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DEVELOPING *a* COLLABORATIVE APPROACH *to* STANDPOINT *in* INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH

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■ Abstract

The notion of Indigenous epistemologies and “ways of knowing” continues to be undervalued within various academic disciplines, particularly those who continue to draw upon “scientific” approaches that colonise Indigenous peoples today. This paper will examine the politics of contested knowledge from the perspective of three Indigenous researchers who work within Yunggoendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research at Flinders University in South Australia. In particular, the authors outline a collective process that has emerged from conversations regarding their research projects and responding to what Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2008, p. 371) refer to as the “call”. In developing an Indigenous standpoint specific to their own disciplines and their research context, the authors demonstrate how these collective conversations between each other and their communities in which they work have informed their research practices and provided a common framework which underpins their research methodologies.

■ Introduction

This paper considers the challenges and responsibility for people of “colour” to contest racial constructions of themselves as “other” (Said, 1995, Bhabha, 1983) and the ways in which the “other” interacts within institutions of power. To illuminate this response we have adapted a quote from De La Tierra (2002) which focuses on ways in which the “other” interacts within those institutions:

We need to remember that our presences exist within an institutional system that is not designed in our favor, and that our part in the system is prescribed. Still we are not powerless ... we are learning a discipline and a code of behavior, a language that puts us at another level ... we are in positions to create change ... to be mentors, to select materials and teaching methods, to actively participate in and affect the discourse of academia ... we can be subversive within the system ... we have to remember we have the right to be here (De La Tierra, 2002, p. 368).

The authors draw from their individual research as examples of counter hegemonic practice to the ways in which Indigenous communities are positioned and represented within the process of knowledge production. These examples include: a Ngarrindjeri archaeologist who is investigating change and continuity within his own community through Ngarrindjeri interpretations of Ruwe (country) and the archaeological record in the lower Murray River; an Anangu educator who is examining the Anangu philosophy of Ngapartji Ngapartji – (reciprocation) and its possible use as a pedagogical practice; and, a Murri academic whose standpoint has emerged in her ongoing response to the “call” and subsequent conversations with colleagues around her research with young Nunga males to develop a “rappin’ methodology”. These three examples provide methodological approaches for Indigenous researchers working collaboratively within the institution to produce beneficial outcomes for Indigenous communities.

As Indigenous researchers who are located within an institution of power which produces knowledge about Indigenous peoples, we are not powerless.

Our research recognises this fact and contributes to the deconstruction of regimes of power even as it contributes new knowledge and methodologies to disciplinary discourses – especially through careful consideration and use of “standpoint” (Nakata, 2007) projects socially, politically, culturally and intellectually. In the context of this paper therefore, the “call” speaks to the authors’ responsibility to acknowledge positions of privilege but to also remind ourselves, via De La Tierra that we work effectively and successfully within a contested space.

We draw from a number of theorists (e.g., Harding, 2004; Hill-Collins, 2004; hooks, 1989, 2004; Minh-Ha, 1989, 1990; Smith, 1999, 2008; Nakata, 2007) to locate our standpoints and to show how Indigenous epistemologies and ways of “being” works to produce agency in the process of research undertaken by Indigenous researchers. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2008) states that, the spaces that exist between research methodologies are “tricky ground”. She refers to these contested research spaces as “richly nuanced and dangerous” (Smith, 2008, p. 113). Indigenous Australian scholar Martin Nakata reinforces the “tricky” relationship of the Indigenous researcher and the research process and states that the contested spaces of research which the Indigenous researchers have to navigate are complex (Nakata, 2007, p. 213). In our experiences these dangers include objectification, misrepresentation, knowledge production and ethical practices constructed around and for us as Indigenous peoples, in ways that compromise and our knowledge systems.

Critical black feminist theorist bell hooks (2004) talks to the experiences of the black scholars as working within these contested spaces as margin and centre/insider/outsider. She defines these spaces-in-the-margins, as sites for resistance and transformation open to acts of “risking and daring” (hooks, 1989, p. 5). This describes our respective research projects intellectually, socially, culturally and politically. Throughout our respective research we draw on hooks (2004) concept of workings on the margins, which opens us to the possibilities of having the right to articulate our own standpoint, positioning and engage in “self-definition” (Hill-Collins, 2004, p. 113). Our navigation of the research spaces demonstrates an engagement in de-colonising practice through contributing our work to meet the challenge of broad institutional transformation of research as well as the needs of our communities (Smith, 2008, p. 117).

When “becoming” the researcher Smith (2008) states that we, Indigenous peoples, actively participate in building research capacities and infrastructures to sustain sovereign research agendas (pp. 117-122), which provides a radical standpoint. This is described by hooks’ as part of a “politics of location” (2004, p. 153). We work in this space of oppositional political struggles, to challenge and shift the ways

of the dominant culture, by showing and sustaining our ways of doing things, to re-create and reinforce our epistemologies (hooks, 2004, p. 153). Martin Nakata (2007) argues that standpoint theory connects to a method of inquiry, a process for making more intelligible “corpus of objectified knowledge about us” as it emerges and organises understandings of our lived realities. For this to happen “an Indigenous standpoint must be produced”, as Nakata states:

This is why we need a theory that as its first principle can generate accounts of communities of Indigenous people in contested knowledge spaces, that as its second principle afford agency to people, and that as its third principle acknowledges the every day tensions, complexities and ambiguities as the very conditions that produce the possibilities in the spaces between Indigenous and non-Indigenous position (Nakata, 2007, p. 217).

In our respective ways and according to the needs of our projects, we each use these three principles of complex knowing, limited but strategic agency, and the dynamics of tension and contradiction. We offer three case studies which explore the importance of where you chose to stand and how you respond to the nuances of the “call”.

Case study 1: Archaeological research in Ngarrindjeri Ruwe

As a Ngarrindjeri archaeologist working in Ngarrindjeri Ruwe (country), I (Wilson) must begin by referring to *Ngurunderi* our spiritual ancestor and creator as it is the premise for this research and the primary Ngarrindjeri creation knowledge from which I draw from in understanding Ruwe. In *Ngurunderi*'s creation journey, which I have adapted from the Ngarrindjeri nations' Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan (Ngarrindjeri Tendi, 2006), Pondi (the Giant Murray Cod) moves through the streams from the north creating the River Murray as he travels. *Ngurunderi* pursues his wives along this same path and sees Pondi near Mannum. *Ngurunderi* chases Pondi near Murrawong (Glen Lossie) and throws his spear further south which then becomes Long Island. In Murray Bridge near Pomberuk (Hume Reserve), Pondi is wounded and surges ahead. Towards the foot of the River near Lake Alexandrina, *Ngurunderi* catches Pondi and creates different species of fish. Several other components of the story are also significant for understanding the cultural landscape of the Lower Murray Lakes and Coorong, including *Ngurunderi*'s fight with a powerful sorcerer *Parampari*, his camping place along the Coorong, his continuous chase of his wives during which he makes the seas rise to drown them – after which they become the Pages Islands; and near Victor Harbour where he travels to

(Karta) Kangaroo Island and where he enters the spirit world – this is represented by the constellation of the Milky Way.

This creation journey has many relationships to palaeoenvironment and ecological knowledge that is known by Western science and therefore significant for my research. It shapes the way that I have undertaken archaeological surveys and excavations in community-identified areas that have been named by Ngarrindjeri elders and community members as “culturally significant”. The three places that I examine within my research are: Murrawong (Glen Lossie); Pomberuk (Hume Reserve); and, Swanport. Collectively, these sites tell a very important local story of change and continuity of occupation through the mid-late Holocene (ca. 6,000 years BP – present). Although the specific details of each site and the material excavated cannot be covered here, the most challenging part of this research will be interpreting the Lower Murray region as a Ngarrindjeri archaeologist, doubly responsible for “knowledge”, aware of the promise and limits of agency and sensitive to tensions and contradictions, as well as potential strategies of practice.

For example an important component of this research is the process of collaboration and negotiation between a “Western” institution and the Ngarrindjeri nation. It was developed in conjunction with Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority Inc (NRA) following previous work around the Lower Murray River Irrigation Project for which Australian Cultural Heritage Management (2005) undertook several cultural heritage surveys to identify archaeological sites of significance for Ngarrindjeri people. It is supported and part funded by the NRA who are formal “partners” in the training, research process and generation of “new” knowledge and thus follows the Ngarrindjeri policy on research practices. Collaborative research projects have been undertaken in the past, predominately related to postgraduate and staff research projects from Flinders University (Anderson, 1996; Baric, 2006; Harris, 1996; Hemming, 2000; Roberts, 2005; Wallis et al., 2006; Wilson, 2005; Wiltshire, 2006). As a result there are researchers attached to the NRA who are assisting in the broader management planning of the region. This approach to research management is crucial to the health of the project and its validity, and is a framework within the Ngarrindjeri community for which my project is situated. As a result I am also drawing on the work of others, particularly Hemming and Rigney (2008) in developing a Ngarrindjeri archaeological standpoint that has relevance to my position as an Indigenous person and archaeologist situated in a colonial discipline.

Perhaps, what is especially unique about this study is the position of the researcher, as a Ngarrindjeri person, archaeologist and academic. A point of “conflict” exists between the community (privileged position as an archaeologist) and the academy (heavily

underrepresented as a Ngarrindjeri/Indigenous person). Incorporating a “standpoint position” is therefore critical, but difficult within a positivist discipline such as archaeology. As a result and in addition to the approaches discussed so far, I have drawn upon “Native American” archaeologists (Atalay, 2007; Lippert & Spignesi, 2007; Watkins, 2000) and other Indigenous academics globally (Foley, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Smith, 1999) to develop a theoretical and methodological approach that does not exclude the importance of Ngarrindjeri knowledges in archaeology.

The Indigenous research agenda described by Smith (1999, pp. 116-117) best illustrates my approach to undertaking research within my own community, a framework I initially explored in my honours research (Wilson, 2005). Although my research specifically involved documenting the views and opinions of my elders in relation to the removal, repatriation and reburial of our old people through “discussions” or interviews, it was a transformative practice (see Wilson, 2007) that enabled me to earn my position as a researcher as well as a Ngarrindjeri community member. Strong standpoint and transformation go together in the process of “becoming” a Ngarrindjeri archaeologist (see Wilson, 2010). Smith’s “Indigenous Research Agenda” is about privileging Indigenous epistemologies and acknowledging that Indigenous researchers have a responsibility to ensure that research is conducted within a culturally appropriate paradigm. It ensures elders or senior leaders are consulted and negotiated with at every stage of the research where necessary and results are disseminated back to the community in a comprehensive manner. This approach considers complex issues of power imbalance and thus draws upon critical theory, post-colonial theory, standpoint theory and decolonisation of research practice by Indigenous researchers (Atalay, 2007; Langton, 1993; Lippert, 2005; Million, 2005; Nakata, 2007; Smith, 1999; Smith & Wobst, 2005; Watkins, 2000; Watson, 2002). Therefore, this research framework that I have adopted is situated within what is referred to as post-processual and interpretative archaeologies which reject a positivist view of science in an attempt to bring new meanings and understandings to the past (Johnson, 1999).

However, understanding and articulating the “Standpoint position” can be problematic within archaeology as my research largely uses quantitative methods to obtain information. According to Nakata (2007, p. 214) it is not enough for Indigenous researchers “to authorise themselves solely on the basis of their experience”. An Indigenous standpoint theory requires “bringing in accounts of relations that “knowers” located in more privileged social positions are not attentive to”. Further, Nakata (2007, p. 215) suggests that peoples lived experience at the cultural interface is the point of entry for investigation, not the

case under question. Incorporating the Indigenous standpoint position (Nakata, 2007) in research can become difficult for those engaging in a discipline that is bounded by scientific approaches like archaeology.

Foley (2003, p. 44) has highlighted the frustration experienced by many Indigenous postgraduate students who are “forced to accept Western ethnocentric research methodology that is culturally remote and often unacceptable to the Indigenous epistemological approach to knowledge”. As a result, many Indigenous scholars will draw upon critical theory, standpoint theory and insider-outsider theory in the deconstruction process with an overarching vision that there is more than one worldview or interpretation (see Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Smith, 1999). Insider-outsider theory is not traditionally used in archaeological research but has relevance here. This theory is “an approach used to justify mishaps in social science research and moves beyond the social base of insider doctrine (the elitist theory of white male Anglo-Europeans) to social solipsism” (Foley, 2003, p. 46). An underlying position which is similar to standpoint theory (see Smith, 1999; Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Huggins, 1995, 1998) is that research outcomes are enhanced if the “Indigenous” are researched by the “Indigenous”. Although this perspective is biased in a Western ideological sense, from an Indigenous perspective it is justified as Western discourse has already been proven to be discriminatory and ideologically controlled by Anglo-Europeans. If conducted ethically and carefully it is an antidote to solipsism.

As Foley (2003, p. 46) argues:

Outsider Theory supports the view that non-Indigenous Australia cannot and possibly will not understand the complexities of Indigenous Australians at the same level of empathy as an Indigenous Australian researcher can achieve.

It is here that my position as a Ngarrindjeri archaeologist is unique, compared with that of other doctoral students in archaeology within Australia as I am engaging in a broader social and political movement as well as a process of cultural education through and for my own community. This approach is not a unique experience when examined internationally. Jacobs-Huey (2002) for example provides a critically review of “native anthropology” and its implications for the construction of ethnographic knowledge. Drawing on the work of Geertz, Foucault, Minh-Ha and Said, Jacobs-Huey (2002) examines the problematics of positionality and “reflexive anthropology” and argues that “this approach is rooted in the premise that ethnographic fieldwork is an *intersubjective* process of various subjectivities (Jacobs-Huey, 2002, p. 1).

This multifaceted theoretical and ideological approach is fundamental to understanding archaeology within Ngarrindjeri community and cannot be ignored despite the “type” of archaeological research being conducted. In fact it has to be recognised as a powerful response to that “type”. From a Ngarrindjeri perspective, my role as the “insider” at the “cultural interface” is to understand the broader cultural, social, political and spiritual aspects of the community and how these things are related to the research process. It is equally important to develop a holistic approach to interpreting the past which does not only rely on supposedly “objective” quantitative archaeological evidence but also depends on contemporary understandings of the past by Ngarrindjeri people. Within this framework archaeological, palaeoenvironmental and geological data are also complemented with Ngarrindjeri knowledge which has either been directly taught to the researcher or gained through other records such as “ethnographic”, historical and genealogical records.

The work of Indigenous archaeologists beyond the Australian context is invaluable as it provides alternative ways of doing and theorising within the discipline. Although the methods and techniques may not necessarily change for an “Indigenous archaeologist”, the ways in which an “Indigenous archaeologist” approaches the research, engages in the research process and interprets the material will be different and/or influenced by Indigenous epistemologies and this reconceptualised research in practice and published outcome. For example, the methods and techniques applied in the field (i.e., survey and excavation) and during lab processing (i.e., sorting and identification of archaeological materials) are standard practice, the processes in which I have engaged as an Ngarrindjeri person/archaeologist working within my own community have been shaped by community negotiation and consultation, discussions with Ngarrindjeri elders during meetings and fieldwork and my experiences reading the “ethnographic” sources. This has resulted in a redefinition of the “role” and “responsibility” whose working on Indigenous sites. The fundamental difference is that I have an additional level of responsibility to my community to behave and engage within the community as according to Ngarrindjeri cultural beliefs and thus be expected to adhere to the same consequences as any other Ngarrindjeri person regardless of my “privileged” position as an archaeologist. My discipline therefore challenged by my adoption of a Ngarrindjeri archaeological standpoint, to rethink its responsibility and duty of professional care to me as one of its members. This means rethinking ideas about research and its conduct, as well.

■ Case study 2: Talking straight out – Anangu standpoint

Us Kungka, we are always talking strong. Never stop talking. Always thinking about the future generations, black and white (Alapatja, 2005, p. 3).

How are Indigenous students, academics and researchers in the disciplines to navigate the complexities of Indigenous experience within such contested spaces? (Nakata, 2007, p. 213).

The book *Talking Straight Out Stories from the Irati Wanti Campaign* (2005) demonstrates the importance of privileging the voices of the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta, the Aboriginal women of Cooper Pedy, South Australia who hold knowledge and strongly remind us of the political activism and the strength of caring for our country and stories. This provides constant motivation to how I (Tur) engage in my research. In considering the words of the women “never stop talking” I turn to Nakata’s (2007) postulation of the complexities involved in Indigenous research and contested spaces. These contested spaces within research challenge me as an Anangu (Western Desert Aboriginal person north-west South Australia) to establish myself and my work at what Nakata names as the “cultural interface” (2007, p. 215), as an entry point for discussions about theory and practice between myself, the community, and educational sites. Having an Indigenous standpoint which is complex, strategic and dynamic gives me a way to enter into engagement with Anangu knowledge, from a sovereign position. This opens the opportunity for critique and analysis of the experiences of Indigenous people, by Indigenous people about our lives and our realities. Nakata’s articulation is supported by Smith (2008, p. 137) who states that actively seeking engagement within Indigenous communities offers alternative ways of seeing, to live with and in the world. My research commitments involves the process of exploring the application of Anangu philosophy Ngapartji Ngapartji which means to reciprocate, to give and take for the mutual benefit of those engaging in a shared activity. Ngapartji Ngapartji, Big hART’s Project (2010). Ngapartji Ngapartji, as cultural affirming process, guides my research project and secures my standpoint.

This position allows me to examine the question: is this philosophy transferable as a transformative practice within educational sites for the benefit of Anangu people? Anangu people understand and perform reciprocation within a specific cultural context, which can extend from the social setting of community, kinship structures and, relationships to engagement with other individuals who may be Indigenous or not. From an Anangu perspective this opens Ngapartji Ngapartji to enactment within educational sites. I am

encouraged to take this position by Smith (2008, p. 12) who insightfully tells us that for Indigenous and other marginalised groups there is a requirement of critical sensitivity and reciprocity of spirit by the researcher. The significance of critical sensitivity as it applies to my standpoint position when exploring Anangu cultural concepts caution me to look for the nuances and the danger that is involved when undertaking research within my own community (Smith, 2008, p. 113). I have to stand firm and feel free to move.

Understanding the nuances and danger highlights a central feature which makes up Ngapartji Ngapartji: The responsibility which comes with the act of reciprocation. This can also be problematic and risky when responsibility is not or can not be enacted. This consideration is significant for educational sites and the research process, as knowledge production is the core activity of this site and part of the intellectual process is the “making” of experts who lead their discipline areas. If knowledge responsibility is part of Ngapartji Ngapartji, can powerful sites of knowledge, such as universities and Anangu communities reach mutual understanding?

■ Subject position: *puliri*/granddaughter/learner/teacher

We are the Aboriginal women. Yankunytjatjara, Antikarinya and Kokatha ... We know the country ... (Alapatja, 2005, p. 12)

I cannot imagine the process of research without investigating my own subject position. There are sound historical, cultural as well as intellectual reasons and precedents for this. I was born and nurtured into a particular social and cultural context: my Anangueness informs my interaction within the Yankunytjatjara community and Australia as a First Nations person. Through intergenerational teachings my mother’s sharing of her resistance stories showed me ways in which oral teachings provide narratives and a historical record of survival within a colonised context. Hearing these stories and the activism of the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta shapes my subject position and radical standpoint. So as I position myself, I am positioned and will position the next generation this talks to the philosophy of Ngapartji Ngapartji and this connection leads to broader and deeper understanding of intersubjectivity. My subject and radical standpoint positions require me as an academic and community member to engage in struggle as right-based activism, and to see research as relevant to this practice and context. Smith’s (2008) articulation of the importance of “*becoming*” a community of Indigenous researchers outlines for me the responsibilities that are located within politics of location (hooks, 2004). Smith throws down the gauntlet to Indigenous scholars who desire transformative research practices that it must

happen through: capacity building; developing and mentoring researchers to create the spaces to support new approaches to research; and new examinations of Indigenous knowledges (2008, p. 122). In this paper we as Indigenous researchers undertake this process.

My process of “becoming” an Anangu researcher calls for the acknowledgment of the multiple subjectivities that is embedded within my Anangueness. Norma Alarcon (1990) comments on this state of “multiple subjectiveness”, when referring to Gloria Anzaldúa’s question “What am I?” (p. 365). The need to assign multiple registers of existence is an effect of the belief that knowledge of one’s own subjectivity cannot be arrived at through a single discursive “theme”:

Indeed, the multiple-voiced subjectivity lives in resistance to competing notions for one’s allegiance or self-identification. It is a process of disidentification (Alarcon, 1990, p. 366).

This multiple identification is reflected in my journey where I was able to take the contested space of the university to decolonise, affirm, discover, re-discover, invent and re-invent the complexity of “me” the [“othered”] subject but [“desirable”] object of research. Minh-Ha reflects on the relationship between subject and object, where she voices this complex association:

The moment the insider steps out from the inside she’s no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out (Minh-Ha, 1990, p. 374).

These words echo in my thoughts as I engage in the process of research. What is apparent from Minh-Ha’s analysis is that the space of object and subject is ever shifting – ever changing, and that the apparently hard binary of subject/object position can be blurred, distinct, and one and the same. She states “Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both not quite insider and not quite outsider” (Minh-Ha, 1990, p. 375). This is further reinforced by Kaomea, native Hawaiian academic (2001, p. 171), who voices the complex shifting relationships experienced by Indigenous academics/researchers when commencing research with their own community and supports Smith’s (2008), thinking on research as bordering on dangerous. In this context I therefore, tread carefully, drawing selectively from the skills of Western research and remain grounded within an Indigenous/Anangu research epistemology, subjectivity and standpoint. I revisit and remember the words of the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta and uphold their standpoint:

We know what we are doing and what we are trying to do is very important. We don’t want the culture to die. We want to give strength to the land and also strength to ourselves, to our children and grandchildren ... and we know that our Aboriginal culture is very important, not just Anangu but for our beautiful country Australia. (Alapalatja, 2005, p. 6).

■ Case study 3: Rappin theory

I (Blanch) acknowledge the spaces that I live, work and move through is Kurna country, I am a Yidnji/MBarbaram woman from the rainforest country of the Atherton Tablelands, North Queensland. I follow the protocols of acknowledgement of “country”, because it sustains and reminds me that I am a welcomed visitor to this place and, in visiting am expected to give back to my hosts, the Kurna people. Indigenous academic Karen Martin (2008) highlights this protocol in her undertaking research outside of her “country”. She recognised her role as an “outsider” from the community and regardless of her Aboriginality, is respectful of the protocols set down by elders (p. 33). Comparable to Martin’s approach, I also traverse various locations embodying multiple identities. This informs my standpoint position which encompasses cultural protocols, ethical practices, reflection and reciprocation to challenge contested spaces to bring the marginalised to the centre (hooks, 2004). To move between countries and generation, in my response to the “call”, I need to know where I stand in theory and practice.

This process of reflection turned into action comes to the heart of my standpoint position about the politics of location and voice (hooks, 2004). As an Indigenous woman and educator, having long-standing experiences within educational institutions my research interests have come to reflect my passions, desires and concerns. Specifically, I have looked to those spaces where Indigenous representation remains denied or denigrated and particularly so with the positioning of young Nunga male youth (Blanch, 2009). To show how, I return to the beginning of the paper and to the full version of De La Tierra’s quote: and add in the missing words:

We need to remember that our presences exist within an institutional system that is not designed in our favor, and that our part in the system is prescribed. Still we are not powerless. As students we are learning a discipline and a code of behavior, a language that puts us at another level ... we are in positions to create change, student by student, to be mentors, to select materials and teaching methods, to actively participate in and affect the discourse of academia ... we can be subversive within the system ... we

have to remember we have the right to be here
(De La Tierra, 2002, p. 368).

It is this generation of learners that my research seeks to engage. I look for an accessible way for them to understand and respond to the “call” and try to provide education possibilities and transformative practice through turning interests in rap into a rapping methodology that take in identity, community and, the politics of their daily lives. I draw from my Masters thesis (Blanch, 2009) to provide a pedagogical method that can work towards understanding and connect the “lived” experiences of young Aboriginal people within the schooling terrain. Using the concept of popular culture, rap and hip hop I explore the development of a methodology which creates a space for young Nunga males to have a “voice” and thus “voice” their stories in their own time and way within secondary schooling. The research focuses on power, knowledge and Nunga participation to go beyond stereotypical responses to identity construction. This process of bringing “voice” to space and time supports hooks in her desire “to confront the silence to incorporate the multiple voices that make one who we are” (hooks, 2004, p. 154). The research theorised and actualised concepts of space, embodiment, and empowerment in ways that contributed to wellbeing, community strength and possible curriculum development. They come together in the metaphor of the Nunga Room, space within in a space, a secure place and focus for change (Blanch & Worby, 2010). From this sustaining and disruptive site I stand by the thesis that:

The cultural capital that young Nunga males bring to the classroom schooling environment must be acknowledged to enable performance of agency ... [that] privileges their understanding and desire for change and encourages to apply strategies that contribute to their own journeys to home to time-space pathways that are (at least in part) of their own choosing (Blanch, 2009, p. iv).

■ Context to the research

Research was undertaken with young Nunga males in a secondary schooling site in Adelaide, South Australia and underlined the ways that schools are one of the mechanism through which values and relations are “normalised” (Apple, 1996, p. 6) and inform the way one is expected to behave in interactions with the wider world (Webb et al., 2005, p. 105). In challenging this process of normalisation my research sought alternative ways to provide opportunity for young Nunga males values and worldviews to be privileged.

I chose the popular culture of African American rap and hip hop understanding that its global phenomena touched the lives of young Indigenous Australians as well as other young Black men throughout the world (Blanch, 2009; Dyson, 2004; Mitchell, 2003). Using the concept of rapping as a methodological tool, meant that as an Indigenous researcher, mother, teacher, community member I grounded my own understanding of the process within the protocols and framework of Indigenous epistemology and ontology (Wilson, 2008, p. 7) as well as popular culture. This enabled a transformative process which challenged the Western ways of research, and moved beyond the “outsider” research to “insider” and “border crossing” research. The process was innovative and creative, allowing for reflection and it provided a safe space for the voices of young Nunga males in secondary schooling to “talk/rap” in the ways that connected with standpoint, agency, youth, masculinity, blackness and institutionalisation and encouraged the articulation of identity, personal narratives and storytelling.

To demonstrate that raps can be used in the processes of analysis, narrative and explanation I also engaged in the methodological innovation of rapping to demonstrate ideas, worldviews, voice and resistance to provide a framework to enact transformation. Echoing the words of De La Tierra (2002, p. 368) in which she talks about “remembering that we are in positions to create change and can be subversive within education, that we are not powerless, I took up the challenge and rapped an alternative way for engagement. Rapping my thesis highlighted that there is true possibilities in the concept of a rapping theory:

hold ya head up its tuff ruff
ya know your stuff
bluff if ya need to
cruise smooth the process, progress
our presence no invitation citation quotation
equate
yourself to the discourses, for courses, resources
subjected objected rejected corrected at every turn
language manage codes of behaviour
save your self my self
students of life get a slice of selective reflective
materials
place of raw desperation participation in
positions of power
systematically categorically denied existence
insistence on
our right our fight no fright we can be subversive
coercive
within places spaces faces traces of ourselves
here and now
write the words, describe, prescribe, arrive,
create change
remember you me them us we have the right to
be here

In my view the approach I have taken to rapping methodology is broadly Indigenist and I added a dimension of innovation with form and process to ideas on Indigenist research by offering rap as a subjective, reflexive research practice (Blanch, 2009, p. 41).

■ Conclusion

In this paper we have demonstrated how three Indigenous researchers working in three different community contexts within South Australia have drawn on various methodologies, and theoretical frameworks to articulate our standpoints. Ngarrindjeri archaeologist Chris Wilson's Ngarrindjeri archaeological standpoint examines the complex relationship between undertaking archaeological research within Ngarrindjeri Ruwe, similarly, Anangu educator Simone Ulalka Tur highlights the complexities of dealing with and through multiple subjectivities and the possibilities for successful negotiation drawing from Indigenous philosophy within the community and research context. Both researchers are working within and for their own communities, which fits within a broader social, cultural and political agenda. Faye Rosas Blanch's research demonstrates how someone working outside of community but within an understood network of connection, can navigate the research space to challenge normalised research conventions and create alternative methodology. All the researchers have drawn on Indigenous standpoints as an entry point to further development of their own research methodology. Overall this paper has been written in the spirit of collegiality; trust, respect, and care with a desire to respond to the call for transformative change and thus empower Indigenous communities are from and undertake our research.

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