online identity was constructed by sharing information such as pictures and interests. Identity was not only an individual characteristic, but it was also a product that consisted not only of individual posts on Facebook but also what others share and say about that individual (Christofides, Muise and Desmarais 2009).

Vital developmental tasks of adolescence according to Hill (1983) are categorised as identity, autonomy, intimacy and sexuality. The category as per Hill (1983) was proposed as critical social variables by Subrahmanyam (2008), which included media technologies that psychologically connect the physical and virtual worlds. This process resulted in the exploration and construction of identity in the virtual world that becomes a playground for development issues from the physical world, such as identity and sexuality (Subrahmanyam 2008). Board members from a particular Indigenous Corporation were ‘concerned about technology and social media’ according to Jenny as well.

I was struck by the reason cited by my interview participant who explained that emergent technology had the potential to counter the positive effects of culture and that technology use itself erodes culture. This argument once again ran counter to Deger’s (2006) position that culture acted as a guide to online communications. This also formulated a much weaker argument when I thought of the intrinsic ability of Yolngu warriors, who ‘gathered’ (a specifically gendered task) trepang for the opportunity to hunt for turtles and dugong on dugout canoes (Thomson & Petersen 1983) during the Macassan trade era, as an episode of cultural erosion. Here, culture did not act as a guide, where men performed a female gendered task of collecting...
trepang but used it as an opportunity to hunt. This transactional behaviour was
evident in many aspects of Yolngu life.

Research by Subrahmanyam (2008) had proven to be pertinent in defining the
discussion of youth online communication and relationships. Similar to the
considered “Board members” of the Aboriginal Corporation in North East Arnhem
Land, the first concern was about the “nature and quality of online and offline
relationship” and secondly “whether the effects are positive or negative”
(Subrahmanyam 2008). Josephine, who grew up as a teenager with a mobile phone
had seen that;

On Divas Chat and Facebook, [that] [you] can actually make fake profiles, like
using fake name, photo, so you don’t know who you’re talking to like if you’re
messaging someone, they could say bad stuff to you, and you don't know who it is.
It might have an impact on you. Like you feel upset about what they're saying.

I discussed with Josephine a few more critical things that puzzled me about Yolngu
reactions in the face of online gossip and bullying. I specifically wanted to know
how young people coped with negative comments and online bullying. I cited the
example of ‘blocking’ people online. By using blocking mechanisms, the person in
question will never be able to use that online profile to see my Facebook profile and
communicate with me. They could even be reported and be banned by Facebook.
Josephine said ‘young people don’t block or unfriend. I don’t know’; unsure of
whether this is common sense, only uncommon amongst Yolngu youth, as she had
grown up with a white father. She continued to explain ‘I think some have worked
out how to do that. Or I think they close their profile down and make another one’.
The act of closing down online profiles seemed to me like a digital act of suicide. The young people used this opportunity to start fresh in cyberspace after a period of ‘mourning’.

7.6 COUNTERING GALKA VIA FACEBOOK WITH THREATENING STATUS UPDATES

The spiritual powers of certain individuals and sorcery or Galka (Reid 1983) had consistently emerged in my discussions. There was a man whose son was born to a Yolngu woman from a town in West Arnhem Land who defied place and time in the interest of protecting his children and grandchildren. He could foresee illness and counter the effects of sorcery with just a mobile phone call. He called his son when his youngest grandchild fell ill and told him to hang a piece of cloth above the door of their house to prevent evil spirits and cure his illness.

I often listened to such stories of power and influence. These were stories of amazing Yolngu with spiritual powers, and even though I struggled to accept the idea of sorcery, I realised that my presence as a non-Yolngu acted as a form of protection for any Yolngu in my presence because Galka only affects Yolngu. The passengers in my car, during a drive from the Club back to Birritjimi on one occasion, claimed that certain parts of the winding road from town to Birritjimi was haunted, but they were safe as they travelled in a car that belonged to a non-Yolngu. After a long night of dancing with youth from Yirrkala and Birritjimi, after we enjoyed a rare moment of stress-free partying, we found ourselves outside the Club with no taxi to getting back to Birritjimi. I said: ‘I’d love a walk back home even though it is almost ten kilometres’. I also posted these exact words on Facebook
and received a ‘like’ from my friend standing a few metres away with his phone in his hand. He immediately reached back into his pocket for his Samsung Galaxy S4 and called his friend who was a taxi driver. His smile disappeared from his face and his speech no longer slurred but urgent.

‘I thought you were happy with the walk back to Birritjimi because you just ‘liked’ my post on Facebook’ asked him. He explained that a ‘like’ can merely be an acknowledgement or a ‘ma’ – an ‘okay’ or a ‘yes’ but not an agreement or an enthusiastic reaction, which would have been a ‘manymak’. No one dared to be walking about at night between town and Birritjimi. Between the lights of the refinery and the streetlights in town, the road to Birritjimi was Elm Street for Yolngu. Jonny said to me that if I ever saw something suspicious, I should say; Yesu Gare! (Jesus Lord) and this will chase Galka away.

A Solomon Islander with dreadlocks, who offered to buy a round of drinks, joined my friend and me at the pub. He was muscular and had a physique built from resilience and a tan from working all day outdoors. The voice of my Islander friend sounded familiar although for one whole year we avoided eye contact, suspicious of one another, a behaviour that even I, an open and friendly character, succumbed to in the latter part of my fieldwork. We spoke freely of the positive power of Galka for two hours amidst the coming and going of clients at the Walkabout Hotel. I noted the theme of the conversation was centred on romantic relationships and how Galka was used as a protection for men from jealous wives and girlfriends. My Islander friend assured us that if we ever encountered any Galka problems, that he could get a hold of a stronger or more potent version of Galka. My new friend
assured me that he knew someone in the Solomon Islands who could organise
everything, even the death of another human being. Getting someone killed through
sorcery was not uncommon. My Yolngu friend smiled, and quietly sipped his drink
in agreement. They were both cautious about what they posted on Facebook and
were slightly concerned about how young people today were using Galka to
threaten others in the community for fun.

Facebook was a useful tool to produce threats and warnings that directly and
indirectly assisted the user to assert and proclaim their feelings. Threats were made
on Facebook towards individuals and groups. It was written in code, understood by
the people within the social network with access to the events that led to such
outbursts. Threats and warnings were given with such conviction as though
speaking directly to a perpetrator only via a public posting on Facebook as
recounted to me by a male interview participant:

Whoever this person is who’s trying to call from unknown, you’re a mother
fu…king asshole who’s got no better things to do but just want to watch
pornography, I tell you … you better be ready when I find out about you cause you
are gonna be properly embarrassed by me in front of your mother and father.

Without deliberation, a few individuals took matters into their own hands,
crowdsourced solutions and tracked down perpetrators using Facebook. These were
individuals who did not believe in sorcery:

04** ***** Dhuwal yolku number find this person and let me know because of
the thread (threat) everybody every here in Galiwin’ku. If you find this person f&f
on my list, inbox me straight away ok.
It was hard to find some objectivity or procedural reason as discussed by Reid (1983) in the attempt to understand when prank calls were just pranked calls and when they were from Galka. Reid (1983) confirmed this lack of pattern in Yirrkala several decades ago, and with that, I decided not to delve deeper into differentiating the process of Galka naming.

The status updates on Facebook reads as though the person was speaking directly to the perpetrator. The witnesses (the Facebook friends) although not visible, are palpable. It was similar to walking on the street in full view of the supposedly non-observing public, and proceeded to persecute and accuse in words and threats as per Burbank’s Fighting Women (1994):

Get a life low life dogs you mob wait think I’m dumb I’ll do it another way black magic so you black low mother fucking dogs will die from now on if you talk shit to me will make you cripple black magic way this time if your family talk shit to they will be on my list as well no jokes want to be six feet under try me all it takes is one phone call fucking not joking.

The mobile phone number, as mentioned earlier was a commodity to be protected from exploiters using Galka, or just those looking to amuse themselves in a community where young people were afflicted with ‘boredom’. Being careful of Galka and announcing this on Facebook was protective, as though Facebook itself was a talisman: ‘Can’t believe My lil brother L2# is Drunk n his Just. Asking me to book Taxi For him to go to Yirrkala Like Honestly. That place is Full of Shit Galka everywhere’. The use of a public noticeboard like Facebook was a tool to show
transparency and become accountable lest the all-surveying eye of the community made a judgmental statement and accused the silent ‘lurker’ of perpetrating a foul act.

7.7 REFLEXIVITY ON FACEBOOK

The protagonists in this digital extension of the traditional remote community regularly reflected on the events and even what they described as their cultural conservatism. They posed questions, disagreed with controversial status updates or ‘liking’ the messy exchange as a sign of solidarity with their ascribed alliances (Rowse 2012). In a Facebook public message that addressed the community in English, a young man explained how technology was beneficial. He was tired of all the negative comments and reminded every one of the positive uses of Facebook and mobile technology. He said:

You can ring family and friends or use digital technology for phone banking.

Using it to video calls, live stream teaching friends, students, Government people, sports, culture, leisure and many more from place to place, out bush to the city, country to country and more.

He concluded that the negative aspects of mobile technology and Facebook use were correlated to young people who were: ‘too carried away, locked in their bedroom, using it to send text messages that abuse people’. Children were raised entirely autonomously when compared with non-Indigenous children in the community. They often had access to mobile phones when playing and were capable of accessing illicit content on the Internet:
Kids watching porn of naked images, xxx sex videos, behind closed door, post
images of themselves, or underage young kids have naked sex an sending it on text,
not knowing that image or videos can end anywhere in the syber [cyber] world, or
other people that hurts feelings of family and members of our community.

Adults were often asleep during the day, as old people and children were given
room to sleep at night in overcrowded houses. Sleeping in shifts was the norm in
some remote communities. Despite the lack of personal space, young people, even
children used every available opportunity and explored sexuality and their sexual
fantasies through mobile phones. Without the availability of physical space and
privacy, young people were forced to get creative and used technology to transfer
their physical selves into digital images and become cyborgs (Haraway 1987) who
extended their sensual pleasures and exploration of the physical body into the more
convenient space between two mobile phones.

Adolescents already disadvantaged by a lack of adequate housing, had to act with
extreme caution lest they offend the all-surveying eye of a society enwrapped in the
ups and downs of a communal life: ‘Be careful what you say in social media,
because no matter what, we live in a hypersensitive society in which people are just
looking for any reason to be offended and make a huge deal about nothing’ were
Joe’s comments during our first interview. The voices of young people sometimes
brought a political tone of the oppressed, fuelled by the discourse in the media on
the prime ministers plan for education:

School is from 9 to 5. School on Saturdays. Taking away all Centrelink benefits.
Can't drink until 21 * can't drive until 21 * taking away aboriginal culture from
schools tony abbot this poxy ngarmadine think he good lil yarlinga!!&copyNpaste if you think this not Right!

The feeling of confusion was often used to describe the state of affairs in the community. The discussion of non-Yolngu people handling the affairs of the community was always met with suspicion:

Feeling confused because this is run by freaks who thinks they know what Yolngu people needs. But really all they are here for is their own interest to build their houses by money taken away from Yolngu communities which leave Yolngu even more confused. WHEN is THIS nonsense GOING to STOP!

The monitoring eye was cast widely upon all members of the community, using Facebook to express disappointment and frustration on the part of their fellow Yolngu for the lack of solidarity and support (Darvell, Walsh & White 2011). Yolngu youth struggled in their daily lives negotiating relationships whilst being afflicted with gossip according to Sam who read this post out loud to me:

Sick and tired of dumb Yolngu people from still the same just all good at talking shit about other people and some got no jobs just play cards 24/7 and always gotta be so fucking jealous and competitive ungrateful bastards get a real-life lazy idiots.

A young person was concerned about the welfare of young people and wanted the conditions in which they grow, learn and play to be conducive to 'live long and strong', saying:
Why little young kids smoking & drinking in young time, they just killing they selves they won’t see they grandchildren in the future or even live long & strong, no wonder some young people dying too quick because they got no good.

But the solutions to these problems lie not in addressing them, as a young person who grew up with such poor living conditions, decided that retreat seemed like the best option:

Gotta bad feeling diz house got problem & the people itself has problem also wish I was a million air [millionaire] so I could fly anywhere leave all diz shit behind me or go up 2the moon &live – they said therez life up in marz why not piss off that way & start a new life or make friendz with whoever I bump in 2 which I could that 4bloody real?

This feeling of despair was interchangeable with feelings of belonging and nostalgia for community life. Many young people choose to remain in their communities even though they completed their secondary schooling in Brisbane, Townsville, Melbourne, Sydney, Cairns or Darwin.

7.8 JEALOUSING

In this context, ‘jealousing’ is not to be interpreted exclusively as ‘jealousy’ from Burbank (1994, p. 57) but is also complimented with the works of Langton (2008) and Davis (2004). In Fighting Women the word ‘jealousing’ is linked to aggression in women’s conversation, which at times it seemed to be used as a synonym (Burbank 1994). The interpretation that I made was based on an in-depth interview
and follow-up discussions with a mother and grandmother who worked to improve opportunities for young people in the community. In this context, the word ‘jealousing’ referred to a feeling of being threatened by potential future partners, past partners and infidelity on the part of a current romantic partner, which resulted in the prolonged antagonism between two individuals. Jamie, who was involved in women’s empowerment programs in the community confirmed that ‘jealousing’ paralysed youth development: ‘Oh jealousing is a death. Yeah oh for sure’ she said.

It was during the Garma Festival in 2013 when I bumped into a young man in town with a mobile phone and earplugs, who requested a ride to another community. I complied and asked him about his plans to attend Garma when I noticed that he was unsure and looked distressed. I said to him that I noticed only a handful of Gumatj and Galpu youth, mostly male and female elders including their grandchildren were present at the Festival. I wondered where the majority of young people were and decided to lay out a hypothesis and watched his reaction. I said ‘maybe no young people come because of miyalk (women) and dhirammu (men) too much jealousing?’ He nodded with a smile and agreed that it is better for young people to avoid such public interactions in order to prevent assumptions made of young men and women being unfaithful or flirting with the opposite sex. I later confirmed this observation with another interview participant who also worked as a cultural advisor and was a strong bilingual leader in the community. She had struggled to work alongside men due to the ‘jealousing’ from her unemployed husband. Jamie also recounted a conversation she had not long ago during a follow-up interview. She had been training young girls to be ready for work, and after a few days of training, a young girl came into training looking unlike she did on the first day.
Jamie asked: ‘Why are you not washing’? And the girl answered: ‘Because my husband is jealous of me. He thinks when I come here combing my hair, I’m trying to pick up’.

Muise, Christofides and Desmarais (2009) found that the high-frequency use of Facebook amongst young couples predicted jealousy-related feelings and behaviours such as regularly checking a partner’s profile and being suspicious of their online activity. According to Susan, who paid close attention to the dynamics of mobile phones and social media in her community for the past 15 years, contributed a comment that again clarified how technology is a conduit of a social issue. She said that ‘jealousy and the thought that you will meet someone, it can happen to anyone, any age, before [mobile phones and social media] it was opportunistic, now social media and mobile phones makes it much easier.’

The police in town often received complaints about relationships that fluctuated between aggression, violence and reconciliation, due to the poisonous attitude of jealously one’s partner: Susan recalled that she often noticed romantic partners who said; ‘Just finished from talking on da phone with my man gana miss him so much gana love him so much no matter wat’ after the police had taken him away for jealousy related domestic violence complaints. The online surveillance was often enabled by an exchange of Facebook passwords during the trust-building phase between romantic partners and used as a display of loyalty. A friend of a study participant reported that a young mother who just delivered a baby spied on her partner and posted this statement for him and his family and friends to see: ‘I
hate you. Did you forget that I know your password ya fuck face, go for fuck them little sluts because I don’t want you near me”?

In the event of a falling-out in the relationship, when the trust was violated, private and confidential collections of media were divulged online as relationship and jealousy porn. When relationship porn as status updates on Facebook was fuelled by online comments and the ridicule, the matter often became a family violence issue for the police who struggled to enforce court orders between couples. A young interview participant once recalled her words that she posted online after an incident with her partner: ‘At police station making a statement for my partner that being threaten and cheated on me because he got jealous of my career and what I have achieve in my life and trying to pull me down’!

7.9 THE STRESS FROM FACEBOOK

The Walkabout Tavern, otherwise known as ‘The Cage’ by long-time residents, was an accurate description of this watering hole. It had seen young people erupt into pub brawls that defied the strong police force and screaming girlfriends who pleaded to end the heartless pounding of a fist against flesh, and an eye for an eye. The courtyard was arranged with seven to eight tables, all stainless steel and rust proof and made in a factory not far from where my maternal grandmother lived in Malaysia. In the centre was a circular bench with a shrub growing in the middle to soften the hard and aggressive feeling of a remote mining town pub filled with a history of violence.
Only a month ago, a particular sergeant on night duty offered me a lift back home in the police wagon in the interest of my safety. I recognised the danger I had put myself in, but I preferred the walk and the chance to participate and observe in the post-pub, crawl back home. I was doing my usual visual count of who was around.

There were the usual faces of young people I knew. Earlier that night I observed some who sang traditional songs and used two index fingers at the table to replace the ‘bilma’ or clapsticks. A woman stood up and danced a step that only men performed. It reminded me of a James Brown move, with both feet, offbeat, that twisted outwardly while the toes planted firmly on the ground and bent elbows. The dance choreographed the search for wild honey by following the wild bees back to their nest in the forest.

The DJ’s music fifteen metres away was drowned by the jubilant voices of young people who celebrated their culture with alcohol, songs and dances, as they would have celebrated whilst being watched by Macassans curing ‘trepang’ (sea cucumber) and cooking ‘berata’ (rice) with salt and tamarind juice. Amongst the greeting and acknowledgements that followed immediately after my arrival in the ‘arena’ of the pub, a young girl in her early twenties with short hair, shiny black skin and big eyes almost filled by big black pupils came up to me and said: ‘Hi Kishan’. She was the only Yolngu who said my name when others called me wawa (brother). We met on my first visit to North East Arnhem Land. She had always been quiet but confident, and a capable young girl until poached by a new organisation in town and based on her reflections was left to her own devices.
without sufficient support and mentoring. She said to me, ‘Five dollar Kishan, just five dollar or I will kill myself’.

I managed to excuse myself from the situation and found her aunt quietly playing a game on her Samsung flip phone. She heard my story while taking a few short glances at me before returning her attention to the video game. She said that there was stress everywhere and stress contributed to the misery of Yolngu people especially the adolescents and that stress had now migrated online, especially onto Facebook. Having heard what I recounted to her of my conversation with her niece, I mentioned that she (her niece) could no longer handle the ‘jealousness’ she faced from her extended family both offline and online. Her life was unstable, and she was full of hurt and disappointment over the words of her cousins. Her aunt thought about it for a minute, finished her drink and asked me to take them both home. There was no discussion to be held, and no intervention that could have been brainstormed for seemed to us was something systemic. A simple problem identification exercise and labelling such incidents as bullying would not have indeed captured the extent of the issue. There were tension and different interpretations of the meaning of clan hood, bravery, support and empowerment. As all these values may see identical to European values, the hierarchy and compromise of practising these values what was appeared to my study participants and me as different from dominant culture studies.

7.9.1 Cyberbullying on Facebook

Yolngu perceived written and verbal words as the truth or ‘Yuwalk’. A Facebook status update, a comment, and a chat on Divas Chat including photos and videos
could be Yuwalk. When a statement was made, it was accepted as the truth and that
the event has or will come true, without a doubt. In the words of James, ‘if I sent a
text or picture to [someone] and saying “you’re a bitch” – then many people will
look at it and think it is Yuwalk, that it is true and believe it’.

When a social media and mobile phone content became a catalyst for conflict,
family members of the teenagers effected often became embroiled in the conflict.
‘Teenage mother won’t necessarily [get involved], and tend to isolate themselves’
according to Jenny, but for the others, they think that they;

Have kinship and [they're] sharing this with my Gurrutu (kinship), and Gurrutu
has responsibility to support me. So they will take sides to this bullying text. And
we’re gonna take your side as a family because this is Yuwalk. They are sending
this around, and we believe it. And we're really upset by it.

According to Frances: “A lot of fights now start due to social media. Now they’ll
take a screenshot, (a controversy which) someone has already deleted and go show
everyone’.

According to Susan, young people will take on the perpetrator as a show of
manhood and solidarity. She explained:

For boys, it is proving yourself to your brothers, everybody, your group, your
friends, especially your brothers. I notice the first time people start fighting, they’re
at that age where they need to prove to their brothers that I can man up.

Joe’s nephew had shown him a video taken via mobile phone shared around the
community via Bluetooth. Joe said: ‘When you watch a video with people actually
punching and stuff, I don’t know why they watch it. I think it is to tease the family
of the person who won the fight, and they think that’s cool’.

Communication is a sensitive practice in the Yolngu culture, and online conflict has
the potential to damage the Yolngu community because of its ability to be
misconstrued, altered, amplified and shared rapidly. Joe also said that young people
were taking risks with bullying when ‘Family relationships are so important to
Yolngu … and the communication that can occur and the problems that Facebook
can cause, they just don’t understand those risks’. Steven explained that due to a
lack of activities and engagement with young people, they found detrimental ways
to express their feelings and used creative but fake online profiles. He said;

‘On Divas Chat, and on Facebook, you can actually make fake profiles, like using
fake name, photo, so you don’t really know who you’re talking to like if you’re
messaging someone, they could say bad stuff to you, and you don't know who it is.
So it might have an impact on you. Like you feel upset about what they're saying’.

Some of these conflicts also happened between geographical locations. Jones
recalled that a significant conflict that began between families became a
geopolitical tension between two communities. He recalled how Divas Chat
referred by Jones as AirG was eventually used by community members to settle an
‘argument [between] People from Elcho with people from Ramo, all the time’.

Another issue came to the attention of a few study participants which involved
amateur pornography being posted on a website by young people from North East
Arnhem Land. A senior female elder from Yirrkala said in a follow-up interview:
I had a discussion with you about a website (www.ufym.com) that is a concern for us, and it involved a couple of local girls. If their brother had seen that, who knows what the consequences would have been. Back in the day, they'd probably get bashed. But it may be ignored now, but they would still be brothers who would be extremely offended or embarrassed. And it was rumoured that the people in the clip who were doing this were not right skin either.

7.10 REASSURANCE SEEKING ON FACEBOOK

According to the work of Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) and Carlson et al. (2015) regarding online communication and relationships, adolescents were using digital tools and social media to primarily reinforce existing relationships, both with friends and romantic partners. From my study and discussions with Indigenous youth both formally and informally, I observed that the youth were integrating these tools with traditional law and culture. The need to integrate social media, especially social networking sites like Facebook, came from a need to create privacy in their overcrowded surroundings. Sites like Facebook betrayed the young person into thinking that they had found privacy online, and this was a suitable environment to explore sexual identity and relationships.

The perception on the part of some Yolngu youth, of relative privacy and personal space in the online world, was misinformed or not informed at all of the covert limitations of privacy as discussed by boyd (2007). Regarding social media, boyd (2007) explained that words and photos could be copied or altered and shared with
people who were not the intended audiences, an act was done out of trust and respect but easily betrayed upon an event of conflict and jealousy.

A girl in her teen was quoted by her mother during an interview where she said ‘who writes that shit on Facebook’ when she described an example how some extremes of behaviour or deviation from the norm, played out in online community life. The mother urged me to look closely. She said, ‘you’ll notice that on Facebook with comments’ pausing to find the correct words, ‘you notice the status updates [on Facebook] that young people write and you wonder, where they’re head at, you know even at home’. Embedding her example into the home environment, the mother wanted me to understand that the physical idea of home and family, often in overcrowded housing meant very little to a young person. Vulnerable youth often felt emotionally and mentally isolated in the community.

Clerkin, Smith and Hames (2013) assert that adolescents were attracted to engagement with peers over the Internet instead of face to face interactions because it provided elements of social interactions that included self-disclosure and identity exploration as critical needs in their development. Young people with lower self-esteem considered Facebook to be an attractive means of disclosing personal information (Forest & Wood 2012). Facebook has the potential for a positive outcome for those who struggle interpersonally, but when used ineffectively may confer harmful long-term vulnerability.

In between the walls of houses plastered with repairs and refurbishments, amongst tents in the backyards and dwellings beyond economic repair, in chronically
overcrowded houses; it was hard to imagine how young people could feel lonely. My Facebook wall consistently contained posts of young people who sought reassurance and drew attention to the possibility that there was indeed a sense of loneliness felt by some teenagers and young adults. Jenny, a generous interviewee with her time and knowledge was emphatic to my questions and was kind enough to explain the situation. She had raised three teenagers and supported them through their turbulent years. She said: ‘they [teenagers] have a perception or maybe trust issue’ as she turned her gaze away from me towards her partner who sat with us and drank coffee. This was a sensitive topic because ‘trust’ was taken for granted in communal Indigenous societies as being a natural phenomenon, an essential element of communal living. She said that young people were ‘not sure whom they can talk to about their issues’. Jenny always thought it was just her perception and doubted her gut instinct on this slight malfunction of the perfect communal society often romanticised by mainstream Australia. She said: ‘after twenty-two years I now feel the opposite. There’s never any privacy. I felt that there’s no such thing within a Yolngu context of privacy because you just never get a minute on your own’. Being on your own is considered abnormal. Jenny generously guided my thinking to conclude that young people still felt isolated despite being surrounded by family and kin because they felt unable to talk about their concerns and issues.

Clerkin, Smith and Hames (2013) suggest that individuals who were challenged with interpersonal communication may benefit from the Internet as an intermediate solution towards becoming more connected and engaged with others. Bonetti, Campbell and Gillmore (2010) found that children and adolescents who complained of being lonely, and in the words of Jenny, ‘I feel so alone, and I feel like I’ve got
no one I could talk to’, were according to Clerkin, Smith and Hames (2013) more 
likely to use the Internet for communication about personal and intimate themes.

Opportunities for children and adolescents to explore and fulfil their critical needs 
in identity works through the Internet (Clerkin, Smith & Hames 2013) were evident 
in Sam’s words; ‘That’s right, girls have been taking photos of their fanny’. This 
seemed to have become a normal part of youth life and according to Sean’s 
experience, he observed that ‘they [teenagers] think they’re sending [a private 
photo] to a boyfriend or someone they fancy but its posted to the [Facebook] wall’ 
of ‘young teenage girls putting pictures of themselves wearing pretty much nothing’ 
as a form of reassurance-seeking (Evraire & Dozois 2011).

Lee also observed that ‘a lot of them [youth] would look up fights in communities, 
fights in Numbulwar’, similar to Sam’s nine-year-old who was on YouTube doing 
‘a bit of Yolngu Boying, filming fights, teasing’. The term Yolngu Boying became 
popularised by a famous feature film produced in Yirrkala with local actors who 
showcased the turbulent lives of young men ushered by their elders to turn to 
tradition, culture and law in order to find health and wellbeing. It was a visual 
ethnographic response to the rising rates of petrol sniffing in the community. The 
young men were depicted in the film as cheeky, adventurous and playful, causing 
trouble to the ranges, parents and policy but all for the sake of an excellent 
adventure and being close to land.

My own observations agreed with the research findings from Gentile, Twenge and 
Freeman et al. (2012) and Gonzales and Hancock (2011) who demonstrated that the
most prolific and ardent producers of status updates and media content, spent more

\[ \text{time on Facebook, and were young people who had higher levels of self-esteem in} \]

the offline world. This was not hard to understand, as these young people were often

\[ \text{exposed to various opportunities, evident in their position or status in the} \]

community and their influence in the broader community through work, sports and

\[ \text{their connections to influential families. Many young people waxed and waned} \]

from the effects of perceived social support on Facebook or Divas Chat (Evraire &

Dozois 2011). Young people received a response and support that often began with

\[ \text{a ‘Like’ and ended with a positive comment. However, this interaction rarely} \]

replicated itself in the offline world and forced young people to become addicted to

\[ \text{the virtual social support available on social media. This phenomenon can be} \]

associated to the research findings of Valkenburg, Peter and Schouten (2006), in

\[ \text{which the Internet use of young people studied as being conducive to increased} \]

levels of self-esteem and perceived support from the social environment. Evraire

and Dozois (2011) strongly suggest that the perceived support from social ties was

\[ \text{a result of excessive reassurance-seeking and was particularly challenging to the} \]

maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships. Negative feedback can

\[ \text{sometimes be the result of the absence of feedback or comments from a post.} \]


\[ \text{According to the opinion of several vital informants, excessive Facebook} \]

reassurance-seeking may be a result of a lack of activities and targeted services for

\[ \text{youth and teenagers. This has had a negative impact on identity constructs relevant} \]

for interpersonal functioning, including self-esteem (Clerkin, Smith & Hames

2013). It is well summed up in the words of an interviewee whom one day posted

\[ \text{his feelings of disappointment from the lack of online engagement with his peers.} \]
He said; ‘not feeling very positive might just deactivate my account until whenever I’m ready’.

Towards the New Year celebrations at the Arnhem Club in 2014, a Yolngu friend sent me a text. It said: ‘This year I feel really empty inside me. I know it’s not me someone help me find me a better home to spend time away from Yolngu people – away from NT’. I found out later from him that no-one commented back and provided any verbal support offline and was intrigued by the lack of responses from his peers and extended family. Young people sought reassurance within their online social networks as they explored identity, sexuality and relationships. In Clerkin, Smith and Hames (2013) the relationship between Facebook reassurance-seeking and self-esteem was heavily implicated with two other interpersonal functioning (Van Orden et al. 2010 in Clerkin et al. 2013):

- Thwarted belongingness (e.g. I am alone); and
- Perceived burdensomeness (e.g. I am a burden).

The combination of thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness has the potential to be incredibly damaging when experienced conjointly. According to Van Orden et al. (2010), they may produce the desire for suicide. In a meta-analysis, Evraire and Dozois (2011) concluded that negative feedback as a result of excessive reassurance-seeking or a combination of both was detrimental to the maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships. Glimpses of young people’s status updates on Facebook became a reflection of their offline self, in which the path to depression was not far, according to Sowislo and Orth (2013). Sam’s opinion reflected the findings of Clerkin, Smith and Hames (2013) and Van Orden et al.
(2010) when she said ‘I keep on flicking back to that suicide because I know that actually has been the part of bullying and has been the part of cyberbullying’. Jenny suspected that it was the lack of meaningful relationships between young people and that they ‘got no-one to talk to. Yes, they are lost. That’s a term they would use. I’m a lost boy. It’s really heartbreaking’.

Some online public posts that were read out to me by my key informants, on the other hand, pleaded to be left alone: ‘Everyone is making everything worst it makes me not wanna live anymore so everyone should just mind their own business youse ain't helping at all just Fuck off everyone’ while others threatened to end their lives: ‘Hopefully, I will be resting in peace goodbye everyone if I won’t be online tomorrow that means I’m dead if I go online tomorrow that means I have good news’. Calls and cries for reassurance and attention as public status updates on Facebook, as relationship porn Bluetoothed to unintended audiences, as videos of fights on YouTube from teenagers and young adults lying on their bare mattresses and trying to drown the noise of an overcrowded house with few resources and little opportunity was a tragic state of life, it confused me and contradicted the mainstream imagination of egalitarian societies.

Unlike other young people, they don’t have pictures of family holidays, photos of their childhood, riding their first bike, framed photos of siblings and cousins on the wall, family videos of their first steps or graduating from high school. In this chaos, the technology kept improvising, refining its hook on young people, preying on their vulnerability during a state of identity and sexuality exploration. The social networking sites improved, it became faster, and easier to access via simple phones
(not smartphones), and created more opportunities for escape for marginalised young people with challenges of low self-esteem and social isolation.

7.11 DISCUSSION

Kral (2010) opined that remote Indigenous youth encountered a greater plurality of lifestyles than generally perceived by policymakers and the broader Australian society (Carlson et al. 2015). Based on the findings of my study, young people actively resisted the cultural conservatism and social inequality in their localities. As exemplified by the opportunities to break kinship rules such as talking to poison cousins and engaging with relationships online that are not sanctioned by traditional law. Such acts of dissent have been accounted for in studies conducted by Aboriginal researchers in social media to signify the ability of young people to reflect and critique through the performative avenues awarded by mobile technology and social media in ways that are non-confronting (Carlson et al. 2015). The young generation in Yirrkala was on a social innovation project that was temporal, where reality was moulded and re-shaped, no specific end goal in mind but an unfolding journey towards solidarity and subsidiarity. Action in cyberspace appeared to be a performative discourse through the use of videos, likes, comments and shares with Yolngu values being the centre of reflection and reconsideration.

Young people redefined their value systems as a result of globalisation by using visual references of such practices as alcohol consumption and peer reactions to this on Facebook, to turn behaviours that were culturally unacceptable into positive behaviours (Buellens & Schepers 2013). Continued reference to alcohol use among young people and the positive messages they associated with it, such as being
sociable and having fun overturned previous messages about the inappropriateness of young people drinking (Chenhall and Senior 2017). The re-defining of Aboriginal youth practices in the context of socialisation associated with drinking alcohol and posting images on Facebook can be quite inspirational to the general Aboriginal sociality who have struggled with stereotypes of alcoholism and the inability to drink in moderation. Facebook, according to Moreno et al. (2013) was a website considered to be an influencer of user attitudes, intentions and behaviours and therefore contradicted the argument of Deger’s (2006) that culture acted as a guide for online communications. Youth in Yirrkala were reshaping and remoulding past stereotypes and creating a new meaning for their behaviours without culture acting as a guide.

In addition to the community ties reinforcing and negative stereotypes challenging capabilities of social media, Facebook also became accepted by Indigenous youth in remote communities in North East Arnhem Land as a platform for monitoring and surveillance. It could be seen that the use of mobile technology and social media supplemented the surveillance activities that were usual in small communities, where individuality and antisocial behaviour were often considered as suspect (Senior and Chenhall 2008). Frequent monitoring and surveillance have brought with it emotions of jealousy, anger, a schism within the families and as a result, brought a lot of stress to the already marginalised community. Unlike the situation for non-Indigenous youth, self-esteem did not significantly predict daily Facebook partner monitoring activities, but from observation and consultation with interview participants, it was the general community consensus that online public fighting and
‘jealousing’ between romantic partners and friends were part of normative behaviour (Senior, Helmer and Chenhall 2016).

From this discussion, it becomes evident that social media can be seen as cultural appropriation that accentuated past practices of lateral violence (Langton 2008) whilst simultaneously providing the means for the escape of young people from their relative poverty, gerontocracy and the lack of opportunities and resources. The reassurance-seeking and ‘jealousing’ via social media was a precursor to social isolation that young people struggled with. In the next chapter, I will discuss why and how, despite the known troubles and challenges that stem from mobile phone and social media use, these tools continued to be adopted and appropriated with speed, confidence and hope for a renewed Yolngu community.

CHAPTER 8 - YOLNGU’S ‘OVERCOAT’

‘We all came out from Gogol’s Overcoat’ – Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881)

8.1 INTRODUCTION
I took my usual route in Yirrkala that allowed me to experience community life without creating suspicion. I drove past the Laynhapuy Homelands Office, the Yamuna Workshop and the Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation Office on my left. On my right were the Yirrkala Arts Centre and the supermarket. The houses of traditional owners were interspersed between ‘unknown’ houses and homes of Yolngu I never met and had no idea of their story. In Yirrkala, there were traditional owners, ‘bungguwa’ (leaders), and commoners. The ruling class and the community members shared the land with little social mobility.

I may have noticed a subtle pattern of affluence amongst a few members of the Yolngu community and much poverty in the majority. There were, for example, some young people who were supported by their parents to attend private colleges in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. These were students from influential, educated and financially stable families, while others orbited around the Yirrkala primary and Nhulunbuy high school. The artificiality of Yirrkala was manufactured when Yolngu clans were manipulated and persuaded to reside in one geographic location; away from their original homelands under Missionary strategies and had always created tension in the community (Thomson & Petersen 1983). Since the homelands movement, Yolngu have used Yirrkala as a place of respite; with a hospital, a court, a supermarket, a few shops for buying toys and clothing, take away stores and two hotels for live music. Yirrkala was the busy capital of North East Arnhem Land, conveniently located close to the airport and remained politically significant, as the home of the Land Rights movement.
As life in Yirrkala was in proximity to ‘nganitji’ (alcohol), access to new technology, Internet and the ‘disorder’ of the western culture, the young people were in a position where they could become easily influenced to forget about Yolngu culture (Marika & Isaacs 1995), and consequently succumb to White Australian temptations. The sophistication in which this lifestyle was achieved was astounding; to covertly embrace and appropriate change without a sound theoretical argument between Yolngu academics even while the elders and leaders were constantly putting out fires and organising funerals from youth suicides. This unfortunate circumstance merely contributed to the normalisation of repression in the community. The discussion of the ‘Bayini’ in a previous chapter with the help of McIntosh (2013) and the enlightened theoretical discourse from Mr Burrumarra MBE on the subject of the pre-Macassan legacy and the story behind Yolngu suffering and oppression, was steeped in poetry and myth which I believed the English language was inept to interpret.

In an attempt to draw parallels to human oppression for discernment, I used the story of Gogol’s Overcoat to illustrate my understanding of the Bayini philosophy (McIntosh 2013). Our understanding of the Theory of the Bayini is crucial in having an accurate even though blurred view (caused by challenges of language and interpretation), of the phenomena of new technology in the lives of a remote traditional Aboriginal community, who retained their culture, language and have successfully, negotiated the Land Rights and continued to fight for their Law to co-exist with Australian law. Burrumarra in McIntosh (2013, p. 102) recalled;

With the arrival of the Bayini child (with light brown skin and golden-haired) colour came to take on a new meaning for Yolngu. Yolngu ancestors began to think
that perhaps in the distant past all people had been the colour of this baby (with light brown skin and golden hair) and that some cataclysm had brought about the change. In the 1980s, this was a foundational belief of all Bayini-inspired clans.

The Bayini philosophy was a foundational theory held by Bayini-inspired clans who predicted that the downfall of Yolngu depended on their negotiation of change, progress and the avoidance of non-traditional material culture (McIntosh 2013). It is here that my thoughts were drawn to Gogol and his use of his novel entitled, The Overcoat, to describe the discourse between material artefacts and class suppression. McIntosh (2013) clarified that even though Bayini herself represented new technology, her law opposed the use of technology that drew Yolngu away from their culture, causing them to lose their identity and place in the Yolngu cosmology (McIntosh 2013).

8.2 THE PARALLEL OF THE BAYINI AND THE OVERCOAT

I was transported back to ‘Sankt Peterburg’ of 1842 when I drove into the boundaries of Yirrkala. According to Gogol’s description in The Overcoat, Nevsky Prospect in St. Petersburg of the 19th Century contained the houses of aristocrats arranged neatly along the same street as the homes of the working class. Yirrkala’s main street that led towards the Arts Centre and the clinic was no different. I waved back at the ‘Akakiy Akakievichs’, Gogol’s famous protagonist who represented the working class. They were young men from Yirrkala who walked across the street towards the IGA store, recognised my car and waved to me with flicks of their wrist.
In the hands of young people transitioning into adolescence was the new message stick, the new metal harpoon, the new dugout canoe, the new bark painting and the new tobacco, all fitted into one device, namely the mobile phone and social media. There were at least two hundred years of innovation for the Yolngu, now summed into mobile phones and social media. However, there was no Djungaya (estate executive) in charge of this handheld technology. Keesing (1987) in Lock and Nguyen (2010) proposed that culture should not be understood as static or conclusive. Culture and the privilege of arguing its values and settling the disputes it created have never been distributed equally in a community, giving rise to the exploitation of the working class in power relations, moral structures and the maintenance of social inequalities (Keesing 1987).

In this chapter, I will use the narrative of Gogol’s discussion of class, inequality, the acquisition of new possessions that defined the self and provided the transport for social mobility and self-expression. The cultural conservatism described in my ethnography is challenged by Appadurai (1990) in Lock and Nguyen (2010) who argued that a significant problem for ethnographers today was the tension between the homogenization and heterogenization of a particular cultural group. By homogenization I mean, the ‘Indigenisation’ of new technology; a process of deciding what is included and excluded after new ideas, knowledge, behaviours, technologies and material goods were appropriated and transformed into the Yolngu context (Appadurai 1990). I took up this challenge after a further study of Appadurai (1996, p. 65) where he argued that;

Anthropology can undoubtedly contribute its special purchase on lived experience to a wider, transdisciplinary study of the global cultural process. However, to do
this, anthropology must first come in from the cold and face the challenge of making a contribution to cultural studies without the benefit of its previous principle source of leverage — sightings of the savage.

I must clarify here that the word ‘savage’ used by Appadurai (1996) did not reflect a simplistic, primitive viewpoint of Yolngu, but that of a basic unit of what it is to be a consumer and that Yolngu have long developed a complex web of consumerism since the dawn of trade with Macassan seafarers.

Warner (1958) opined that social structures were responsible for the regulation of the technology and helped disciplined the distribution and consumption of its productivity outputs. Deger’s ethnography also supported the assertion (2006) of Warner (1958). Does Warner’s idea hold the same gravitas in today’s cultural appropriation of mobile technology and social media? The cultural appropriation by Yolngu cannot ignore the ‘appropriation of Yolngu’ by technology from a mutual encounter as the mobile phone, although an inanimate object was alive with the ideas and behavioural manipulation driven by principles of freedom of information, a capitalist agenda, but also easy access to an unlimited consumer base for marketing. The Yirritja clans, who owned the rights to new technology introduced by the Macassans of a bygone era, may have had an advantage over the Dhuwa Clans although the traditional interlocking ties of Yothu Yindi Mari Gutharra (Marika, Ngurruwuthun & White 2009) supposedly created a universally unchallenged equilibrium.
The leader of the Djapu clan from the Dhuwa moiety, Wonggu Mununggur, interviewed by Thomson in the 1930s (Thomson & Petersen 1983), forced equilibrium to this imbalance of power by taking 25 Yirritja wives. His children according to one of his descendants, Sam during an interview mentioned that, they provided Wonggu with a unique ‘visa’ into the lands and ceremonies of their Yirritja mothers. The special rights gave Wonggu and his descendants’ access and a degree of power which indirectly empowered the Djapu clan. Wonggu’s descendants were comparable to visas that provided rights into the territory of his wives fathers’ clans and mother’s clan. This was explained to me by Sam in the presence of a senior male elder and Traditional Owner from Elcho Island, my ‘uncle’. All these and many more accomplishments were the reason why Wonggu was proudly admired by young men in Yirrkala, even today.

8.3 OWNERSHIP OF MATERIAL

Warner in A Black Civilisation (1958) identified several premises of ownership in the Yolngu culture:

- The object of technology was personally owned, but brothers, fathers and sons have a feeling of collective ownership.
- Mutual use of land was encouraged between two friendly clans instead of exclusion.

A totemic design is owned by clans and is impossible for other clans or moieties to use these designs unless permission was given under exceptional circumstances.
According to Warner (1958), Yolngu were not particularly interested in the acquisition of material culture and would instead not be burdened by its ownership and responsibilities. The exotic dugout canoe with its mast and sail could not entirely replace the bark canoe even though it enabled the practicality of hunting the much-desired flesh of turtles and dugong (Warner 1958). All objects of new technology, except the Macassan tobacco pipe (Lungin), were appropriated with modifications and given a Yolngu identity. Even the collection of trepang, a joint task (gathering) performed by women in the Yolngu culture was modified into a turtle and dugong hunting activity. With the use of the new bark canoe (lipa lipa or dugout canoe), harvesting trepang was performed enthusiastically by men and discussed by Warner (1958) as the only way the Macassans were able to use Yolngu labour and created a profitable industry.

The need to own material possessions was not equally distributed in Yolngu society, and its burdens were also handled differently. Instead of looking at this as a deficit, a lacking feature of a European model (Williams 1986), Gogol in The Overcoat suggested that the desire to be an individual and be noticed was a natural human desire, and confirmed by Dostoyevsky in the words, ‘We all came out of Gogol’s Overcoat’. A feature of the Yolngu life that aimed to counter internal marginalisation through the adoption of new technology was not only to appropriate but also to be noticed. I am here. I exist.

Contrary to Williams’ (1986) discussion that this approach proposed an artificially circumscribed object of analysis while displacing the concepts, intentions and behaviours of the actors; Cindy, a mother having observed mobile phones in her community confirmed that young adopters of technology:
See it as participating in the current trend. As if any young person wants to be considered a part of the contemporary society” and their use of technology is defined by “… looking for accolade within their peer group. They are not necessarily looking for accolade within the higher Gurrutu (kinship system).

I wondered, however, if some young people had given up hope and their reliance on the current kinship system for social equality. Akakiy Akakievich in Gogol’s masterpiece looked for accolade within his peer group through the acquisition of an expensive overcoat and was ready to be persuaded by a one-eyed, former convict turned tailor to give away every single penny he owned for this elusive Overcoat. The oppressed serf, ex-convict and tailor convinced Akakiy to change his routine, his beliefs and actions to gain possession of a new overcoat. As young people within Yolngu society, unnoticed, roamed the community at night (Senior & Chenhall 2008b), persuaded and convinced their peers to obtain a mobile phone, their focus shifted from the traditional and cultural routine of living in community to escape with the ‘shiny object’ prophesied by Thomson in the 1930s (Thomson & Petersen 1983) to become the downfall of Yolngu. As discussed earlier, Daisy confirmed that the mobile phone might take centre stage in the life of an individual when she said: ‘So once they got money and the kids crying for a phone they might take that as a priority over a baby at home needing nappies’.

The acquisition of new technology by Yolngu youth did not equal cultural appropriation or the ‘indigenisation’ of technology, as mentioned by Appadurai (1996). The use of Facebook and mobile phones struggled to be led by cultural law
as per Deger’s (2006) and Kral’s (2010) hope of an Indigenous globalised youth culture as evidenced by this quote from Jason:

You’ve got a lot of youth, and you got even younger than that. Not sort of going to their parents for advice, they’re looking at the internet (instead). I guess it makes them ignore the important things and so they’re more interested in what their friends are doing and saying and keeping up with whatever is "IN" at the time.

8.4 NEGOTIATING BICULTURAL IDENTITIES WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY

The bicultural identities I referred to were not formed through the adoption of European values. The Yolngu identity remained within its Yolngu boundaries, but the modification of Yolngu customs and tradition had enabled the use of new technology. The individualisation of Yolngu was what had emerged from the use of technology and therefore resulted in the formation of bicultural identities within the Yolngu structure. At the level of an individual, it was possible that the European autonomy was desired, and complemented the philosophy of the Bayini child. The fixation of the literature on Yolngu, as an ancient romantic culture, idealised their traditional laws and had stereotyped Yolngu as non-negotiating subjects of their reality. I recorded an example of cultural negotiation and mobile phones when a senior woman showed me a photo of her grandchild:

Janet's grandson was taken by a croc a month or two after we arrived here. She had a picture of him on her mobile phone. She waved her hand dismissively when I reminded her that photos of dead people were taboo in Yolngu culture. (Field notes 12th April, Arnhem Club 10 pm).
Traditional owners and elders, including board members of a primary health care provider, had been observed to show fear in regards to new technology. Jodie said: ‘Board members and elders were concerned about technology and social media because it eroded their culture. I think it is fear of the unknown’. Was, this the safe fear that led to several centuries of trade and travel with Macassans? I urge the reader to ponder on this question and find the author's perception that there may be more to this then preserving of culture but development of Yolngu modernity. The statement of the female board member was a reflection of an unacknowledged acceptance that a new Yolngu way of being had been co-created by a younger generation unwilling to continue to be different from mainstream society.

The redrawing of the borders between Yolngu youth and globalised youth culture, the appropriation of hip-hop and rock with the Yidaki (Didgeridoo), and the desire to use the same tools as their non-Indigenous peers, did not include the erosion of culture as feared by elders and traditional owners. The mobile phone and social media refused to be governed by a gerontocracy, and the young adopters did not yield autonomy to the instructions of their elders on the use of mobile technology, which is the source of their liberation from the confines of cultural conservatism.

8.5 YOLNGU IMPROVISATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

Akakiy was transformed by his new overcoat and was subsequently invited to a party, which signified his entrance into the world of existence in Sankt Peterburg. He emerged from the obscurity of his working-class position in society. He felt his presence as he walked the streets of the city and desired the company of women,
which he had never thought of before. He noticed and appreciated the beauty and
even felt beautiful himself from the effect of wearing a new overcoat. Yolngu youth
who experienced the owning of their mobile phones, created media and stories that
belonged to them, accentuated a new level of individuality and independence that
invoked a challenge to the communal structure in Yirrkala. According to Janet: ‘I
guess it’s made them more independent. What I would say is probably not a positive
thing because Yolngu and Yolngu culture, things are done as a family’.

The song ‘Treaty’ from Yothu Yindi was a narrative detailing the broken promises
made by a stronger power to a less powerful minority, even though seen on the
television and heard on the radio (is, therefore ‘Yuwalk’ or truth) can still disappear
‘like writing in the sand’. The paternal grandson or Gutjuk was called to keep on
dancing the ‘djatpangarri’, singing ‘you improvise, you improvise (Nhima
gayakaya, nhe gaya’ nhe) and to ‘keep improvising, keep going, you’re better’ (Nhe
gaya’nhe marrtjini walangwalang nhe ya). The new individuality and independence
were transformational. Being an individual was culturally inappropriate and
seeking to have one's space was taboo, as understood in the words of Sam here:

There’s never any privacy. I felt that there’s no such thing within a Yolngu context
of privacy, cause you just never get a minute on your own. Someone always wants
to sit with you. And if you did want to be on your own, well it’s considered
abnormal – “why would you want to be alone, sit by yourself.

Through mobile phones, you can explore individual interests, personal relationships
and consume media under one's control. With Facebook profiles and friend requests
from boys and girls, the youth were engaged beyond the realities of their remote
public housing; cramped, unfurnished and lacked in privacy, which was necessary features for appropriate adolescent development (Senior 2003; Senior & Chenhall 2012). As the predicament of marginalised Yolngu remained unchanged for decades, mobile phones and social media was appropriated to improvise, and opportunities were sought to control or obtain resources to beat the overwhelming state of inequality. The young people fluctuated between their traditional lifestyles surrounded by family and the frustration and having so little to live with, fewer opportunities, resources and entertainment. Josephine explained to me that; ‘there's not a whole lot for youth to be doing [here]. In the cities and stuff, unless they feel unsafe, there are plenty of things for people to be doing’ unlike in this region. The following words of young people cited by my interview participants explained their predicament:

- Can’t wait to go Gove for courts haha gone Fuck shit up and move on in life wanna better life all u Gove mob that are two-faced cunts can get fucked.
- This year I feel really empty inside me. I know it's not me someone help me find me a better home to spend time away from Yolngu people – away from NT.
- Gove is full of fake lying dogs really need to get out of this shit hole man hate everyone in this town fuckin dumb idiots
- Yirrkala is getting more boring, I don’t even know this place for staying too long … and it’s making me sick right?
- Need some1 to make company with me Cause I'm Fucken Bored Bored Bored Fucken hell :(
Can some1 inbox me your number so I could call you Cause I'm Bored 😊
lolz

Can anyone call me cause I’m bored ?!!!! ……Anyone??

Boring I wanna go back to home. Yirrkala.

‘Boredom’, as noted from the countless discussions and online interactions I held with family and friends in the region was a symptom of deprivation, loss, hopelessness and a dependency to be engaged, entertained and the failure of Indigenous leaders to recognise the signs of chronic societal inequality (Scheper-Hughes 1993) not only from without but especially from within the Yolngu society.

8.6 THE ONLINE DISINHIBITION EFFECT AS METHOD OF COPING WITH STRESS

A young man in his early thirties said in an interview: ‘there are fights, a normal part of community life, even though [over] distance if it wasn’t through Facebook it would be through phones. So yeah! Its youth culture and how they communicate’.

He was a son of a renowned Aboriginal leader and was often seen online communicating with the community of Yolngu from different age groups. There were parents and grandparents, non-Yolngu followers and commenters, and likers who agreed with his statement.

He reminded me of an omnipresent online champion who posted his advice and commandments as status updates. He implored and advised his listeners to attain a higher level of spirituality, improved interpersonal relationships for Yolngu to live up to the cultural standards of his elders before his father. After a quiet week of
online invisibility, he emerged with a prophet-like tone of admonition to warn everyone that ‘now the crime committed by youth in the community is extreme. So people know what you and your post, and where they end up’. His advice was important to his listeners in that crime was something that must remain hidden. It was as though youth crime was inevitable and posting criminal activity online was a manipulation of the ‘system’ that sought to bring down or incriminate Yolngu youth. He said, ‘be smart, be cyber safe!!!’

Youth culture had been defined as synonymous with anti-social behaviour in the remote Aboriginal context by a young Aboriginal man on Facebook. Being safe online was exercising caution in both their offline and online worlds, so far as to circumvent the consequences of the traditional and secular law. An interview participant in her late twenties said that anti-social behaviour had also involved people stealing sim cards. She said, ‘They steal it and use it to abuse other people with text messages and stuff’. The communal life of the Yolngu was threatened by abuse, theft, relationship, jealousy porn, and in this situation, the prophet-like advice from concerned young adults targeting teenagers online, was to: ‘be careful what you say in social media, because no matter what, we live in a hypersensitive society in which people are just looking for any reason to be offended and make a huge deal about nothing’.

The victim of abuse, the families that suffered from online abuse was labelled hypersensitive and that the young people have to apply sophistication to their youth culture and to be careful with their online exchanges. According to Suler (2004), The Online Disinhibition Effect is a phenomenon whereby some young people,
either self-disclose or act out more frequently or intensely abuse, threaten and bully
others online than they would in person. Not all disinhibitions are harmful; there
are ample examples of altruistic behaviour, displays of empathy, unusual acts of
kindness and support during a funeral and standing up against injustice meted out
by organisations and institutions on the ordinary Yolngu who were unable to speak
out. Secret emotions, fears, and wishes in addition to the online behaviours of acts
of kindness were described by Suler (2004) as benign disinhibition.

Toxic disinhibition was the display of rude language, harsh criticisms, anger, hatred
even threats used synonymously with swearing, was a ‘blind catharsis, a fruitless
repetition compulsion, and an acting out of unsavoury needs without any personal
behaviour and the online disinhibition effect into the following:
• Dissociative anonymity
• Invisibility
• Asynchronicity
• Solipsistic introjection and
• Dissociative imagination.

Anonymity and invisibility were some of the fundamental features of social media
use that created the disinhibition effect (Suler 2004). Young people felt less
vulnerable about self-disclosing and acting-out when they have the opportunity to
separate their actions online from their offline in-person lifestyle and identity. In
the context of overcrowded housing, restraint and the repression of the self through
kinship ties and submission to higher authorities within family circles, generational
envy and jealousy were embedded within the traditional structures of Yolngu life.
Here a young person can now disown their anti-social behaviour by integrating their
online and offline identities. According to Suler (2004, p. 322), the online self-
becomes compartmentalised, ‘almost as if superego restrictions and moral, 
cognitive processes have been temporarily suspended from the online psyche’.

Asynchronicity was evident in the lives of young people’s use of Facebook when 
they ‘experience asynchronous communication as ‘running away’ after posting a 
message that was personal, emotional, or hostile’ according to Suler (2004, p. 323).
The asynchronous communication style offered by social media allowed young 
people to feel safe to enter into conflict, create conflict or disclose happiness, 
boredom and disappointment by putting it ‘out there’. This imagined captive 
audience on social media was where everyone could ‘see’ a receptive audience, but 
still according to Sandy ‘got no one to talk to’ and despite being surrounded by 
cousins and family ‘could still feel isolated’.

Without a continuous feedback loop of a live discussion or solipsistic introjection, 
social norms in the Yolngu community could not be reinforced and resulted in self-
disclosure and behavioural expressions that strayed from the cultural protocol 
which resulted in conflict and ended with fights. Joe had always been aware of toxic 
disinhibition because she had ‘seen a lot of that on Facebook and also on Diva 
Chat’, behaviours from young people she called ‘negative stuff’, had explained that 
it included ‘arguments’ that were posted online or ‘they swear’ (Burbank 1994). 
Young people, Joe explained used anonymity by making ‘fake profiles, like using
a fake name, fake photo, to say bad stuff to you” so that you inevitably “feel upset about what they’re saying’.

Young people who read text messages on mobile phones and status updates on Facebook or Divas Chat, according to Suler (2004, p.323) ‘experienced as a voice within one’s head, as if that person’s psychological presence and influence have been assimilated or introjected into one’s psyche’. Cindy was saddened by the thought of the young person who took her own life in Yirrkala after a phone had come into her possession. She kept bringing the discussion back to young people reacting so tragically. She said, ‘I keep flicking back to that suicide because I know that actually has been the part of bullying and have been the part of cyberbullying’.

Here Cindy specifically included the bullying that happened online, which targeted this vulnerable young person and had possibly driven them to take their life. Social media traditionally proposed that every user be equal, and its utilisation was solely to share ideas and resources among peers (Suler 2004). There was no centralised control, and its authority minimising effect amplified anonymity and dissociated the individual from the offline reality of traditional culture and law. According to Suler (2004, p. 324), this resulted in a dissociative imagination because of which a young person attempted “an invisible non-identity, resulting in a reduced, simplified, or compartmentalised of self-expression”.

A fantasy environment that was created online was an environment void of surveillance and law (Suler 2004), in which exploration by independent-minded teenagers and pioneers contributed to the effects of both benign and toxic disinhibition (Suler 2004). According to Jones, a middle-aged Yolngu interviewee,
a Yolngu Facebook user who ‘friend your poison cousin but not your miyal’ (female) poison cousin’ was an example of traditional laws gone online. This convenience through which it has become easier ‘to keep in touch with families, easy to chat with’ but also caused mobile technology to ‘destroy our tradition’.

I was tempted to agree with Suler, when I considered that the “disinhibition effect released deeper aspects of intrapsychic structure, that it unlocked true needs, emotions, and self-attributes that dwell beneath surface personality presentations” (Suler 2004, p. 324) similar to the after-effects of chronic lateral violence (Langton 2008; Gonzalez et al. 2013; boyd 2013). The complexity of what was the ‘true' self of Yolngu young adults and teenagers required a psychoanalytic methodology to understand the process of inhibiting and disinhibiting (Suler 2004). However, according to a young female worker in public health, ‘A lot of elders think these young people shouldn’t be on the Internet, they think it’s wrong’. A young man observed his peers online ‘Saying things that they think are funny but disrespecting older people’ and ‘Things that affected the community’ was a testament that the problem of anti-social behaviour on social media, ‘Does not exist separate from the environment in which that self is expressed’ as theorised by Suler (2004).

8.7 DISCLOSURE AND SURVEILLANCE

In the context of mobile phone numbers, social media profiles and individual activities throughout the day, a subsection of young people online was compelled to disclose a great deal of personal information, according to Petronio (2002) and Christofides et al. (2009). I could not find appropriate answers to such an abstract question amongst the young people I lived, played and worked with over the three
years in the Gove Peninsula. Some young people were extremely private about their
daily activities, while others would disclose details of their movements throughout
the day and sometimes by the hour. According to Poyntz and Kennelly (2015, p.
2) globalization referred to ‘a system through which individual lifeworlds are
structured in particular ways; Most profoundly today, this has included a de-
structuring of older lifeworlds, the result of which is the development of processes’
and has created a new appetite for aspirations, experience and expectation. What
drew my attention to the dichotomy was the possibility that these young people who
disclosed their private lives online were compelled to do so by a more powerful
section of the community. A band of thinkers, who determined who amongst the
less powerful, was getting up to trouble, stirring up Galka incidents or having an
affair with someone else’s partner.

Christofides et al. (2009) support my speculation of an existence of a group of
controllers over another group, that information disclosure and information control
were not “two ends of the same spectrum” as proposed earlier by Westin (2003).
Christofides et al. (2009) suggest that these behaviours were influenced by different
aspects of personality and were utterly independent behaviours. It holds true to an
ever-changing non-Indigenous society in an urban environment, whereas the
pinnacle of Yolngu life was the sustenance and maintenance of Gurrutu (kinship)
and therefore deserved control and disclosure. A Yolngu teenager, in the phase of
identity construction, chose not to show their overcrowded houses, front yards
without a lawn and pets, resource deficit playtimes, absent vacation photos and
Christmas gifts, to show their family and extended networks what everyone already
knows but ‘tell’ others about themselves. By telling others what they are doing and
feeling, by disclosing the ups and downs of their romantic relationships, their identity was constructed through an exchange of information that simultaneously warded off any speculation of negative behaviour mentioned earlier.

From the perspective of Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008, p. 1831) (modified for the Yolngu context), ‘identity is not an individual characteristic, it is not an expression of something innate in a person, it is rather a social product the outcome of a given social environment and hence performed differently in varying contexts’. In this context, disclosure and surveillance became an aspect of identity construction. The risks of limiting access to personal information and daily movements in the community appeared to become more significant than the risk of disclosure, due to the effects of community-based interpersonal surveillance. The individual limits the potential for identity construction by opening up the opportunity for speculation of harmful behaviour, creating gossips that potentially reduced his or her rapport with their peers. Goldner (2008) suggests that adolescents who disclosed more information on their social media profiles received more significant support from their same-sex friends and in the Yolngu context it can solicit support and ward off any negative gossip about the young person.

Facebook was designed to engage users, but also enabled the surveillance of activities and lives in a community stricken with a lack of resources and opportunity. During an interview, a participant spoke anonymously about his friend, one who posted his discontent with people in the community who conducted online shopping and talked about it on social media as an example of a localised social segregation. He quoted the text that said; ‘biggest show off people who do shopping
online then posting on wall or putting it one status, what a fucking show off?’ The perception that an online Facebook user was not adhering to cultural norms was a testament to the conflict in a communal society where resources were often shared, and modesty observed to keep others happy.

People on my Facebook friends list or Divas Chat list tracked the beliefs, actions and interests of their peers, which according to Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield (2006) was common in a community of tensions surrounding affiliations, clan loyalties, and romantic partner infidelity and football clubs. Kennedy (2009) suggested that social networking sites provided a suitable medium for monitoring, investigating and even stalking behaviour or panopticism and was accepted as normal and necessary to maintain order and evaluate gossip.

The ability of Facebook to enable and encourage such behaviours of monitoring, surveillance and panopticism among romantic partners has been inadequately explored, according to Darvell, Walsh and White (2011), and this is especially the case in a community in which individual ownership of resources was a fleeting moment and property demanded to be shared or given up to reinforce kinship relationships. Sean talked to me at the Walkabout Hotel about girls and how some were better than others, how relationships were so difficult to maintain because of jealousy and lack of mutual trust. We both noticed a recent Facebook post by a familiar friend who wrote ‘$$_talkz bullshit walkz…then what she said 2 me gives me ur password then I’ll let u know how much I luv u’.

We both knew that exchanging Facebook passwords would not guarantee a relationship free of jealousy and infidelity. Sean laughed when he recalled his
failure at not being caught. ‘Hacked by B!!’ a status update said on my wall that referred to Sean. ‘You’re a fucking big slut, and I hate you did you forget that I know your password ya fuck face, go fuck them little sluts cause I don't want you near me’. Several weeks after my friendly catch up with Sean, I was told that the police force escorted him for having breached a court order filed by his partner who was in the car with him crying as he was taken away.

Despite the conflict in Yolngu communities between teenagers in love, there was a lack of discourse on demand for monogamous relationships amongst female teenagers. Stern and Taylor (2007) and Muise, Christofides and Desmarais (2009) discussed what I observed was the accepted activity of Facebook users. The study participants described their observations of a common practice where partners use mobile phones and social media accounts to ascertain whether their romantic partner's online activities also include any evidence of unfaithfulness. Anything from inappropriate messages, from flirtatious to showing signs of interest through ‘Likes’ and comments may result in suspicion, jealously and conflict.

‘If a younger girl was hitting her male partner and being jealous of him, that means that she loves him and he has gone with somebody else’ recalled Susan in a discussion about the role of social media in the tensions of relationship maintenance and relationship porn. She said that family would often succumb to the gendered power differentials young women were beginning to question, which showed signs of the emancipation of Yolngu feminist rights. According to Susan, the family’s reaction to such a show of affection would be to protect and defend the male partner. She said, ‘You would often find that his sisters and his family would say “just leave
it, it’s just what men do”, and expect that the female partner accepts her partner’s infidelity as normative behaviour. Susan went further in her analysis of the past two decades of counselling young people and said that this act if infidelity was a value upheld by men from a traditional rights-based approach. She said, ‘for Yolngu, it’s the right of the man. They come from a culture with more than one wife’.

One of my interview participants, Carla, used to work for a not-for-profit supporting Yolngu with financial counselling. We sat in the library of the Nhulunbuy Library, and caught up now and then, where I was a regular fixture around the back, next to the children’s playroom. One day we sat down on mini chairs, and I took notes on a mini table when I learnt that Yolngu had gone through a phase when they were signing up for mobile phone plans since ‘everybody (non-Indigenous people) had one’. Nobody considered the financial commitments because according to Carla, ‘talking to Yolngu families was the thing to do. So that was the start of the technology pressures. Everyone needed to have a mobile phone. But it was also, definitely a status thing’. She confident drew examples from her seven years of experience solving problems of young people with mobile phone issues.

Contrary to the opinion of Carla, for a Yolngu man in his early thirties, who travelled nationally as a performer, the mobile phone was not a ‘status thing’ because according to him ‘everything is disposable! Cars are disposable!’ Hence the notion that objects as status symbols that are disposable were not contradictory positions. Status symbols and disposable objects as a binary in the Yolngu world alluded me to the feature of renewability. Through the discussion with interview participants and observations, it was noted that there is a perception and belief that
things and life events were renewable. The relational attitude of renewability
dispelled the urgent need for challenges and barriers in the community to be
addressed promptly. Here the relationship was prioritised over the problem-solving
process of discourse, negotiation and agreement.

Joe agreed with my observation that some young people preferred not to have a
phone than to deal with humbug. The interaction between young people in a Yolngu
community, almost required that they own a mobile phone for it reflected a young
person's self evaluation and their ability to rely on their parents and uncles (mother's
brothers) for financial and emotional support, thereby increasing self-esteem.
According to Rosenberg, Schooler and Schoenbach (1989) self-esteem was a
reflection of a young person’s perception and feelings about themselves.

Young people engaged in a romantic relationship with high self-esteem are more
comfortable and confident in the ability of their partner to be faithful, according to
Clark and Lemay (2010). They are also able to be more secure in the relationship
due to a lack of feeling of suspicion and jealousy according to Hutsinger (2004) and
Senior, Helmer and Chenhall (2016). The problem of low self-esteem, suspicion
and jealousy had led to “a few suicides from people” according to Susan, after she
recalled giving a talk at the Batchelor Institute about “just how difficult in women’s
groups, how difficult as a woman here”.

Opinion remains divided on the relationship between self-esteem and Facebook-
related partner surveillance. Muise, Christofides and Desmarais (2009) disagreed
that there was a connection between self-esteem and Facebook-related partner
surveillance and jealousy. Partner trust according to the authors referred to an individual’s perception of their partner’s ability to be trustworthy and not their self-esteem.

Therefore Muise, Christofides and Desmarais (2009) argued that trust in one’s romantic partner significantly predicted feelings of jealousy on Facebook and further created suspicion about their partner’s activities online resulting in constant checking of their Facebook profiles. Before the age of social media and mainstream use of mobile phones, Buss et al. (1998) in Muise, Christofides and Desmarais (2009) showed that distrust towards a partner enabled surveillance behaviours such as spying. Self-esteem was not a significant predictor of intentions, according to the findings from Muise, Christofides and Desmarais (2009). A romantic partner's plan to check on their lover's activities frequently or ‘Facebook partner monitoring’ was a reflection of the low level of trust accorded to their lover. Muise, Christofides and Desmarais (2009) stressed that the role of trust, not self-esteem in couple’s jealousy-related behaviours on Facebook was also consistent with a more recent study by Darvell, Walsh and White (2011).

Scheper-Hughes (1993, p. 213) claimed that researchers must strip away the ragged metaphors of which in this Aboriginal context would be examples of fights, jealousing and boredom until we find the bare skeleton of hunger. Scheper-Hughes is using starvation as a metaphor for a more systemic problem in society. It is not just the hunger for physical nourishment, but an unfulfilled desire for opportunity, the end of familial and intergenerational competition for resources, and a need for stability love justice and equality. The bottom line is a hunger for social justice as
argued by Rowse (2012). This chapter attempted to ‘not just describe youth lives,
then, but to interpret what they simultaneously conceal about the machinations of
global life’ (Poyntz & Kennelly 2015, p. 3).

8.8 CRITICAL SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Research in the area of the intersection of ethnicity, gender and other dimensions
of identity, which included socio-economic status was, according to Manuel and
Zambrana (2015,) a relatively new approach to studying inequality. Inequality was
defined as institutionalised patterns of ‘unequal control over and distribution of
society’s valued good”, resources and opportunities (Manuel & Zambrana 2015, p.
2), which in the context of Yirrkala were resources such as land, property,
employment and housing.

As this thesis strived to contribute to intersectional analysis, the results conveyed
the ‘experiences of groups that occupied multiple social locations and finds
approaches that focus on the complexity rather than the singularity of human
experience’ (Ferguson 2012, p 141). Positive identities of young people were
created by the opinion of individuals themselves and others (Christofides, Muise &
Desmarais 2009), where the viewpoints of others have become mirrors in which we
evaluate ourselves and our own identity (Ferguson 2012).

Young people who explored the mesmerising market in cyberspace, or even offline,
twenty kilometres away in Nhulunbuy where capitalist economies reflected
affluence, wealth and opportunity, of which little existed within the grasp of a
young person growing up in Yirrkala created seemingly insurmountable barriers.
These challenges were implicated in the distortion of teenage development into adults (Senior & Chenhall 2008), which led to feelings of inadequacy and mental health issues. According to Ferguson (2012, p. 181,)

Sometimes others affirm a person's identity sometimes they ignore or deny it. Identities of self not only depend on how a person viewed them self and how others perceive them but are also formed by the contexts from which they emerge; they are dynamic and evolving.

Yirrkala was under-resourced in infrastructure and economic development. The remote community lacked an Olympic-sized swimming pool although there was more youth in Yirrkala then in Nhulunbuy. It required a skate park, a great-maintained playground, a bike path, and a drop-in youth centre. There was an indirect social categorisation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous, or between those employed by the mining company and the Yolngu who were the traditional owners. According to Ferguson (2012, p. 183) ‘if a social category matters in a given community, and if a person claims an association with this category, or if others associate her with this category, that category will have some impact on her behaviour’. This separation was discussed in the chapters previously, as interpersonal conflict, jealousy and surveillance, a reflection of this internalised identity (Ferguson 2012), a result of the social inequality between Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy.

How could a young person in Yirrkala formulate a positive identity of themselves when their identity depended on their experiences of the world (Ferguson 2012)? The dominant role of identity tells us what to pay attention to, and the explosion of
online self-disclosure and reassurance seeking on Facebook in the remote communities in North East Arnhem Land tells us how young people think, feel and act. Their online behaviour suggested that ‘identities can provide clues for predicting behaviour’ and vice-versa (Ferguson 2012, p. 185). Through the analysis and consultations discussed in this thesis, we could hypothesise a young person's ‘interpretative schema’ and what ‘threatens a person’s identity – made her feel anxious, incapable, humiliated or ashamed’ (Ferguson 2012, p. 185). The identity of young people that was reflected in their behaviour similar to lateral oppression (Langton 2008; Gonzalez et al. 2013) i.e. interpersonal conflict, jealousy, surveillance and public online shaming was a result of the internalization of vertical oppression and negative social categorization (Ferguson 2012; Bailey, Williams & Favors 2014; Manuel & Zambrana 2015).

Their resistance to cultural norms, the challenging of influential individuals and family with access to social economic resources and opportunities even to the extent of challenging traditional power structures may have created the beginnings of an Aboriginal Arab Spring (Lotan et al. 2011; Eltantawy & Wiest 2011; Gerbaudo 2012) but was stifled by their inability to create an inclusive identity of solidarity between alliances and clans where instead of a youth ‘population' they must emerge as a ‘people’ as discussed by Rowse (2012). They were young people who, according to Rowse (2012, p. 57) still experienced the aftermath of ‘satisfied wants’, without ‘compelling sacrifice and subordination to elders’ when the colonial power had effectively called ‘the insurgent energies of youth’ in the past through ‘food, clothing, freedom from hunger and want’ and welfare payments.
According to Scheper-Hughes (1993, p. 171) ‘at the heart of all critical theories and methods is a critique of ideology and power. Ideologies (whether political, economic or religious) could mystify reality, obscure relationships of power and domination, and prevent people from grasping their situation in the world’. A new form of consciousness must arise from the prevalent ideology in Yirrkala, which seemed to thrive unchallenged and stabilised by particular institutions and social practices. The critical theory applied in this study was not to look down upon culture and social tradition but to recognise what is emancipatory in understanding how current structures and corporations in remote North East Arnhem Land re-create social inequality, domination over the less fortunate and perpetuate human suffering in the words of (Scheper-Hughes 1993).

Pierre Bourdieu (1977, p. 173) in Scheper-Hughes (1993, p. 120) argued that ‘the best kept and the worst kept secret is (one that everyone must keep) [so as not to break] the law of silence which guarantees the complicity of collective bad faith’. The best kept and worst kept secret in Yirrkala was that their family and culture had the potential to betray teenagers and young adults. Despite learning everything about it and preserving their culture, they were unable to finish schooling and have the same opportunity for employment, even as they were coaxed, persuaded and rewarded for attending school and training programs. These strategies were reproduced as miracle solutions to the problems of inequality both from within and external to their community.

There existed a refusal to recognise the signs of persistent inequality and lack of opportunity, reflected as collective bad faith as discussed by Scheper-Hughes
(1993) in Yirrkala. The process of liberation was ‘complicated, but possible through reflexivity on the complicity and psychological identification of people with the very ideologies and practices’ (Scheper-Hughes 1993, p. 171) that ‘the ‘traditional’ intellectuals, the bourgeois agents of the social consensus, are pivotal in maintaining hegemonic ideas and practices’ (Scheper-Hughes 1993, p. 171). Scheper-Hughes (1993, p. 172) argued; ‘for the anthropologist to deny because it implied a privileged position (i.e. the power of the outsider to name an ill or a wrong) and because it is not pretty, the extent to which dominated people come to play the role, finally of their own executioners is to collaborate with those in the relationships of power and silence that allow the destruction to continue’.

I hope that the theoretical arguments put forward in this chapter with the help of Yolngu philosophy and the Bayini Theory, Gogol’s classic tale of the oppressed and their desire for social mobility that disables social inequality has made a strong case for the new globalised Aboriginal youth culture with its opportunities and challenges. The double-edged spear of new technology, as theorised by Burrumara was a social trap that has been exacerbated by the capitalist structure of Indigenous corporatisation, and created a class-conscious Yolngu society with impact on the development of relationships, individual self-esteem and de-collectivisation of power and resources.
CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUSION

Studies of digital technologies in Indigenous Australia, according to Kral (2014 p. 172) ‘have tended to address issues of access, affordability and usage rather than the changing social practice in relation to communication technologies’. Such studies have also been conducted by Brady & Dyson (2009) and Rennie et al. (2010). After three years of fieldwork and a continuous cycle of analysis and reflection on the contribution of the interview participants and predicament of young people in Yirrkala, I re-examined the hypothesis, that new technology was capable and instrumental in supporting Indigenous agency and its emancipation against external power structures (Gerbaudo 2012; Eltantawy & Wiest 2011; Lotan et al. 2011).

The Indigenous youth I engaged with, lived in a strong gerontocracy where power and access to knowledge and resources were controlled by older men (and sometimes women), which may have, under these circumstances, caused some level of inherent disadvantage and marginalisation. The use of mobile technology, Facebook and Divas Chat by remote Aboriginal youth, which allowed glimpses of other ways of being (Senior & Chenhall 2012) and youth intersubjectivity (Poyntz & Kennelly 2015), may have also contributed to a degree of frustration and stress and as a result of the palpable social inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The lack of opportunity and resources, the lack of self-
esteem and collective trust within the community (Langton 2008) could be seen as a result of the long-standing oppression that had internalised the outward struggle for social equality (Ferguson 2012; Manuel & Zambrana 2015; Schofield 2015) and caused citizens to turn against one another.

From my analysis of the in-depth interviews and informal discussions, two distinct groups, the proletariat (working class or Yolngu with no access to paid employment) and the bourgeoisie (elite, ruling, traditional owners) was produced in this remote community. A potential emergence as a result of the forced dependency formed between Yolngu and the Church administration, during the several decades of engagement with the Methodist Mission (Williams 1986; Morphy 2009), the Commonwealth Government and multinational mining companies (Williams 1986; Blakeman 2015). The internalisation of the oppressive qualities of the capitalist economy (Langton 2008; Bailey, Williams & Favors 2014), as I observed and consulted with key informants and interview participants was reflected in the orchestrated conflict within the community and the intent to oppress others, as clearly argued by Langton (2008) only now, through the use of emergent technology (Bailey, Williams & Favors 2014).

Schofield (2015) used Marxist theory when he theorised on oppressed communities, which I considered applicable in the context of Yirrkala today. He argued that class conflict, through insufficient access to resources, had created inequality, crisis and instability. Yolngu youth today used and improvised new technology to draw different boundaries between clans and extended kin based on socio-economic status instead of the law of kinship. Lack of faith in Yolngu corporations and land
rights movement which resulted in Yolngu becoming asset-rich, but cash-poor was another implicit contributing factor to finding new and improvised means for securing resources and tangible economic outcomes. The new Yolngu agency, evident in the individual’s social media and mobile phone use, was to challenge the social domain of hierarchy and inequality (Schofield 2015) and created distinction from and between a personal and clan-centric perspective. The changing priorities and values of Yolngu youth meant that battles to uphold culture and traditional law were less critical than their efforts to join a globalised youth culture and achieve economic sustainability.

The struggle for individuality and resources was now directed within a particular clan as well as between clan circles in North East Arnhem Land. The Gove Disagreement of 2011 was just one meso example where the use of technology for interpersonal conflict, jealousy, surveillance, caused the individual to compete for resources. Conflict, jealousy and surveillance were a representation of youth expression, a channel to communicate their thoughts, feelings and understandings that was intrinsic to the making and interpreting of meaning (Schofield 2015). In the practice of making and interpreting meaning, the Yolngu youth brought their world into being through material things, as per Foucault’s (1980) discourse in Schofield (2015) in which power was inherent and organic. Young people struggled with gerontocratic methods of power and control between clans and families, primarily since the Corporatisation of Yolngu traditional systems of power (Rowse 2012).
Young people without influential uncles and family members as material providers became socially and emotionally isolated, an example of the modern-day version of Gogol’s Overcoat. These young people internalised their oppression (Ferguson 2012), and this was reflected through online self-disclosures and reassurance seeking. They were unable to challenge the social order in which they were trapped in. Some were observed to experiment with relationships and jealousy porn as a means of increasing self-esteem and interpersonal power, while others exhibited destructive behaviours that involved drug and alcohol (Ferguson 2012). The restriction of the lives of other members in the community and romantic partners through surveillance and jealousy occurred possibly because the community had internalised the negative views and limitation imposed by another dominant and economically well-off group as a result of colonisation (Ferguson 2012). Youth who were able to resist, became part of an internal conflict symbolising their dissatisfaction between those who have living twenty kilometres away in town and in the global Internet they now can examine through their smartphones.

Resistance at a meso and interpersonal level (Ferguson 2012; Senior, Helmer & Chenhall 2016) required the development of alternative consciousness. The alternative consciousness insisted on a new self-definition, or self-evaluation and refused to reflect the negative images of their groups (Ferguson 2012). This resistance was achieved through online interactions with the local and broader community (Ferguson 2012), with the technological abilities of social media and mobile phones (Kral 2014; Carlson et al. 2015). When young people publicly resisted online oppression, the individual that practiced the development of a positive definition of self in the face of dominant culture oppression (Ferguson
2012) and interpersonal conflict coming from within the community, they deleted their online accounts and started fresh personal accounts on Facebook or Divas Chat through either social media suicide or the acquisition of new mobile phone numbers as a final act self-destruction.

The process of oppression, resistance and empowerment according to Ferguson (2012) existed in an interdependent relationship with one another as a continuous process of adaptation to the more powerful individuals and community groups (Ferguson 2012). Interpersonal and inter-clan conflict as a discourse (Schofield 2015) of resistance, in which exploited community members publicly confronted their exploiters or the family members of their exploiters was a “crucial form of power reflected in the complex counterstrategies that exploiting classes were forced to adopt through the elaboration of instruments of supervision, surveillance, monitoring and sanctioning” (Ferguson 2012, p. 112).

My own experiences inevitably influenced the learning from this study as a member of an oppressed minority. The personal exposure during my childhood in Malaysia to racial discrimination, violence and hatred in the name of equitable economic policies that favoured the Malays, resonated with the experiences I had with youth in Yirrkala. Malaysians from Indian background were distrustful of each other and antagonistic towards their cultural heritage as they were forced to compete with each other without questions the special privileges afforded to the Malay majority. Therefore, I propose that it is crucial that health and social policy be directed at preventing the creation of a power imbalance that threatened to destroy the solidarity and unity of a nation. Without sufficient resources and opportunity,
competition, clanship and alliances may become impediments to self-determination and human flourishing (Ryan, Curren & Deci 2013).

Under such conditions, mobile phones cannot merely be considered as useful instruments of communication or novel aids to capture people's attention in a health promotion campaign. They are inherently political, symbolising unequal access to material goods, power and facilitating people's attempts to exert control over each other. At the same time, in the hands of a young person, mobile phones and social media may provide significantly enhanced opportunities to build networks and alliances that may have been previously inconceivable.

9.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that public health discourse should focus on social innovation programs that support and encourage offline (Portes 2014) and online (Ellison et al. 2014) solidarity in the community of Yirrkala, through the practice of cultural reflexivity (Jafari & Goulding 2013; Gordon & Gurierri 2014). The objective of cultural reflexivity was to ‘take stock of the study of culture and make the case that the judicious, theoretically informed, empirically grounded study of culture can and should be a permanent component of the poverty research agenda’ (Lamont et al. 2010, p. 3).

Despite resistance from scholars to discuss and study a culture’s internal relationship with social inequality and competition (Kowal 2015), ‘invoking cultural explanations selectively, only undermines the ability of social science research to inform policy discussion’ (Lamont et al. 2010, p. 13). This further drives
our responsibility as cultural anthropologists in public health to ask empirical questions in the best interest of the unheard voices which in the words of Lamont et al. (2010, p. 8) are ‘whether, when and how cultural tools and cultural constraints matter is ultimately an empirical, not a political question’.

As part of my study in Arnhem Land, I partnered with Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation to direct and produce an ethnographic documentary (Appendix 3) on the socio-economic influence of high tobacco rates in the region (Robertson et al. 2013). I worked with Tobacco Action Workers and the community to capture the unheard voices and ideas on tobacco consumption (Kariippanon et al. 2015). I used ethnographic documentary film-making to draw on the Yolngu voice and storytelling techniques, and especially visual ethnography, to engage Yolngu from the standpoint of history, culture and kinship. The documentary was approved by the Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation Board and clan leaders. The details of the project as a framework for social marketing in a traditional remote Aboriginal community are discussed in Appendix 3. The framework and the productions of this project is an example of how collective reflexivity and the use of filmmaking technology and social media can generate a common discourse for public health practitioners to draw from in program design stages.

I would recommend that addressing an Aboriginal community in a specific geographic location should include an analysis of clan affiliations as the critical element in funding and supporting interventions. Not all clans can interact together in one physical space, and therefore health programs must incorporate traditional kinship structures in resource disbursement in order to avoid further social isolation.
of non-participating clans and their members. Mobile phones and Facebook may produce the means to engender significant social change – the Arab Spring of the Indigenous world. However, this glimmering of opportunity simultaneously exists within a device that has the potential to reinforce social division and create anomie through an individual's self-assessment of their material worth.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - KINSHIP

Gurrutu (kinship) and mälk (skin) relationships in North East Arnhem Land

These notes are adapted from Study Notes – Yolngu Languages and Culture: Gupapuyngu (Christie 2004).

Dhuwa and Yirritja

Firstly, there are two moieties, Dhuwa and Yirritja. Everyone and everything is either Dhuwa or Yirritja. Yirritja people sing about Yirritja things, for examples, Yirritja rocks, winds, fauna, ancestors, flora, clouds and creators, and many other things. A Yirritja person must always marry a Dhuwa person, and Dhuwa must marry Yirritja. You can’t marry the same moiety. That’s how the world works. It has been there for thousands of years. We live by that.

If a man or woman is Dhuwa, their mother will be Yirritja. Dhuwa land can be located nearby his mother’s Yirritja land. For example, the Bawaka, which belongs to the Yirritja clan, Gumatj is situated next to the Rirratjingu land called Yalangbara, a Dhuwa land. The mother and child relationship beyond its human symbol is found in the land and other animate and inanimate objects. This relationship is referred to by Yolngu as Yothu-Yindi. In a Yothu Yindi partnership,
one person is always Dhuwa and the other is always Yirritja. The Yothu is always considered the child of the Yindi or mother regardless of gender, even in inanimate objects like land. Sometimes Yirritja is the mother of Dhuwa, sometimes Dhuwa is the mother for Yirritja.

Notes from a talk by Raymattja Marika-Munungguritj in Nicholls (2009)

Gurrutu

Gurrutu means kin or kinship. To understand Yolngu kinship, one needs to understand the relationship terms and the responsibilities which people hold towards their different kin. Yolngu kinship also places in positions of responsibility towards wanga (land), manikay (songs), bungul (ceremonies), and miny’tji (designs). This introduction shows how the kinship chart has been set out by Balanda.

Each clan or family group can be seen as passing down through the father, but the mother’s line connects groups together with links (Yothu-Yindi), Māri-Gutharra) that cut diagonally across the male descent lines.

You are the same moiety as your father and the opposite from your mother.

If you are a man, your child (i.e. your gathu) will be the same moiety and same clan as yourself.

If you are a woman your children (i.e. your waku) will be the same as your husband, that is, the opposite moiety from yourself.
Kinship diagrams are normally laid out so that clan groups (that is, ancestral lines descending through the fathers) are arranged vertically.

Appendix Figure 1.1: Gurrutu kinship chart from a male point of view

Appendix Figure 1.2: Gurrutu kinship chart from a female point of view

Nicholls (2009 pp. 302)
Yolngu kinship charts

“Kinship diagrams reduce complex multidimensional reality to simplified two dimensional representations. Every time something in the Yolngu world is put on to paper, much of its richness and value is made invisible. These diagrams represent nothing more than a Balanda attempt to reduce some particular aspect of Yolngu life to a mathematical diagram.

They represent the idealised system which of course doesn’t actually exist anywhere. Yolngu relationships have never worked exactly like this, but these diagrams are a way of representing the principles at work in Yolngu gurrutu. There is no Yolngu family anywhere with one husband or wife, and every couple has only two children, a boy and a girl.

Every group and every community interprets their ancient principles to make them applicable and workable to their present lives. People do not always marry strictly according to this pattern, so there are gaps and bumps in the realisation of this system”.

Nicholls (2009 pp. 303)
Yothu Yindi

“Yothu Yindi denotes the link between two different entities (people, clan, groups, songs, totems, pieces of land etc.) which is characterised as a mother-child relationship. Yothu-Yindi relationships are always between the moieties, and one of the two is always considered to be the mother. Yothu means child, Yindi means big or great. Two places can also relate to each other as Yothu-Yindi”.

“If in ceremonial preparations, for example, a man is working with his sister’s sons, the group will be a Yothu Yindi group. The man in this case, is the ‘yindi’ the
‘mother’ of the boys. The ngandipulu is often called yindipullu. The partners in a Yothu Yindi relationship do no hold anything in common, because they are of opposite moieties. Their land, totems, songs, names etc. will be quite different, yet they have a crucial responsibility towards each other”.

“Even though they have different land, songs, totems etc. they are always mother and child; the child cares for its mother. This gives rise to an important political reality in Yolngu life. The waku or yothu (from the Yothu-Yindi pairing) is the caretaker, or manager (in many Yolngu languages, the djungaya) of the ngandi’s land, ceremonies, paintings etc. The waku always has the right to be consulted about the use of the ngandi’s land, ceremonial items etc. This is one reason why Yothu-Yindi is such an important political idea in Yolngu life”.

“Yothu-Yindi is the system whereby people of opposite moieties, (with no land, totems, songs, ceremonies or anything in common), develop ongoing relationships, where agreements for marriage, ceremonies, hunting, trade etc. can be worked out. It is a system which encourages opposites to respect and depend upon each other. It is a system in which everything (every person, piece of land, animate and inanimate objects) has (from the opposite moiety) a ‘Ngandi’ to care for it, and a ‘Waku’ to help manage its business”.

“The well-known rock band Yothu-Yindi was originally made up of Gumatj brother who called themselves “Wawa mala” – “the brothers”. When their nephew joined the band (their sister’s son) they had to change their name. They decided upon
Yothu-Yindi – a name which reflected not only their constitution as a group but also a key concept from Yolngu culture”.


Rumaru and Mirriri

“People who are in particular kinship relation to yourself, need to be treated with great respect, and often complete avoidance. These kin are called rumaru or wukindi. The verb rum’rum’dhun means to practice respectful kinship avoidance. There are many different names and ways of speaking which people use when dealing with their rumaru gurrutu, but all of this richness has been condensed in the English translation, as ‘poison cousin’”.

Nicholls (2009 pp. 304)

The Mälk system

“Mälk and gurrutu are two systems which Yolngu use to fit everyone, including newcomers, into a social network. Both systems sustain the division between the two moieties, Dhuwa and Yirritja and while they are actually independent systems, they often fit together, and one does not contradict the other”.

“The mälk system is a system of names which are used as personal names for Yolngu, especially children. There are sixteen mälk names, four male and four female in each of 2 moieties”.
“It is important to remember that when Yolngu identify how they are related to other Yolngu, they very seldom use mälk. Gurrutu is always the important rom for people who can trace ancestral connections”.

“Your mälk is determined from the mälk of your mother (who is the opposite moiety and always different mälk from yourself). All the brothers and all the sisters from the same mother will have the same mälk. If a woman’s mälk is Bulanydjăn, all her sons will be Wämût and all her daughters will be Wämûtjan. The mälk of the father has nothing to do with the mälk of the children”.

Nicholls (2009 pp. 305)
The participation

The beach was beautiful despite a few scatterings of what was once a battery operated model car for a three-year-old child to sit on, a pram and a shoe in usable condition only missing the other. The sealed road dividing the two rows of asbestos shells provided a view of the forty-year-old smokestacks and the smell of fumes from the mining ponds to the south was exciting and different.

The house was small and furnished with white goods, a dining table with four chairs, a green couch, and a bunk bed for the kids and a queen bed for the parents, it was sufficient for a family of four, as we were not expecting any visitors for a long time. The four hundred and thirty dollar rent per week, however, came out of her salary. The house was clean but there was more I could have done with a pressure cleaner and bleach. The backyard was a public toilet for the five dogs that shared the territory with Galpu and Rirratjingu families.

A neighbour joined us for frozen pizza while the kids slept in mattresses purchased for non-clinical staff, but we managed to get our hands on a doctor’s mattress for our son as the other mattress was very thin but suitable for a four-year-old. My neighbour was born to a Marika elder, who travelled the world and published a book about himself and his culture. She was an important person in the community and when she took two bites from her slice and packed the rest to share with her daughter and grandchildren at home, I swallowed my last bite of pineapple and ham
with a taste of privilege but puzzled at the ‘social slide’ she had experienced since
the passing of her father.

The four and five-year-old Kariippanons’ went out to play on their first day in
Birritjimi and returned with ten other Yolngu children. It wasn’t the school holidays
yet but there were two other kids from the homelands visiting, probably for a
funeral. My children hurried home to ask for their share of skin names and if they
were ‘adopted’. The Yolngu kids Gutthunu and Mapilli asked: “Who adopt you?”
When I explained, the boys still in primary school quickly worked out what our
kids should call them and went home to tell their parents.

The children were served fresh fruit from Woolworths for the rest of the week, to
aid in the ‘getting to know us’ phase. It seemed like a natural thing to do, provide
free food and it was also expected of us when one or two kids came over at random
times asking for fruit. Their parents would have to either own a car or spend twenty
dollars each way for a taxi if they had to head into town to buy fruit. But now they
can hitch a ride with us.

After a couple of weeks the children Birritjimi visited us when they felt like it even
though we stopped serving them fruits. They taught us Yolngu words and explained
how everyone was related to each other. They tried the curries and rice, sitting
around a table together and having their own plate, not having to share it with
anyone else. On some occasions, we played board games. Gutthunu and Mapilli
taught our kids how to look for and eat oysters on the rocks at the beach and how
to throw a spear. There was so much affection between the children, and we felt
happy in Birritjimi, aware that soon the honeymoon phase will come to an end and what will the future look like. I began to plan ahead and cautiously positioned us appropriately, without offence and too much assumption.

When I went outside the house to find out why Mark was going to Lombuy by himself, I found ‘Wulman’ and his wife were both about a hundred metres ahead with an axe and a bottle of ice water. It was one o’clock in the afternoon, the heat was directly above my head, the brightness was blinding and the discomfort made me turn around and go back inside. I couldn’t ignore the conditions in which this beautiful family had to work in to create art for sale to supplement their incomes. So I took the car and dropped them off and assured them that they will be most welcome to request a lift anytime from us. These eventful exchanges gradually transferred my passive participation (DeWalt and DeWalt 2010) into a more active participation.

Wulman and I regularly talked about young people and how he raised his sons to do ‘djama’ (work) and to perform ‘djama’ as part of their Yolngu identity. We formed reciprocal relationships with our children as they looked out for each other in Birritjimi. Careful listening (DeWalt & DeWalt 2010) were followed by questions, and sometimes my nodding and agreement transcended the level of moderate participation in active participation (DeWalt and DeWalt 2010). My informal interviews were used in this way to verify and gather as many views as possible on the subject under study. There were also boundaries that as a researcher and neighbour, we honoured and respected, particularly during in the events of a conflict. There weren’t many but about three times during our fourteen months in
Birritjimi, we heard, witnessed and masked the disputes and negotiations from our little children. We retreated to the house not wanting to compromise the privacy of my neighbours although the public display of emotion by women was normal (Burbank 1994).

There were two distinct events that broke out between two and three o’clock in the morning in Birritjimi. One was a dispute that occurred after a few men came back home after the pub and their wives who waited for them, I assumed started the discussion. The whole community was involved and both verbal and physical blows were thrown at each other whilst the children observed. On another occasion, a popular hip-hop song’s chorus was played over and over for about half an hour. The song said “… so what we smoke weed, we just having fun…” I had the impression that the words of the song were like a message to the neighbours.

I seldom travelled by an empty car between Birritjimi, town and Yirrkala. Every Yolngu hitchhiker was an interesting person whether they used a mobile phone or not. As we conversed informally about clan, family and ancestors, I shared my own opinions and feeling about life in Birritjimi and asked many ‘why’ questions using the word ‘how’. For example, ‘how did a young person die in Yirrkala last month because of texting? How was there a fight last night at the Walkabout?’

One afternoon my neighbour, one of the daughters of Wandjuk Marika, who as a young health worker connected to a Tamil student many decades ago came knocking at my door. She had the look of panic on her face and slightly short of breath having walked very fast only twenty metres to my house. I wanted to ask her
about her diabetes and blood pressure noticing how she breathed but was stopped
with a ghastly story of a leaking gas bottle.

I ran to back to her veranda to turn off the leaking gas bottle. Never having
encountered such a problem before, I was unsure of what exactly to do as I pictured
turning off a valve and not getting blown up in the process. I fumbled with the cords
and turned to ask my neighbour a question when I found here several metres away,
safe from a possible fatal mishap. Behind her, ten metres away was a Yolngu man
sitting on a green plastic chair in the middle of his empty carport, smoking a
cigarette. I wondered why she didn’t ask him for help! I felt honoured and hurt at
the same time and eventually confused about the identity and role I was conferred
by my dear community members. Hence my participation was diverse, dangerous,
mentally exhausting but exhilarating, and as a student of the Yolngu community, I
learnt a lot from them for a small price.

The observation

I left no stone of unturned in my quest for discernment. Even the most uneventful
day, filled with routine school drop-offs, and running the household as a ‘stay at
home husband’, I kept an eye out for the subtleties that so easily evaded the gaze of
the outsider. A typical day began with getting the kids into the car for school, giving
George a lift to work whenever he sat in front on his veranda, four houses away
from ours waiting to hitch a ride into town.

Between nine in the morning until about an hour past noon, I sat in the library in
town, reading and writing up field notes. I initially waited outside from nine to ten
until the library officially opened its doors but to my luck, I was offered access as early as eight, when the staff became friendly with me. The head librarian and wife of the former town administrator were well acquainted with the life of a doctoral student having helped her husband many years ago before the advent of personal computers to catalogue his literature. Naturally, I engaged with the librarian who had spent a decade or two in Nhulunbuy, on the subject of teenagers, school and the infiltration of mobile technology and Facebook in the general non Indigenous community.

After doing some work at the library, I made my way towards Woollies and parked in the carpark between the offices of the Federal Government, the Northern Land Council and the East Arnhem Shire Council. On my way to the post office, there was life inside and outside Woollies, around the Westpac ATM, the takeaways and the courthouse. I observed and made mental notes, sometimes typed into my iPhone the general happenings and greetings offered and ignored sporadically. I eventually learnt to differentiate the sombre mood of the people during funerals and behaved accordingly avoiding jokes and lively greetings of “Nhamirri?” (How are you?).

On the first week of every month, I allocated time until the lunch break to observe the court proceedings and the exchanges between Yolngu, sergeant, lawyers and judges. I sat on the left side of the courtroom, slightly out of sight. I followed two particular cases over a period of three months and discussed the feelings of the people involved when they were comfortable to talk about it.
The observations at the practice oval and during footy matches became saturated very early into the year. I switched my gaze from the green oval to the dim lighted smoky pub scene where Yolngu were living out their day to day experiences, where they talked about their recent adventure or journey, shared in the sadness of a recent funeral and sometimes just having a plain good time. With a glass and cigarette softening my presence as the observer, I noticed the phones came out to entertain the bored and the lonely person amongst a group of mates, and while others surveyed the activities and actors for friend and Facebook.

At four in the morning, on one random Friday night, I was in my car in the Arnhem Club car park, when I saw a drama unfold at the taxi stand opposite the pool before the police drove past, to circumambulate the town square to confirm that the brawl was ‘family’ related before they left. On that night, I saw L with his shirt in his hands talking to another Yolngu while his cousin screamed at a group from Gunyangara. I tried hard not to get involved but I was moved when I saw tears from L’s cousin. I carefully walked over to him and noticed him speaking into a brand new iPhone 5. He saw me approach him and passed his new iPhone 5 to me. On the other side of the phone was the voice of his grandmother, in clear English, who directed me to drop her grandson home at Gunyangara. The young man in his twenties used the phone to be in touch with his grandmother as he fought the gossip and blames that were hurled against him for a ‘crime’ his father or relative had committed.

On another occasion, it must have been a full moon that night when I woke up to the sounds of a large group of people talking with aggressive tones. I sneaked out the front door and crawled into my car to observe a fight that involved several
people in Birritjimi at three in the morning. I learnt that messy conflicts involved everyone regardless of age and even a woman in the fifties could throw a punch at a young man. No one was seriously hurt, but the physical expressions seemed violent for the outsider. The next day, everything seemed calm but tense.

Difficult ethical issues around the impact of violent relationships in the community were a huge dilemma for me. My affiliation and loyalty to my clan sometimes meant that I was loyal to the perpetrator and would strive not to be seen empathising with the victim. Even football was not spared from conflict and living in Birritjimi forced me to play down my support for Djarrak when a senior elder from Birritjimi slapped a Djarrak player during a match in town. As an outsider, I observed that Yolngu were concerned about how I may judge them, especially those with a strong affinity with the church. Even though I have been an eyewitness to a few events, I endeavoured to put my assumptions and judgments aside when interacting with individuals lest they suspect me of blaming them for their actions.

My relationship took off from the offline reality of community life into the cyber world of Facebook and Diva Chat. As my presence grew from stranger to ‘Djarrak’ to Wayne and John’s brother, requests to become ‘friends’ on Facebook starting appearing on my iPhone at least once a week for two months. I was surprised at the number of Yolngu teenagers and adults using Facebook. Yolngu teenagers and adults, those I knew offline and interacted with daily if not fortnightly was joined in my Facebook friend’s list by young people from Millingimbi, Elcho Island and Groote Eylandt and may from Gapuwiyak but the transient movements of young
people although sporadic still made their full circle to Yirrkala, the capital of North East Arnhem Land.

My observations of Yolngu over a long period allowed me to practice appropriate behaviour in some settings. Being a careful listener and a willingness to reciprocate was crucial to building rapport as mentioned by DeWalt and DeWalt (2010). My own value systems eventually were put aside in order to observe Yolngu values – Gurrutu and reciprocal relationships. I bought many beers for those in the right kinship ties who demanded from me and provided them ‘ngarali’ (cigarettes) when they asked for it with their index finger and thumb clenched together and swiped across their teeth.

The Honda was overloaded like any other Yolngu bush car when the situation demanded that I transport my ‘family’ back to Birritjimi or Yirrkala. The cash that I take with me to the Walkabout was always stretched without getting too offended when my ‘gathu’ (sons) and ‘ngapipi’ (uncles) demanded another drink from me in a convincing tone and body language that seemed aggressive.

I accepted the show of arrogance from some Yolngu who sat the table in a meeting or at the pub in town and noticed their expression of power and self-confidence directed at my unwelcomed presence. I learnt that this engagement was temporary and would change as often as the circumstances allowed. I slowly learnt to develop immunity to these changes and pretended that I did not notice their body language.
The Professional “Stranger Handler”

The clinic in this Aboriginal community looked similar from the outside of the Bairo Pite Clinic in Timor Leste during the 2006 civil crises. In this Aboriginal community, however, there were no Internally Displaced People (Hampton 2014, p. 3). The waiting room had only three clients compared to the two hundred Timorese people, many of whom had walked for at least two hours to see a doctor.

‘One Disease At A Time’ was an organization founded by a medical doctor and successful entrepreneur of Sri Lankan background. His goal was to eradicate scabies in Australia starting with North East Arnhem Land. The operations manager of ‘One Disease’ walked me into the clinic for an informal introduction. I was invited to be their new volunteer in 2012 after they had read about me on the Croakey Blog and watched my TED Talk that discussed the use of mobile technology for social marketing.

The dry season was not too far away in May of 2012 and the Aboriginal staff in the clinic were comfortable in the cool office, powered by a relatively new split system air conditioner, in front of their work computers reading emails and looked at photos on Facebook, undeterred by common workplace policies around social media use during work hours.

I was led to initiate a process of ‘going deep’ (Agar 1998; 2004) and over time, I formed relationships that would assist my work with One Disease to ‘denormalize’ scabies and increase health-seeking behaviour and treatment adherence. The kitchen in the clinic seemed like an informal venue where I could make contact with
staff on their breaks. It was just before noon when a man in his fifties with a ponytail
and a cap, a long sleeve white shirt unbuttoned at the top, dress pants neatly ironed
with a perfect crease, a pair of black clean boots and a chain that attached his wallet
to his pants. He walked with a gait that differed from a few of the men who walked
around the community and in town.

He was slim and his skin was youthful and shiny as I thought about scabies. Andrew
introduced me to Wayne and I recognized his name from a Google search I did on
‘Yirrkala’, ‘traditional owners’ and ‘land rights’ as keywords. He was aware of the
several Arts Council web pages that featured the famous artists from Yirrkala and
the galleries that have purchased their precious artwork. As he resisted a smile of
pride by dropping his gaze to the floor, he approached the kitchen sink to make
himself a cup of tea and ‘handle’ the new stranger (DeWalt & DeWalt 2010).

“You look like me”, Wayne said, while rubbing the skin of the inside of his left
forearm with the first phalanges of his right hand. He asked about my ethnicity and
family and my country of origin. My knowledge of the Malay language and recital
of words that I found similar to Yolngu Matha from Macassan origin prompted him
to ask me for my skin name.

He stood by the sink and sipped his cup of tea with Andrew sitting between us. It
had only been ten minutes since we met when he declared his intention to adopt me
as his younger brother or ‘Gutha’. He said, “You call me Wawa”. I was caught by
surprise and hesitated. I chose to delay the acceptance of such an unexpected
decision when Andrew kicked me under the table and ‘encouraged’ my confused
acceptance. With a light sense of humour, Andrew asked Wayne, what rights to land and property I have as his new ‘gutha’ to which he pointed to the floor symbolising Yirrkala and in the direction of Nhulunbuy, saying ‘town’.

The Arnhem Club and the other Wawas’

Wayne, a driver and traditional owner of Yirrkala was the son of a former Rirratjingu elder, the man who took the Australian government and a mining company to court, after whose passing was succeeded by his younger brother, Roy Marika. Wayne’s mother was a church minister and a Gumana, belonging to a family of renowned artists from GanGan.

As the eldest son of the brother of Mawalan Marika, a custodian of Rirratjingu knowledge and law, and a clinic driver, I considered myself fortunate to make such a connection. During the weeks of getting to know Yirrkala and One Disease, I drafted a proposal with a goal to understand how mobile phones and social media could be used to denormalize scabies, increase health-seeking behaviour and treatment adherence in the community.

On Thursday evening, four days after my arrival in the town, I walked to the local pub to encounter and meet more Yolngu people. The Arnhem Club carpark looked empty with only two four-wheel drives until I walked in to find at least 25 Yolngu men sitting close to the bar and many more sitting outside and smoked in the beer garden. Wayne noticed the ‘new stranger’ first. He sat at a table with six other Yolngu men who were his peers in age. He stood up and beckoned me to the table. I was not ready for the engagement and looked for an escape but my research plans...
forced my step that led me to the table. They weren’t youth and they weren’t on
their mobile phones and the chances that they know anything about Facebook were
slim, so I thought.

Instead of learning from the youth about mobile phone and social media
engagement, here I was approaching the table and knew that I would end up buying
a couple of rounds of drinks. Wayne introduced me to his family, saying their
Yolngu name and how they were related to me; ‘this is your waku, this is your
ngapipi’ using hand signs as accompaniment. It was impossible to remember all
their names and the clans they belonged to and how they were connected to me via
kinship. However, I paid close attention to the interaction at the table, filled empty
schooners on demand, and proceeded to consider the possibility of being labelled
as a ‘happy to spend money buying drinks for Yolngu’ stranger. When I stepped
into the restroom, iPhone in my right hand, I typed this sentence:

- ‘Was I being ‘humbugged’ or am I having an amazing cultural experience
  and being accepted as part of the community’ Field Notes, June 2012, The
  Arnhem Club.

- I struggled to say ‘no’ to ‘humbugging’. I wanted to ease into the
  community before I was comfortable in saying ‘no’ as the word ‘no’ in my
  own culture in the context of any request is rude and arrogant.

After my second round of drinks for six men, the bartender took the liberty of
advising me not to continue buying, but to simply say ‘no humbug’ and that I would
not offend anyone. He was a self-proclaimed cultural advisor protecting me from
Aboriginal people. He used the term humbug and I was not entirely sure what
qualified the use of the word humbug yet. With a tray of full schooners, I turned
around and found Wayne and Barry sitting at a separate table. Barry said; “Gutha
(younger brother), they have no manners, humbugging you like that”.

Barry, from my impression, became a close friend to me from that evening. We
connected as brothers and he would remind me of our connection every time we
met. He was in his fifties but like many Yolngu men his age, although physically
they were older, they maintained a youthful attitude towards life within the
traditional law, kinship and ceremony.

On my second field trip to Yirrkala, July 2015, during a consultative process for
One Disease, I toured the community to seek permission from clan elders to use
mobile phone text messaging as a tool for health communication. As Rose and
Betty, two health workers for One Disease led me to an open construction site and
called for a clan elder to meet me. There across the site was Barry. The same Barry
that I met at the Club, I learnt was a humble leader who gave me his permission to
try different ways to engage the community.

On the last day of my second field trip with One Disease, I bumped into Barry at
the Walkabout Hotel. He was at a table surrounded by young people and he asked
for a drink. I sat down next to him while he passed his unfinished drink to a family
member and moved onto the fresh schooner that I brought him. “Wawa, ngarali
ga!” I said.
He looked straight into my eyes and said nothing for three seconds, which gave me enough time to imagine this to be my last conversation with him and that I had offended a clan elder. He then reached into his pocket and pulled out a cigarette and thought me the importance of relationship and kin in the Yolngu world when he said, “I will give you one, [but only] because you are my brother”. He said it in such a way that I thanked him as though he for conferred upon me a great honour.

Barry and Wayne became my referees in the community. People came to know of me through them and friendships were found based on my association with them. We often met at the pub from about nine at night until the security guards ushered us out at three in the morning. Our conversations revisited Yolngu and Tamil cultural similarities, family dynamics, sibling rivalries and the politics of leadership.

Wayne comes to Darwin

When Wayne visited me during the dry season of 2012, he brought his wife with him who had an active restraining order against him. The first thing he bought was an iPhone 3 for $650 dollars and a prepaid sim card with Telstra. He got me his phone connected to the Internet through Wi-Fi and spent many hours with earphones and looked at his screen.

My home was in visual range of an Aboriginal hostel and when Wayne and I would step outside the gates to talk and smoke, he would be guarded of any Aboriginal people looking at him. “Galka?” I asked. He nodded his head in agreement and urged me to go back inside. After a Queens’s birthday celebration at the residence
of the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Wayne changed from his suit into less formal clothing and tried to be unnoticeable as he walked along narrow lanes of the Mindil Beach Markets. Again he gestured to me that some other ‘Yolngu’ might do galka at him. Balanda, however (non-Aboriginal) do not practice black magic.

Wayne was fluent in ‘Google’. He used it to show his family members who are accomplished artists, including his wife’s artworks that have made the galleries in Sydney. He also used his smartphone for Internet Banking and watching YouTube videos. At this stage based on Wayne’s stories of the mobile phone in Aboriginal hands, I was convinced that a social marketing campaign via text messaging and short videos shared via Bluetooth was an interesting way to engage the Yolngu community to denormalize and reduce the stigma associated with scabies. With these preliminary interactions, consultation and observations, a draft proposal was written and sent to the senior management of One Disease.

One Disease, one question.

The proposal to use mobile phones and social media to engage, denormalize and destigmatise scabies, inspired by the founder of One Disease ‘to eliminate scabies one tweet at a time’ was swept under the carpet in favour of improving the clinical treatment protocol for scabies and providing access and support for functioning washing machines in each household. Less than a year ago, on April 2, 2011, the Sydney Morning Herald featured an article about the plans of One Disease to “…create a social marketing campaign directed at the most important group: the young, often teenage, parents in remote communities, most of whom have mobile
phones that could be used in Twitter style campaign message”\textsuperscript{29}. The social
marketing campaign was meant to destigmatize scabies and increase health-seeking
behaviour in the community. In proposing a social marketing campaign, my initial
application of theory was centred on the Consumer Culture Theory by Arnould
(2005) and the Fogg Behaviour Model (Fogg 2010) which was combined together
to create online or digital products that used “online video, social networks and
metrics…to influence people’s behaviours via technology channels” (Fogg 2010 p.1).

Understanding the complexities of working in a cross-disciplinary team, the
argument for Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould 2005) and the use of the Fogg
Behaviour Model was perceived as inferior and inconclusive compared to the
physical bathing and application of medication by a nurse for a patient with scabies.
The plan to use Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould 2005) and the Fogg Behaviour
Model (Fogg 2010) to inform a social marketing campaign had already failed in its
planning stages due to the prevalent use of the biomedical model in public health
program design.

As more time was spent in the community, I began to see the complexity of running
a social marketing campaign in Yirrkala. The conversations and observations
created more questions than providing answers to why scabies was so difficult to
tackle. There was a dedicated clinic in Yirrkala, staffed by Yolngu staff, descendent
from the women and men who took the Commonwealth and a transnational

company to court and won and yet eradicating scabies was unsuccessful. Scabies was attached to a lot of stigma and access to clinical care was insufficient. Stigma was a sign that there were underlying factors and meaning which required an understanding of Yolngu culture. Time was precious. The answers had to come fast and unlike the efficacy of antibiotics in the medical world, the treatment of stigma was complicated and maybe not yield results in time for the next annual report.

As One Disease drifted from an agenda of innovation into a biomedical model grounded in one of the longest living cultures in the world, based on economic sustainability and the avoidance of failure, I began to question my own exploitation of this organisation. Was the purpose of my research to formulate the right question to the answers that were determined by political, economic and social structures? I realised that in the process of collaboration my own agency had been replaced by One Diseases’ own agency and the Yolngu merely a symbolical backdrop.

The process of planning, targeting, strategizing and implementation lacked in-depth knowledge of the meaning of scabies, the technology used for communicating about scabies and the language that could possibly destigmatize the infectious disease. As a doctor myself, I found the complexity of behaviours, community life, language, relationship to disease and the clinic, skin, agency and structure beyond what I had theorized to think in clinical circles. But fortunately I was also trained in the former Soviet Union and part of the medical program was a two-year course in Philosophy, cultural studies, economics and Russian literature of the 19th and 20th Century. This became instrumental in the shifting my work from a reductionist approach to anthropological theory and ethnographic method.
How did I deconstruct the messy web of actors, their narratives and structures that created this resistance to health care, sent to alleviate the disease burden in Yirrkala? The One Disease focus became simplistic and reflected a clinic perspective of causality, aetiology, diagnosis and treatment. As for scabies in Yirrkala, the diagnosis was a given. Addressing the non-clinical challenges brought by scabies (Currie 2000), was beyond the capability and capacity of One Disease as an organization staffed by clinicians and by its clinical capabilities alone (Sen 1999). I realised that we were both mistaken and that both a clinic and social marketing approach using Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould 2005) and the Fogg Behaviour Model (2010) was too simplistic in a context made up different and hidden social categories, inequalities, severely impacted by globalisation and marginalisation.
APPENDIX 3 - AN ETHNOGRAPHIC, CULTURALLY REFLEXIVE ANTI-
TOBACCO SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN.

To the Yolngu, tobacco is a commodity that is owned by the Yirritja clans. The Dhuwa clans, on the other hand, act as clan executives of tobacco and assist with the management of tobacco within its traditional ceremonial function. The tobacco dance is performed during funeral ceremonies and has a deep and meaningful metaphor when followed by the “Djapana” dance at sunset. The smoke from the tobacco rises into the sky and turns the sky red signifying the end of the earthly life and the continuation of another life in a land called ‘Dhariny’ or paradise.

Tobacco or Ngarali was introduced to Yolngu before European settlement, approximately 200 years ago by Macassan seafarers who arrived on the shores of North East Arnhem Land in search of ‘trepang’ or sea cucumber. ‘No one smoked Ngarali until Macassan came in and traded Ngarali. That’s how it started’ (Field Notes). The Macassans traded with Yolngu in exchange for labour. Trade items like Dugout canoes, metal hooks and harpoons included tobacco and tobacco pipes or ‘Lunginy’ were adopted into the Yolngu cosmology and as the Macassan seafarers became part of the Yolngu kinship system, so were the Macassan artefacts. Tobacco became part of the kinship system (Robertson et al. 2013) and has been referred to as part of the family for at least two centuries.
Understanding the Yolngu connection to Ngarali

Yolngu had incorporated Ngarali into the ritual ceremony, particularly during funeral ceremonies. The Ngarali dance, sees the traditional performers on a lookout for Macassans sailing on their ‘praus’ or boats from the West, with both hands over their forehead creating a canopy over their brows, gazing far ahead into the horizon.

Then with outstretched hands, the dancers ask for Ngarali saying “ga” (give). Afterwards, the dancers pick up the Ngarali and Lunginy (tobacco pipe) from the ground, which today are usually cigarette sticks, then sat around the fire and smoked. As they smoked their Ngarali, they thought of ‘Warwu’ referring to the feeling of nostalgia for the land and the ancestors of the past in the Yolngu paradise referred earlier as Dhariny.

The smoke from the Ngarali rose to the sky and at sunset, the sky would become red. This is when the Ngarali dance is followed by the Djapana dance. The Djapana dance at sunset and the metaphor of the smoke from the Ngarali is a deep and meaningful metaphor to Yolngu. In the past, only senior men were allowed to smoke Ngarali and use the Lunginy. “One the men smoked Ngarali because Ngarali was their Gajala” (transcript) meaning precious” according to a senior elder from the Rirratjingu clan (Field notes). The tobacco pipe would be painted with sacred art and this meant that the pipe can only to be handled by the right leaders or elders.
The Macassans harvested sea cucumber for approximately 6 months in the year.

“Yolngu would stop smoking and only have a little buried in the ground for [next] 6 months. Get it out sometimes Ngalapal (elders), old people. Not young people, not twelve-year-olds smoking” (Interview transcript).

From 1894 to 1903, a total of 2,376 kg of tobacco were imported from Macassar into the Northern Territory. These are substantial quantities when the relatively small Aboriginal population is considered. According to Warner (1929) the Indigenous people became quickly accustomed to smoking tobacco. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that such native tobacco would have been available in quantities comparable to that traded by the Macassans. So after the Macassans stopped coming, it is likely the relationship between Yolngu and nicotine would have been relatively subdued, for a few decades at least. The next wave of outsiders to arrive in North East Arnhem Land was the Methodists, who established missions in several communities in the region (Cole 1979).

Post Macassan tobacco influence

Methodist missions in North East Arnhem Land were established along the coast at Goulburn Island (1916), Millingimbi 1923, Yirrkala (1934) and Elcho Island in 1942. They too brought tobacco with them, using it as payment to Yolngu for work done around the mission stations and giving it to Yolngu in exchange for turtle shell and crocodile skins. Tobacco was also used to pay wages for work that Yolngu performed in agriculture, the timber sawmill and at the cattle farm.

According to Yolngu, the influence from the Christian Methodist Missionaries and the military personnel based in North East Arnhem Land during World War 2 had
a profound impact in the smoking culture of the people (Cole 1979). During the
Methodist Mission management of Aboriginal reserves and Yolngu communities,
“they [the Missionaries] had an iron bell that went “ding, ding, ding, then the people
has to line up for ration sugar, Ngarali, flour, and they had to put then in a bowl,
billycan and then give it to the Ngalapalmirri (elders) (Interview transcript).

Some people protested, for example, a policeman on Groote Eylandt wrote in
protest to the Administrator:

It is expected by the Missionaries that by the lavish gifts of tobacco, flour,
tea, sugar and that they will win the confidence of the natives. The
Missionaries would not leave the sanctuary of their boat but invite the natives
out to them with the promise of gifts. To our minds the whole scheme is
wrong...It is really bribery (Quoted in Dewar M, The Black War in Arnhem
land - Missionaries and the Yolngu 1908-1940, North Australia Research
Unit (ANU) 1992, p.65)

Over the decades, more and more Yolngu came into contact with the missions. The
early sporadic access to the mission’s tobacco sticks became more regular by the
1950s. Of course, at that time, it may not have been reasonable to expect
missionaries to have been aware of the health effects of tobacco. For this reason
alone it is remarkable that some missionaries were actually aware of its addictive
effects.

In 1950 the controversial ‘tobacco question’ strained relationships between the
CMS and the Government, and brought division among the missionaries
themselves. In December the Government ordered the missions to issue tobacco to
the three CMS stations refused on the grounds that Aborigines were becoming
addicted to tobacco and using endowment and other monies to buy it, the
administrator of the Territory threatened to withdraw CMS licenses to work in the
(Arnhem Land) Reserve (Cole 1979)

Robertson et al. (2013) found that the smoking rate of 45.1% of the Australian
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population despite increasing annually is
roughly three times the rates of the general Australian population rate at 15.1%.
This rate is similar to that of Indigenous people from developed countries like the
United States of America, New Zealand and Canada. In the past 20 years, Robertson
et al. (2013) argue that the smoking rates in remote Aboriginal communities in
North East Arnhem Land remain unchanged and as high as 82%. However,
according to Thomas 2012, there appears to be a consistent increase in quitting from
2002 to 2008 in men and women in remotes communities.

Challenges to Indigenous smoking interventions
Social marketing campaigns in the region have in the past utilised the Health Belief
Model (HBM) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The campaigns
couraged Yolngu to quit smoking in order to prevent cardiovascular disease. The
HBM suggest that a person’s effectiveness of the recommended health behaviour
will predict the likelihood the person will adopt the behaviour (Green and Murphy
2002). For example, the association of cardiovascular disease and smoking in a
social marketing campaign will enable a person to quit smoking. The TPB states
that the achievement of a new healthy behaviour depended on an individual’s level
of motivation and ability (Green and Murphy 2002). For example, by assuming that Yolngu have the ability to quit smoking, they only require a motivational social marketing campaign to trigger the behaviour of quitting.

Based on the discussion by Green and Murphy (2002) the limitations of using HBM and TPB in the Yolngu context for tobacco control social marketing are:

- The assumption that a Yolngu individual has acquired the opportunities and resources to achieve the desired behaviour regardless of intention (Burbank 2006).
- They do not take into account that tobacco is a highly addictive substance.
- The assumption that cues to action are successful in encouraging Indigenous people to quit smoking (Burbank 2006).
- They do not acknowledge the cultural significance of tobacco in the community and in ceremonial practice (Robertson et al. 2013).
- They do not take in consideration environment and economic factors that influence a Yolngu person’s smoking behaviour (Robertson et al. 2013).

In 2009, social media and mobile phones were adopted in North East Arnhem Land by an Aboriginal primary health care provider to engage youth in an anti-tobacco social marketing campaign called “Yaka Ngarali” meaning “No Tobacco [smoking]”. Video clips of young people singing, rapping and dancing with traditional painting and colours were used to promote the risks of smoking. Joe said ‘I think that there is excitement about ICT and it engages young people and therefore within that excitement they’re gonna listen’. Angelina said: ‘Yaka
Ngarali: It well viral when it came out but yeah...like when I first saw the video clip it was on my cousin’s mobile and I asked her how did she get the video clip and she said that one of her friends Bluetoothed it to her and the friend got it when she went over to Elcho. So she went over got it over there and brought it over. It just went everywhere. And it’s gone as far as all the outstations like 3-4 hours from here’.

The health of adolescents and young adults were crucial (Senior 2002, Senior and Chenhall 2008, Burbank 2012) not only because of the high rates of disease as a result of smoking tobacco but the effect poor health outcomes have on the transition of adolescents into adulthood (Senior 2002). The ‘hook’ in engaging young people with mobile technology and social media was brilliant in achieving this goal as confirmed by Jack: “Service providers. They worked with the kids and the kids themselves created it and then they themselves sent it around to each other’s phones. So they were the ones in control where that information was going and they were the ones who were in control of creating that information. I'm talking 17 year olds”.

Jenny reflected on the ‘Yaka Ngarali’ campaign and said; ‘Was the message understood? I guess so because it was repeated throughout the song like the actions that they used were Yolngu sign languages. When you listen to the song you can’t really get the picture, cause most of the video clip is actions and it’s just fun because they’re using colour, song is different, it’s what they like to use and it’s like a catchy song. The way they delivered it wasn’t serious, it was fun, enjoying, and all the little kids enjoy watching it as well and they’ve got that song in their head as they sing it as well’.
Other interviewees mentioned that ‘It will have to be catchy, with dance moves but I won’t know if it’s having any impact on smokers, I just enjoyed the movie [music video] anyway’, and ‘I’ve heard comments like “Oh that’s a good funny clip, are they gonna be doing any more?” But I haven’t heard many comments about people wanting to stop smoking’.

The lived experiences of Yolngu youth was a narrative of resilience and survival. They used social media and mobile phones for communication and to strengthen their relationships (Kral 2014). Young people were born into overcrowded housing, with little to no furniture. There were very little opportunities and resources for young people to escape the boredom of community life in contrast to the opportunities and experiences urban youth were accustomed to. There were no youth drop-in centres, no tennis courts but a dilapidated basketball court which functioned as a late night disco for teenagers and their younger siblings.

The streets were littered with few rubbish bins; the houses were rustic and some ‘beyond economical repair’. The three bedroom houses have not been repainted in the last twenty years and the walls were adorned with dirt and dust instead of a picture or a photograph. The young people had little space for their exploration of identity (Senior and Chenhall 2012) and as they competed for resources within their families and between clans, jealousy and animosity created conflicts that resulted in broken windows now replaced by a simple wooden board (Senior and Chenhall 2016). As one parent said in an interview about young people who were excluded from the experience of making an earlier music video clip on healthy foods:
Whether they actually took it on as information for healthy foods, I don’t know. Whether or not they took it on also as a jealousy thing; I wish I was able to make song, I wish had gone to school so could have been involved in that workshop.

Young people, who enjoyed football, showed up to the oval often with old boots while others, who cannot afford a pair of boots, stayed off the field or play barefoot. Many young people were also raised by their grandparents or single mothers who struggled to provide the necessary resources in a community plagued by alcohol and drug abuse and the absence of a male figure, especially in the lives of young men who still practised traditional law and culture. The cost of tools, sports equipment, books and the basic lack of stores that stock and sell these items at an affordable rate in remote communities left young people with little choice but to turn to the online space for entertainment and identity exploration.

The use of the anti-tobacco social marketing video clips by a health service provider to encourage ‘empowerment’ in this context was reinforced by its biomedical roots of the 1970s (Moodie 1973, Senior and Chenhall 2012) and fabricated in the Ottawa Charter (WHO 1986). According to a young person being groomed for a future leadership position; ‘I think the Miwatj smoking one was so popular that really proved that there’s definitely a base to promote health and all sorts of messages. Absolutely.’

‘Empowerment’ became a conduit to promoting healthy behaviours and social marketing was used to encourage Yolngu youth to take control (WHO 1986) of their lives and smoking habit and enhance self-help and social support (WHO
The social marketing campaign utilised visual and auditory messages in Yolngu Matha (language) to empower and encourage self-help via social media and mobile phones based on the assumption that new technology can breakthrough and intervene directly with Indigenous youth or community (Lock and Nguyen 2010). A young female health worker confirmed that the social marketing campaign had good uptake and said; ‘Most positive was everybody sending around the smoking one that came out of Galiwin’ku’. Lea (2005) draws attention to the overlooked social context of Indigenous youth and their lived experiences strived to minimize their ‘inherited structural dominance over the Indigenous populations’ focused on the ‘facilitation and partnerships with health longevity, wellbeing and independence’ as a goal, whilst safeguarding superficial aspects of ‘community control’ in their campaigns (Lea 2005 pp. 1310) through ‘community consultation’ with select leaders and reference groups.

Cindy a young Indigenous health worker recalled the social marketing campaign with its catchy tune and visuals said ‘I think the people heard the message but didn’t really take it in. So yeah, if there was another health promotion, I would want [it] to be catchy like that with good choreography and dancing, a lot of young kids involved and they usually have the best ideas and it attracts attention in the communities’. The idea of a tobacco-free Yolngu reality, to quit an old tradition in exchange for a new and healthier Yolngu community and culture was interpreted at the outset of the social marketing campaign as a way forward and at the end, a success because of its wide acceptance. The use of Yolngu rappers and Hip Hop was crucial in engaging the youth population but not their elders. This approach essentially disengaged young people from the inter-relatedness and connection with
their traditional elders without acknowledging the authority that senior men and
women hold in the community. Similarly, an Aboriginal mother with four teenage
children acknowledged the community input into the video but commented that it
had a limited impact. She said: ‘To be honest, we just released a report in […] its
rising [the rates of smoking] and just have a video like that it’s not gonna send [the]
message, its gonna take a lot more things to change. More innovative stuff’.

Sean who is a youth worker from Yirrkala, advocated for the ‘old fashioned’ no
technology approach to engagement of Yolngu participants and suggested the ‘door
to door, sit down, sit in a group, have a cup of tea, talk to people, that’s always been
the most effective’ method which brings into our context the Indigenous value of
reflexivity and storytelling. The song lines with a posture of reflexivity and
nostalgia are values that appear to be constructed into Yolngu cultural continuity
and keeping to traditional law. The context of the Yolngu community has been
affected by a tumultuous century, the aftermath of which young people and their
elders to this day are still engaged in analysis and the reconstruction of their lives
now engaged with the dominant culture. Today’s social marketing can be labelled
a ‘dialectical opposite of the process of knowledge production and dissemination’
(Potter 2010 p. 135). Social marketing in the Indigenous context appears to be
conveying and disseminating new knowledge, where the Yolngu is assumed to be
unaware of disease causation and pathology, whilst at the same time ignoring
traditional beliefs and traditional medicine (Lee 2005).

In the Indigenous context, knowledge production has thus far been part of their
cosmology, not social, and therefore, the contradiction of Indigenous cultural
practice through social marketing campaigns can be considered a form of
discrimination against Indigenous knowledges and culture. Bhaskar in Potter (2010
p. 136) explained the difference of interest between the oppressor and oppressed in
relation to knowledge. The oppressor in this context, the ideology of the dominant
culture embedded in the anti-tobacco social marketing campaign (Lee 2005,
Petersen and Lupton 1996) as described by the quotes from Yolngu communities
members provided earlier appear ‘as a necessary condition for rational self-
emancipation – whether what the agent seeks emancipation from the oppression of
individuals, groups, classes; of practices, institutions, organizations; of relations,
structures and systems’ which results in ‘compulsions or constraints on action’
(Potter 2010, p.136).

The oppressed, dominated and denied, Bhaskar argues in Potter (2010 p 136) ‘have
an interest in the knowledge which their oppressors lack’. The social marketing
campaign, void of any cultural context but a pantomime of generic anti-tobacco
messages, divorced of historical and cultural context, facilitated the acquisition of
the Yolngu target group’s wants and the satisfaction of their needs. ‘The oppressing
agency, inasmuch as their (or its) interests are antagonistic to the oppressed,
possesses an interest in the ignorance of the oppressed. Thus the human sciences
(in this case the science of social marketing) and at a remove philosophy, cannot be
regarded equally ‘a potential instrument of domination’ or of ‘the expansion of the
rational autonomy of action. The human sciences are not neutral in their
consequences in a non-neutral (unjust, asymmetrical) world’ (Bhasker in Potter
2010, p. 136).
Methodology

The making of the Ngarali – Tobacco Story of Arnhem Land did not begin with a script. With a rather ambitious goal to make an ethnographic film about Yolngu and tobacco, in consultation with Yolngu stakeholders, it was agreed that the film would serve multiple goals. The goals would be aligned according to implicit principles of traditional Yolngu knowledge creation and dissemination practice.

Firstly the ethnographic film should document the historical arrival, incorporation and enculturation of tobacco into Yolngu cosmology and culture. Secondly, it should address the socio-economic influence tobacco has had in increasing tobacco consumption in the Yolngu community since its use as payment for work done around the mission stations. Thirdly, it should be a product that guides future social marketing work in the region, from both a policy and practitioner standpoint.

As ethnographer-filmmakers, the goal was also to play the role of circumstantial activists (Otto 2013), creating connections and comparing different points of views and ideas across to local and international audiences but also organisers of social marketing campaigns (Otto 2013). Yolngu stakeholders wanted a product that can be used to promote and discuss their dilemma with tobacco as a local agenda but at the same time allow for the researcher, the ethnographer-filmmaker to critique Yolngu ‘perspectives that invite reflexive discussion about cultural change’ (Otto 2013 p. 203). The film was designed with the help of Yolngu senior elders from Yirritja and Dhuwa clans to ‘contribute to a reflexive space that informs local agency and action towards the future’ (Otto 2013 p. 203). Shelly advised that
Yolngu need local context to be able to connect to the information. She said in an interview that ‘Yolngu see a white person on the side of the cigarette packet and it just means nothing to them, you know. It’s the white person sickness. You know what I mean. So I think there’s a lot of inequity from the governments’ messaging. It’s sort of targets, one group. These packets only have white people. They don’t have any cultural background at all. And of course, you’ve got the belief here that smoking doesn’t kill’.

Yolngu agreed that today’s format of storytelling has become visualised and there rigour of ‘film as a medium is that it, more easily than written products, can generate this reflection across cultural differences’ (Otto 2013 p. 203). Yolngu were inclusive of non-Indigenous audiences when they worked together with the ethnographer-filmmaker in the interview and filmmaking process. Guided by anthropology, the ethnographer-filmmaker used this opportunity to revitalise the critical public role it has previously lost according to Otto (2013).

Using ethnographic methods (Agar 2004; 2006) and participant observations (DeWalt & DeWalt 2010), the lived experience of Yolngu and their connection to tobacco was discussed on a daily basis as events unfolded in the community. Informal interviews were held over a period 18 months at different times of the day, with smokers and non-smokers, youth, senior men and women, representing both Yirritja and Dhuwa clans. The initial proposal was verbally discussed with the wide variety stakeholders mentioned earlier in order to contribute to a more reflexive moment on cultural change and the potential benefits as well as risks when discussing the role of tobacco in Yolngu culture and tradition.
Preparations for the ethnographic film also included an in-depth study of the work of Ian Dunlop and Yolngu clan leaders of the past and present in the Yirrkala Film Project (Deveson 2011). The ethnographer in partnership with Yolngu community members from different walks of life, focusing also on the unheard voices, members of the community who had no explicit authority was also utilised and allowed the ethnographer-filmmaker to be guided by a wider spread of ideas.

The Yolngu community was taken by surprise at the different voices requested to take part in the film, generally, a role allocated exclusively to the ruling members of the clans. From the beginning, Yolngu having watched the Yirrkala Film Project by Dunlop (Deveson 2011), saw the value of it as an instrument for a Yolngu centric education and through this, “political and legal persuasion” (Deveson 2011).

Secondly, Yolngu were encouraged to be filmed as the film was ‘taken up as a means of recording their culture for future generations of Yolngu, and even of directly addressing those generations’. Inspired by the comments of the late Roy Dadaynga Marika, the adopted father (Malu) of the ethnographer-filmmaker, in Deveson (2011), the general direction of the narrative of the film was conceived. Mr Marika said in Deveson (2011 p. 155) that:

The first picture will be for the future, for our children and their children to see: the aboriginal culture before the mission came… The second picture will show the changes in the Aborigines’ way of life after the mission came, and the third picture will show the results of the big changes caused by the mining company.
The 18 months of informal and formal interviews were instrumental in being able
to go into pre-production, production and post–production within four months. The
ethnographer-filmmaker was already made aware of the voluminous discussion and
historical and cultural information that need to be taken into context through the
words of Ian Dunlop in Deveson (2011 p. 156). He said:

My first shooting trip of three weeks was hopelessly inadequate. It was more
successful as a research, than as a shooting trip. About a month should be set aside
before this trip (for both an assistant and myself) for preliminary research, including
consolidating the notes.

The use of anthropology as a ‘loose encompassing model of what can be classed as
data’ which has not been limited ‘in its objectives by the limitations of the methods
that it employs’ was an enabling factor for the ethnographer-filmmaker to adapt ‘to
the circumstances in which they find themselves’ (Morphy 1994 p. 118). The
ethnographer-filmmaker became aware of the Yolngu association with tobacco and
its long history through casual conversations as a doctoral student in anthropology
where a limiting pre-fieldwork preparation could have encouraged the prospective
fieldworker “to pay too much attention to methods, in particular, quantitative
methods, that are likely to be of only limited interest” to some researchers and
bureaucrats (Morphy 1994).

The use of film as a method of triangulating and obtaining ethnographic data
(Morphy 1994) is also according to Morphy (1994), a means of interpreting
ethnographic events to an audience. Morphy (1994) argues that filmmaking is “part
of the ethnographic process, as a means of recording data, of ‘documenting’ events” (P. 118) and useful medium agreed by Yolngu as “a medium for presenting interpretations and representations of ‘other cultures’”. An anthropological framework in ethnographic-filmmaking provides the necessary information “necessary to enable the director to shoot the film” (Morphy 1994). Funding a film crew over long periods of time is unsustainable and as far as possible, it is the role of the anthropologist to guide the query and lead the discussion (Morphy 1994) based on preliminary interviews, study and consultation with wide variety of stakeholders and unheard voices.

“To have had to pretend that I actually knew what was going on would probably have cost me all possibility of gaining an understanding”. (Morphy 1994)

Even in the process of filming, the ethnographer-filmmaker as depicted in the words of Morphy, cannot be complacent with the discussion and consultation held with stakeholders prior to the production of the film and miss opportunities to uncover more critical dialogue and arguments, using different means of engaging the public and especially the unheard voices of individuals who are bereft of power or status in the community. Despite the wide discussion and variety of voices, the ethnographer-filmmaker acknowledges the final product of the ethnographic film as inevitably reductionist (Morphy 1994). Morphy (1994) argues that the finished product is “literally a selection from a larger body of footage, organized in such a way that the audience is able to follow the action and gain some understanding of the significance of cultural events observed” and discussed by the camera (p. 124).
However, the ethnographer-filmmaker agrees with Morphy (1994) in that the film is not any more reductionist than ethnographic writing “at least not any more so than ethnographic writing guided by a paradigm of cultural interpretation or explanation – and that seems to cover most” (p. 124). The finished product, a 45 minute film, may be labelled ‘functionalist’ “not so much because they are informed by the theoretical framework of functionalist anthropology by Banks (1988) but because they are oriented towards the creation of a work which is complete in itself and which for aesthetic reasons, ties everything together (Morphy 1994 p. 125).

Using the filming style of Ian Dunlop from the Yirrkala Film Project where the “gap between finished ‘film’ and ethnographic footage has been narrower” as argued by Morphy (1994), the Ngarali Tobacco Story of Arnhem Land used visual images, natural sounds, aerial footage, traditional music, contemporary Yolngu music, and pauses to create a story that resonated with Yolngu traditional styles of meaning creation and knowledge dissemination.
### APPENDIX 4 - A SNAPSHOT OF THEMES FROM BROWSER HISTORIES IN THE IMACS AT THE YIRRKALA ART CENTRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
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</table>
| 30 April | PI Boyz Aboriginal Justice  
Yolngu Land Hip Hop Track by Nathan B  
N.T. Nhulunbuy Fight  
2 Pac found in Nhulunbuy  
Reality show fights  
Halls Creek fight Cabby & Jaden  
Kendrick vs Chris  
Mornington Island Girls  
Elcho Island Dancers  
Chooky Dancers  
Syd.29.05.06 Education Success Galiwin’ku Shepherdson College  
Kormilda College  
Kevin Swords vs Andy Loko |
| 3 May    | Cori B  
Mindless Behaviour  
Keke Palmer – The One You call  
One Direction |
| 7 May    | Borroloola New Years Fight 2012  
Reality Show Fights |
| 8 May    | You Gotta Be Strong  
Don Dhalikany Burarrwanga playing yidaki  
Nelson Dhapan Yunupingu yidaki genius  
Yunupingu Geoffrey Gurrumul  
Mulkuy playing a yidaki  
Yothu Yindi |
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Didgeridoo solo by Gapanbulu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 May</td>
<td>World’s most amazing photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top 10 most shocking photos</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funny Look Alikes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 Pac California Love</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bone Thugs n Harmony – crossroads</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 Pac – Dear Mama</td>
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<td>2 Pac – Thugz Mansion</td>
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<td>AVNL</td>
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<td>LMFAO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Michael Jackson</td>
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<td>14 May</td>
<td>Heavyweight boxing interviews</td>
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<td></td>
<td>German fans attach David Haye</td>
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<td>Boxing Face Off Klitscho vs Haye</td>
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<td>Pacquiao Bradley 247</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Crocodile</td>
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<td>Flo Rida – Wild Ones</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Usher</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lady Gaga</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rabbit Proof Fence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yolngu Boy – Warumpi Band</td>
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<td></td>
<td>My Island Home – Warumpi Band</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Noongah – Out da Front</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yothu Yindi</td>
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<td>NEAL Boys from Yirrkala</td>
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<td>DJAYRUFF j Boog Ganja vs 2Pac Hell 4 a hustle</td>
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<td>UB40 Red red wine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reggae</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chris Brown</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Skinny fish music</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>Free running stunts  &lt;br&gt;Free fun  &lt;br&gt;Monsterbike  &lt;br&gt;<code>Undisputed 2 Soundtrack</code>  &lt;br&gt;Bukan empat mata 2012  &lt;br&gt;UFC 140  &lt;br&gt;Tony Jaa vs Fight Club  &lt;br&gt;2000-2009 AFL Grand Finals  &lt;br&gt;2012 AFL Ladder Progressions  &lt;br&gt;Ninja Baby  &lt;br&gt;Funny Cat, Funny baby, funny man and dog</td>
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<td>16 May</td>
<td>World of Dance Vancouver  &lt;br&gt;Break Dance Battle  &lt;br&gt;Free run Bollywood  &lt;br&gt;Dr. Dre Kush  &lt;br&gt;Steven Seagal teacher Anderson Silva some moves  &lt;br&gt;Kimbo Slice vs. Houston Alexander  &lt;br&gt;Killing a Toyota part 1  &lt;br&gt;Shoot guns  &lt;br&gt;Barrungar School  &lt;br&gt;East Journey</td>
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## Top 25 Most Played Media on the iMacs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Total number of Plays</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yalangbara Opening</td>
<td>9:50</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chooky Dancers 1 - Superman</td>
<td>3:40</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>Wandawuy Fish Trap 2010</td>
<td>6:14</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>Red Flag Bunggul 2009 Final</td>
<td>1:27:12</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Final 2011</td>
<td>1:27:39</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>Datiwuy Garma 2010 Day 4</td>
<td>12:16</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chooky Wrong skin</td>
<td>3:48</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yolngu Strong</td>
<td>4:10</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Djapana Film Clip</td>
<td>4:04</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baru at Bawaka</td>
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<td>Wurrumula Final</td>
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<td>Yirrkala Surf Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Turning</td>
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<td>Bayini</td>
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<td>Maymuru dhapi</td>
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<td>About Buku Larrngay Mulka</td>
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<td>Mungurru</td>
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<td>Roy Marika Memorial</td>
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<td>Ngarra2</td>
<td>2:44</td>
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<tr>
<td>AVM Millingimbi Sea Claim Celebration</td>
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<td>Datiwuy Garma 2010 Day 5</td>
<td>12:6</td>
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<td>Mayang</td>
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<td>Ngarra3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dhalinbuy Kids</td>
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<tr>
<td>R Anthony Home Movies</td>
<td>2:34</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Youth health 2.0: The interplay of social media, mobile phones and Yolngu youth and its impact on social marketing in Yirrkala.

This means you can say ‘no’

I, .......................................................... (Please print name)

First name ..............................................  Last name

consent to take part in the research project entitled: Youth Health 2.0 - The interplay of social media, mobile phones and Yolngu youth and its impact on social marketing in Yirrkala.

I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above research study. I have been informed that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal information will not be divulged.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and that this will not affect medical advice in the management of my health and wellbeing, now or in the future.
Please circle “yes” or “no”. I consent to:

Taking part in a maximum of 10 sessions of
(30-40 min per session over a 6 month period)
interviews involving the use of social media
and mobile phones by Yolngu youth: YES NO

Being observed during focus group discussions: YES NO

Having my interview audio recorded: YES NO

My phone being photographed: YES NO

To have photographs of my mobile phone used in posters or presentations: YES NO

Signed _____________________________

Printed name: ___________________________ Date:

______________

Witness

Signed ___________________________
Interpreter (if used) I have translated the above information explaining the nature of the procedures to be carried out. __________________ indicated that they understood the explanation

Signed: _______________________________

Printed name: _______________________________ Date: __________________
APPENDIX 6: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT: YOUTH HEALTH 2.0; THE INTERPLAY OF SOCIAL MEDIA, MOBILE PHONES AND YOLNGU YOUTH AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIAL MARKETING IN YIRRKALA.

ADVICE STATEMENT: THIS IS FOR YOU TO KEEP

RESEARCHER:
Dr. Kishan Kariippanon, PhD Student, Menzies School of Health Research (DPHIAS).
Dr. Kate Senior, Senior Research Fellow, Menzies School of Health Research (Supervisor)

PROJECT AIM:
You are invited to assist me by allowing me to interview you individually or in a group to talk about the use of social media and mobile phones by Yolngu youth in Yirrkala.
**BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT:**

This study will help in improving the way health messages are produced and distributed for Yolngu Youth. It will also help in understanding how to partner and collaborate with Yolngu youth to produce media content that is effective both culturally and practically. The study wants to understand how media content can be shared with Yolngu Youth via mobile phones to create behaviour change for healthy lifestyle.

**PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT:**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be invited to join a focus group or an interview. The focus group and interviews will be conducted in an informal manner and data will be collected via audio recorder and then later transcribed. There will not be any photographs or video recorded of study participants. Transcript will be provided to the participants for confirmation before the analysis is finalized.

The research will take place in a community hall, or after sporting activities and trainings. Each session will take 30 - 40 min and will focus only on one question/topic. A total of 30-50 participants are invited to undergo an average of 10 sessions over a period of 6 months. Participants will be provided with a meal and healthy drinks in the form of a sausage sizzle.

There are no specific risks associated with this study. It does not ask you to show us your SMS, photos or videos. It also does not ask you to show us your social media profiles.
We would be grateful if you did participate in this study but you are free to not participate. You can say “NO” at any time of the study and after the interview and focus group discussion.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Access to the data will only be available to the chief investigator Kishan Kariippanon. Associate researchers will have access to the analysis of the data collected.

ANONYMITY:
If you decide to take part in this research, your ideas and information on the subject will be recorded anonymously. Your name will not appear in any of the data that will be collected. The chief investigator, Kishan Kariippanon will ensure the full confidentiality of your participation and information.

DATA STORAGE:
The data that is collected will be stored on an external hard drive and kept in a locked case during the analysis and preparation of results. A copy will also be kept on Google Drive and Dropbox with complex and secure passwords that are updated every month. After the completion of the study, the external hard drive will be returned to Menzies School of Health Research for archiving.
RESULTS OF THE STUDY:

The results of the study will be available on the website dis and through a newsletter that I will provide every quarter.

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS:

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical conduct of the study, you are invited to contact the Ethics Administration, Human Research Ethics Committee of the Northern Territory Department of Health and Menzies School of Health Research on (08) 89228196 or email ethics@menzies.edu.au”

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For further queries or information regarding this research please contact the principle investigator, Kishan Kariippanon on 0422270458 or email: kishan.kariippanon@menzies.edu
APPENDIX 7: LETTERS OF SUPPORT

THE MULKA PROJECT - AT BUKU-LARRINGAY MULKA INC.
Yirrkala NT 0880 Australia - phone (08) 8987 8015 - fax (08) 8987 2701
mulka@yirrkala.com - www.yirrkala.com - abn: 66 988 958 476

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in support of the proposed research to be undertaken in Yirrkala by Kishan Karlippanon titled Youth Health 2.0.

After reviewing Kishan’s PhD proposal I strongly believe the data he intends to obtain through his research to be of great value to the community and any organisation servicing the community. Furthermore I find the intended methodology of real time data dissemination proposed to be both instantly useful and community minded in spirit.

Whilst I can not make any comment on the methods used to obtain the data or it’s main application by One Disease At A Time, I can certainly say that the data, once made available, would be of great use to The Mulka Project. Any future projects we undertake involving the dissemination of digital content throughout the wider Yolngu community would certainly draw upon, and stand on the shoulders of, the research undertaken by Kishan.

Feel free to contact me if there is anything further you would like to discuss in regards to this proposed research.

Sincerely yours.

Joseph Brady
Programme Director
The Mulka Project
To whom it may concern

The collaborative work that Dr Karlippanon proposes to undertake is well-aligned with the goals of Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation, specifically in regards to the notion of social marketing and mobile phone usage for the purpose of improved health promotion amongst Yolngu communities.

The collaboration will also assist One Disease at a Time in the creation of a social marketing strategy that is relevant and accurately targets community members and stakeholders so as to assist in the elimination of scabies as a health issue from Australia.

His work is mainly inspired by the Yaka Ngarali campaign that utilized social media and mobile phone technology to spread health messages in Yolngu Matha designed by the community.

The below points outline the importance of Dr Karlippanon's work:

This research is essential to understand the use of social media and mobile phones to improve on health communication for prevention and education.

Through a collaborative model of study, young people and community elders will be able to use the potential of these new technologies to strengthen Yolngu knowledge systems with Western model of health.

The results of the research will give voice to Yolngu communities on the use of social media and mobile phones to improve health education.

Young people will be better equipped to collaborate with health services in designing appropriate health interventions using social media and mobile phones.

Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation looks forward to collaborating with Dr Karlippanon.

Yours sincerely

Eddie Mitholland CEO
Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation
Correspondence emailed: kishan.karu@gmail.com

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of the Research Proposal composed by Mr Kishan Karippalan titled "Youth Health 2.0: the interplay between social media, mobile phones and Aboriginal youth in Yirrkala North East Arnhem Land and its impact on social marketing.

On Thursday 20 June, the Office of Youth Affairs (OYA) staff met with Mr Karippalan to discuss his Research Proposal to date. The OYA is a central co-ordination agency within the Department of Children and Families. The office provides a whole of government approach to policy priorities for young people aged 12 to 26 years and develops effective communication links between young people, Government and the wider community.

Based on community consultations conducted during the Northern Territory Government Youth Policy Framework review, the feedback from regional and remote sessions indicated that young people are far more connected and tech savvy than often perceived by the wider community. The influence of social media and mobile phones on community dynamics has been of particular interest.

We look forward to being kept informed of the progress of the Research Proposal. If you have any questions in relation to this letter of support, please feel free to contact myself on 8999 3887.

Yours sincerely

Vicki Schultz
Manager, Office of Youth Affairs

10 July 2012
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