Living Well in a World Worth Living in for All

Kristin Elaine Reimer · Mervi Kaukko ·
Sally Windsor · Kathleen Mahon · Stephen Kemmis
Editors

Living Well in a World Worth Living in for All

Volume 1: Current Practices of Social Justice, Sustainability and Wellbeing

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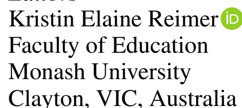
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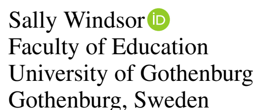
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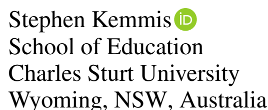
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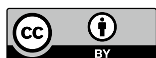

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Preface

This is the first of two volumes that seek to explore the critical question for our era: ‘What, for our times, does it mean to live well in a world worth living in for all?’

This question conveys the essence of the work of the Pedagogy, Education and Praxis (PEP) international research network. Stephen Kemmis, one of the founders of PEP, brought this important question to life when he proposed that the double purpose of education is *to help people live well in a world worth living in for all.*

Since 2006, PEP has joined educational researchers from across different intellectual traditions, different languages and different geographical locations to explore what ‘good’ education means and how researchers, educators and practitioners can work to bring that *world worth living in for all* into reality.

The *World Worth Living In* project, across the two volumes, connects 30 individual studies—focused on praxis, well-being, social justice and sustainability—conducted by researchers in six countries, all of whom are associated with the PEP network. In each study, researchers listen deeply to a range of individuals and collectives as they respond to the above question, ensuring that understandings of ‘living well’ and ‘a world worth living in for all’ genuinely reflect diversity both within and across nations. With the COVID-19 pandemic re-configuring priorities and practices, and with well-being and sustainability increasingly recognised as critical for our global existence, this project is both urgent and timely.

The two volumes focus on the following three questions:

- What does it mean to live well?
- What is a world worth living in for all?
- What, for our times, does it mean to live well in a world worth living in for all?

This first volume focuses on people’s current experiences within the world: How is education enabling or constraining people to live well and to bring into reality a world worth living in for all?

The second volume focuses on the future: What can we learn so that we can create change in educational policy and practice in order to enact praxis?

The volumes will be accompanied by a multimedia component. Please find more about the World Worth Living In Project—including short films and podcast

episodes—at https://www.monash.edu/education/wwli. Join the conversation and help move us toward a better future where education consistently helps us live well and helps us create a world worth living in for all.

Clayton, Australia — Kristin Elaine Reimer
Tampere, Finland — Mervi Kaukko
Gothenburg, Sweden — Sally Windsor
Borås, Sweden/Brisbane, Australia — Kathleen Mahon
Wyoming, Australia — Stephen Kemmis

Acknowledgments

This volume is only possible thanks to the sustained commitment and full-hearted work of the members of the PEP international research network and their colleagues. We value their support in the initiation and realisation of this project.

We also wish to acknowledge the voices and perspectives of a vast range of people and communities who have allowed us to listen to them in this volume. In listening for the answers to the question 'What, for our times, does it mean to live well in a world worth living in for all?', we acknowledge the voices and wisdom of:

- Aboriginal leaders in Australia;
- Young people in Australian schools;
- Teachers in Swedish-speaking schools in rural Finland;
- Leaders in Steiner schools in Australia;
- Australian Aboriginal youth;
- International university students in Sweden;
- Asylum-seeking students in Australia;
- Refugee youth in Finland, Norway and Scotland;
- Families with children who tube-feed in Australia;
- Climate activists in Finland.

Thank you for helping us think through—and act into being—a world worth living in for all.

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Chapter 6
The Sand Through My Fingers: Finding Aboriginal Cultural Voice, Identity and Agency on Country

Christine Edwards-Groves

Abstract Concerns about supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their potential endure in contemporary Australian education and society. Moreover, supporting these Aboriginal learners to have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual and physical wellbeing was identified as a key goal of the "Alice Springs (*Mparntwe*) Education Declaration". This declaration sets out the national vision for education and the commitment of Australian Governments to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal peoples across Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019). This is a critical responsibility for the practices of Australian educators, policymakers and researchers alike. This chapter presents a unique *on-Country* approach to research with young Aboriginal people seeking to understand what a world worth living in means to them as individuals and for the communities they live in. The approach involved multimodal research methods that included poetry composition and photography, as media that revealed their Aboriginal youth voices, cultural sensitivities, identity and agency. For these young Aboriginal people, sitting on their own Country with sand from their Wiradjuri land sifting through their fingers, their words and images emerged as powerful resources for connecting to culture and to self as their Aboriginal identities flourished despite previously being demeaned by racism, ignorance, injustice and inequity. The poetry and photographs produced by these young Aboriginal males serve as a window into how cultural voice and vision expose ways identity and agency are socially-culturally-politically configured—both in their production and deployment. Their words and images demonstrate the kind of resilience needed for these Aboriginal youth to take their place in the world—one that they, too, see as worth living in.

Keywords Creative methodology · Cultural identity · Indigenous · Photointerviews · Youth voice · Multimodal research · Practice architectures · Praxis

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Introduction

On my Country, I sit
The sand trickles through my fingers teaching me
to look, to learn, to listen, to think, to accept my difference
Jimmy (14 Years, Wiradjuri man)

Sitting on one of the logs encircling the Bora ground where Jimmy[1] led me as part of our *walk and talk* to discuss his learning experiences at school, he reached down and scooped up a handful of sand and watched it slowly sift through his fingers like sand through an hourglass. We were silent for a while as Jimmy, then me, repeated the action first with one hand and then with both. All the while Jimmy occasionally looked up and gazed across the Bora ring[2] past the totem and through the cypress pines into the distance, sometimes glancing at me and my growing pile of sand, comparing it to his. Jimmy was first to break the silence with the words "ya learn lots out here Aunt, not talkin', just listening to the birds and stuff." Jimmy called me Aunt this day (a profound sign of respect among Aboriginal people), reminding me of a previous conversation we had had with the other boys, when Adrian asked me "You Aboriginal Miss?", to which I replied "No, I'm not." I was challenged and also deeply saddened (as a teacher) by Adrian's response: "But *you're* listening to *us.*" … "Usually only Aboriginal people take any notice of *me* and what *I* have to say."

I am not Aboriginal. I am a White Anglo-Celtic woman who grew up in rural New South Wales Australia with Aboriginal people as my relations, my neighbours, my best friends, my school peers and after entering the education profession, my colleagues and inspiration to be a better teacher. In their own way, each of these Aboriginal people taught me cultural humility, and the importance of recognising cultural bias and my own latent white privilege. Learning to listen openly and dialogically is a matter of ethics, and critical since it was only in 2017, in the *Uluru statement from the heart,* that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples collectively and representatively sought to speak, be listened to and be heard (National Constitutional Convention, 2017). Now as an educational researcher I continue the search for becoming a better teacher and researcher as the educational world grapples with the shifting sands of uncertainty concerning what living well in a world worth living in means—especially for Australian Aboriginal youth.

In this chapter, I explore ways a praxis-orientation informs research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners and what this means for enabling, legitimising

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[1] All names in the chapter are pseudonyms to preserve anonymity in line with research ethics protocols.

[2] The Bora ground (or known as the Bora ring by Tirkandi Inaburra participants) is cleared land designed as an *Aboriginal ceremonial place.* These grounds are important cultural spaces where initiation and celebration ceremonies are performed and are often used as meeting places among Aboriginal people or tribes. A Bora ground most commonly consists of two circles marked by raised earth banks and connected by a pathway. One of the rings would have been for everyone—uninitiated men, women and children (for more details see www.aboriginalheritage.org/sites/identification/).

and centralising cultural voice, identity and agency among Aboriginal youth. The chapter focuses on my own experience as an educational researcher with Aboriginal[3] males at risk of entering the juvenile justice system, and shaped by the words from the extract from 14-year-old Jimmy's poem called *Sand Through My Fingers* (presented in full later in the chapter). The chapter aims to draw out two main points: first, to consider what is at stake in education for Australian Aboriginal students through a fresh analysis of research data about schooling gathered in a two-year ethnographic study listening to Aboriginal youth voices and visions; and, second, to consider research methods with vulnerable and marginalised Aboriginal people (here, adolescent Aboriginal males encountering the oppressive structures of institutions such as Western education and the juvenile justice system) and the connection to a taking praxis-oriented stance in educational research.

The chapter returns to previous research studying the perspectives and experiences of school of male Aboriginal youth (see article published with Wiradjuri Elder Colleen Murray: Edwards-Groves with Murray, 2008). I come back to this study (its methods and findings) with a renewed sense of urgency as concerns about supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their potential endure in contemporary Australian education and society. In Australia, supporting Aboriginal learners to have a strong sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enable them to manage their emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual, and physical wellbeing was identified as a key goal of the Alice Springs (*Mparntwe*) Education Declaration (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019, p.16). This is a critical remit for the practices of Australian educators, policymakers and researchers alike. As Keddie (2012, pp. 329–330) noted:

> Creating culturally inclusive schooling environments for Indigenous students is a fraught and difficult task for educators. Dominant practice continues to deploy cultural reductionism where Indigeneity tends to either be unproblematically celebrated and exalted or denigrated and inferiorised against a white middle class normative frame. The urgency of creating more productive and sophisticated strategies for addressing issues of cultural recognition is clear in the enduring disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples.

Although public and educational policy[4] over the years have made varying attempts to redress lower levels of engagement and success of Aboriginal students (compared with all students) in school and in society, issues concerning the voice, identity and agency of young Indigenous people remain as challenges, and even

[3] In this chapter, after seeking advice from Wiradjuri woman Sue Green and Barkindji woman Deb Evans, I use the term *Aboriginal* to refer to the First Nations or Indigenous youth participants in the research. This is the term the Aboriginal youth participants used to refer to themselves. I acknowledge that in current contexts across the globe there is a shift towards using 'First Nations Peoples of Australia and the Torres Strait' or 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' in mainstream social, political, educational, and cultural policy, and research literature.

[4] See for example, Closing the Gap (Council of Australian Governments, 2008; Commonwealth of Australia, 2018); The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy (Education Council, 2015); The Alice Springs (*Mparntwe,* pronounced M-ban tua) Education Declaration (2019).

barriers, for participatory equity in schooling. This includes the challenges of Aboriginal youths' participation in research about matters that directly concern them—their heritage, their education and their futures.

It is not the intention here to review the extensive body of literature advocating or critiquing particular pedagogies or policies for the improvement of the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. Rather, the intention is to draw attention to ways the youth-centred, socially and culturally-responsive research methods (Edwards-Groves & Murray, 2008; Hayton, 2020; Obamehinti, 2010) used in the study facilitated and supported youth participation, where eliciting the voices of these particular Aboriginal people in the research project was valued and prioritised. As Maguire (2005, p. 3) said, young people

> … have good social radar for assessing the situations and contexts in which they find themselves. Thus children's perspectives and voices are important signifiers of their conceptualisations of the situatedness of their learning, their interests, needs and perceptions.

Attention to youth voice is not new (Cook-Sather, 2002; Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2008; Fielding, 2004; Fielding & Bragg, 2003; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2003; Macfarlane, 2004), but in this chapter I shift the focus to what this means for Aboriginal youth. A key purpose is to offer a renewed understanding of the critical importance of listening to and responding to Aboriginal voices as portrayed through the creative media—poetry and photography—employed in this study. In this study, the visual and written modes are anchored in both expressive and receptive modes of communicating (Thomson, 2008). What this multimodality means for the development, conduct and dissemination of the research presented in this chapter, forms an integral touchpoint for making sense of the artefacts—the images and poems—created by the Aboriginal youth participants themselves. Critical in research conducted with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, is the matter of ethics involving the negotiation and consultation processes for explicitly preserving Aboriginal knowledge, ownership, cultural integrity, individual agency and autonomy (Barney, 2013; Harrison, 2003; Keddie, 2012; Philip & Trudgett, 2014). In this study, this meant repositioning the youth participants to be the authority of their own experience rather than have them lose their voice to the researcher (Harrison, 2003).

Creative media of poetry composition and photography were employed as participatory practices in the study with the intention to elicit the perspectives and experiences of schooling among the group of young Aboriginal males. The reciprocity between the processes and outcomes of these methods (described subsequently) is highlighted in researcher-participant conversations provoked by, and generative of, these creative media. The multimodal approach positioned the young Aboriginal people as the generators of information, the composers of creative texts and the drivers of conversations. As producers and co-producers of knowledge their voices and visions, cultural sensitivities, identity and agency were privileged, resulting in their creative responses informing understandings about what a world worth living in means to them as individuals and for the communities they live in. For these young

people, this meant understanding their self-worth, self-awareness, culture, personal identity and agency that influences their everyday lives.

The chapter begins with a position statement related to culture and practice; this is followed by a brief overview of the initial study. The next section describes in detail three multimodal creative research practices used in the research: *photointerviews*, the *walk-and-talk* and the poetry composition strategy *think-me-a-poem.* Empirical examples are provided as exemplars of the data gathered in the study. The ideas about multimodality as an intergenerational intercultural bridge are then discussed in relation to conducting youth-centred, culturally site-responsive research as accounting for contemporary textual practices of todays' youth. Following this is a brief section on praxis-oriented research, which foregrounds the conclusions for the chapter that propose the research methods used in this study, and described in this chapter, emerged as a positive formative and transformative practice. The final word is expressed in the poetry of 12-year-old Aboriginal male, Adrian.

Culture as Practice: Prefatory Remarks

In a chapter presenting research with Aboriginal youth, care must be given to address the predicament of culture (Clifford, 1988), that is to consider the understanding and use of the term *culture*. This caution is particularly important since its prevalence in much educational professional and research literature represents the term as a noun; that is, more narrowly and statically "as synonymous with *ambience*, *climate* or *spirit*" (Brice Heath & Street, 2008, p. 7). Rather the standpoint taken in this chapter is a more dynamic anthropological view that "culture never just 'is', but instead 'does'" (Thornton, 1988, p. 26; Philip & Trudgett, 2014). Therefore, as a preliminary consideration I turn to Street's (1993) proposal that culture be treated as a verb rather than as a noun which reflects overtones of culture and so cultural identity, as being a fixed thing. Instead, Street's "idea of *culture-as-verb*" (Brice Heath & Street, 2008, p. 7) takes as axiomatic the notion that culture as practice—and its associated discourses, activities and interactions—is living, dynamic and moving.

This position aligns closely with the principles of the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014) that insists that practices are comprised of what *happens* in places at particular historical times (then and now) through sayings, doings and relatings amid influential conditions delineated as cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements. The term"culture" figures prominently in the theory of practice architectures in its consideration of ways *cultural-discursive* arrangements are formative influential conditions that shape how practices happen in the everyday. On this view, culture unfolds in practices, that is, the sayings, doings and relatings that happen in every day-to-day activity and experience of people. Culture (in languages, objects, activities and interpersonal and environmental relational architectures) is deeply rooted in history, since practices in their making (their

happeningness then and there at any given time) are always prefigured by practices of the past.

Background: The Study

The initial two-year ethnographic study examined the perceptions and experiences of school by male Aboriginal youth *at risk*[5] of entering the juvenile justice system. The youths, aged between 12 and 16 years, were from inland rural communities in New South Wales (NSW) Australia, and attended the short-term residential centre Tirkandi Inaburra[6] Cultural and Development Centre (Tirkandi). With family and community support, Tirkandi participants come voluntarily to the centre. Each participant generally comes with complex family histories and often has experienced exposure to violence, death, abuse, poverty, and drug and alcohol addiction (through personal experience as victims or as witnesses).

Tirkandi was established in 2006 on a culturally relevant site at Coleambally in the Riverina region of NSW as an intervention initiative of local Wiradjuri Elders for Aboriginal youth who show potential for educational and post-school success but are at risk of entering the criminal justice system. At the time, the development of Tirkandi was supported by local Elders, the NSW Attorney General's Department, the NSW Department of Education and NSW Health as a response to the 10-year review of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody (launched in 1987), the statistically significant increase of youth suicide among males, and the documented over-representation of Aboriginal males in the criminal justice system. It was designed to provide at risk Aboriginal adolescent males with an opportunity to participate in strengths-based culturally appropriate educational, cultural, social and personal programmes. Local Aboriginal Elders, along with other members of community, are involved as *teachers* in developing and implementing Tirkandi's programmes, and regular on-site schooling is provided with classroom teachers through the NSW Department of Education and Training. At the time of the study, after "graduation" the young people return to their communities and mainstream school with an exit support programme relying on local Elders, a school sponsor and a community mentor.

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[5] Long before the inception of Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre, local Wiradjuri Elders and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members were concerned about the high numbers of local Aboriginal male youth in their communities participating in or witnessing risky or criminal behaviours—these young people were considered at risk of entering the justice system. It was considered that many of these young people had potential to 'turn their lives around' if some form of cultural and educational intervention was designed as an opportunity for those young people and their families to participate in such a program. The impetus for the program at Tirkandi Inaburra Culture and Development Centre (opened in 2006) was driven and co-designed by local Wiradjuri Elders.

[6] The name *Tirkandi Inaburra* means "to learn to dream" in the Wiradjuri language.

The Project Design

The initial project design (including data collection, time schedules and analytic approaches), was developed in consultation with Wiradjuri Elder Colleen Murray (also the Centre Manager of Tirkandi at the time). Any variations to the approved processes were negotiated with Colleen Murray and the Aboriginal youth (Tirkandi) participants. Ethics approval was sought and provided by Charles Sturt University in March 2006. An important consideration in this study was the preservation of Aboriginal youth knowledge that was written and articulated through their words (poetry and interview responses); this was prioritised at all stages of the research process (Barney, 2013; Philip & Trudgett, 2014). All data (poetry, interview transcripts and photographs) remained the property of Tirkandi and each respective Aboriginal youth participant and was used with permission. Any manuscripts and presentations for dissemination were negotiated, discussed and confirmed with Tirkandi (Colleen and the participants).[7]

Conducting research *on* people is a common criticism dominating much research involving the young, marginalised and Indigenous people across the world (Brice Heath & Street, 2008). Thus, reinterpreting the value of youth-centred research methods for prioritising participant youth voice and participation is critical in an attempt to diminish generational, social and cultural barriers. This requires deliberate moves to shift the power balance by "respond[ing] to the enduring concern for youth to be more participative in the educational, research and policy decisions that govern the places in which they spend their young lives" (Groundwater-Smith, 2017, p. 119), particularly in research conducted with more vulnerable peoples. With young people, this can be accomplished through the careful and strategic use of creative contemporary methods that intend to "invest them with greater agency" (Rudduck et al., 1996), but at the same time "resist the constant pull for 'tokenism', 'faddism' or 'manipulative incorporation'" (Fielding, 2004, p. 296). Such moves have twofold benefits—affording possibilities for enabling and illuminating participant voice in transformative ways, and enabling ethically-considered orientations towards praxis in educational research (Fielding, 2004; Groundwater-Smith, 2017). Furthermore, encouraging voluntary participation through the deliberative employment of youth-centred approaches to data generation, counters and supports the resolution of ethical issues such as harm, power, coercion and a compromised sense of agency (Barney, 2013; Brice Heath & Street, 2008).

[7] Note, as part of the ethical compliance, consultation was sought with Aboriginal colleagues and family members about aspects of Aboriginal cultural referred to in the writing; drafts were shared and feedback accommodated in revised drafts.

Securing Aboriginal Youth Participation Through Multimodal Data Sources

Creative multimodal research methods, described in the next section, were employed to provide contemporary, socially acceptable and appropriate approaches for promoting youth appeal, and the currency necessary for securing and maintaining youth engagement in the research (Rainford, 2020). Using poetry and prose as important tools for elevating the voices of vulnerable Aboriginal peoples was reported by Keddie (2012), whose case study of girls and women (aged 12–28 years, mostly identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander) at Gamarada High School (Australia) found creative media provided a platform for diverse and marginalised Aboriginal people to respond to hierarchies and asymmetries of power. In her study, Keddie (2012, p. 10) showed the potential of poetry and prose as transformative media for individuals to account for personal experiences of domination and subservience. Responding to oppressive hierarchies through their words positively promoted the girls' cultural integrity, agency and autonomy (Keddie, 2012).

In another example, Hayton's (2020) ethnographic research investigating youth perspectives and experiences of cyberbullying sought to disrupt participatory barriers for research involving youth from a diverse range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds—including migrant, Anglo-Saxon and Aboriginal youth from rural and urban settings. In her study, Hayton found that as well as more typical use of focus groups and interviews, the use of contemporary socially-relevant communicative "multimodal" methods such as blogging, Facebooking©, videoing, texting, messaging and narrative writing to "share and rewrite their stories of cyberbullying" shifted the power balance towards the youth participants. As she found, these youth-centred youth-driven approaches emerged as important participatory and agentic methods which also provided both formational and transformational outcomes for those involved since the research was conducted *with* and *by* the participants rather than *on* them.

In 3-year longitudinal collective case studies of immigrant children, Compton-Lilly et al. (2017) drew on a range of multimodal data sources including observations, spoken data and student-created artefacts (e.g., writing samples, maps, photographs, drawings) to explore identity construction. Their cases revealed intersectional networks of identity negotiation that entailed positionings relative to various dimensions of self, including language, gender, technological practices, nationality and race. As Compton-Lilly et al. (2017) concluded, multimodal approaches to data gathering and analysis facilitate new possibilities for attending to the identity negotiations on the part of young learners from different cultural backgrounds in ways that revealed sophisticated, agential and strategic identity negotiations. Multimodal data sources, explained next, formed an integral part of the study presented in this chapter.

Data Collection as Multimodal On-Country[8] Site-Responsive Practice

The approach developed in the study was culturally site-responsive research which recognised culture and Country as central to the research process, and used the cultural standpoint of the researched as a framework for research design, data collection and data interpretation (Obamehinti, 2010). This also meant considering social (including generational and gender implications) and cultural background in terms of the contemporary social positioning of the participants (Ober & Bat, 2007)– that is, that these Aboriginal people were adolescent youth familiar with and immersed in Western schooling, social technologies and contemporary popular culture (including sport, art and music). Importantly the recursiveness of the research process (frequent visits[9] over the 2-year period), participant agency in the form of young adolescent males taking photographs of their choosing and the conduct of focus groups stimulated by these photographs was an important way not to single out individual students, something about which Aboriginal students are reported to be particularly sensitive (Russell, 1999). In this study, after time, some participants were comfortable to lead a *walk-and-talk* conversation on-Country[10] with the researcher.

Over the 2-year course of the ethnography, a range of qualitative data-gathering methods were employed involving 17 Aboriginal male youth (aged 12–15 years) participants. These data included participant-generated photographs that informed audio-recorded semi-structured focus group *photointerviews* (also described as photovoice or photo-elicitation interviews); co-produced poetry (processes described subsequently); video-recorded classroom lesson observations, leisure activities and cultural programmes; anecdotal field notes recording informal *walk-and-talk* conversations and discussions with participants during researcher observations of classroom lessons; and interviews with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal classroom teachers. The data sources formed multiple modes of communicating participant meanings including oral, written and visual media, creating varying and widened the semantic scope for intersubjective meaning-making.

[8] The use of the hyphen in the phrase ‘on-Country’ is a deliberate linguistic device to represent the important connections between individuals and place—Aboriginal people and the lands upon which they live and pass through; this is a significant feature of Wiradjuri Aboriginal culture.

[9] The frequency of visits varied depending on the stage of the research and other cultural and school-related activities at Tirkandi; this meant at times there might have been a month between visits or a day. During the first few weeks of the study, visits were made more regularly (at least 3 days per week) in the effort to build familiarity and trust – particularly since I am a White older female in a position of power (a teacher and researcher). No data were collected during this time.

[10] In this chapter, the term ‘on-Country’ was coined to refer to ways place in the research (after Tuck & McKenzie, 2015) was informed by the youth participants (then and there). As such the research practices were derived of as ‘on-Country’ and the term tightly connects to a site-ontological (site-based) approach necessary for recognising and understanding in critical ways the experiences of these young Aboriginal males. Each participant was on their own Indigenous lands—here Wiradjuri country in New South Wales, Australia, and so on-Country (their country).

In this chapter, I focus on three of these interrelated data-collection methods which formed the unique on-Country approach to data collection: *photointerviews*, the *walk-and-talk* and poetry composition using the strategy called *think-me-a-poem*.

Multimodal Intersubjective Meaning-Making

Photointerviews

Photointerviews is a qualitative participatory visual method developed to facilitate participant agency and engagement in research among this vulnerable group of Aboriginal youth (Edwards-Groves, 2006; Edwards-Groves & Murray, 2008). In the study each participant was provided with a disposable camera (24 exposures) for the purposes of taking photographs—over a period of about a week—of objects, places, activities and people that captured what they considered to be supportive of and important to their learning. The sets of participant-generated photos (totalling over 300 images, some shown in this chapter) were printed for use in focus groups as a stimulus for conversations about their meaning(s) as seen through the eyes of the individual *photographers*. Photos were kept by participants unless permission for additional use by the researcher was approved by them.[11]

Participants selected up to five of their favourite photos to bring stimulus and direction to the focus group conversations. In the focus group, participants were invited to select and then talk about one of their photos, describing what it meant to them, and why they thought what was happening in the photo helped them, supported them, they liked doing, and so on. General non-evaluative prompts were offered by the researcher; for example—tell us more about that idea; say some more about this part; you said (this), can you talk about that some more; does what (name) said remind you of a photo you took (and then others looked at their photo array and if one was similar, they could add in their thoughts). For instance, when Adrian presented a photo (Fig. 6.1) from his collection, he spoke about how good it was to be trusted with the saw to cut his branch for the didge-making as referred to by the participants (making didgeridoos, a richly resonating traditional Aboriginal musical instrument); then added:

> …at school we are not given responsibilities—jobs like the other kids, those things always go to the others… anyway I think I am dumb and stupid 'coz I am not as good as the others, I'm not even trusted with taking notes to the office…

Jimmy added (as he got out a similar photo that he had taken in the Mallee lands cutting a branch for making his own didgeridoo):

[11] Permission was given by participants to use all images in this chapter.

Fig. 6.1 Adrian's photograph of cutting a branch for didge-making

> I learn best when I am doing practical stuff like this [*pointing to his own photo taken in the Mallee*], I like it when we are 'doing' things, like art and D&T and PE.[12] I like going and looking at things, doing it that way, and then talking about them].

Jimmy continued (as he sorted through his set of photos to find Fig. 6.2 of fishing in the Murrumbidgee River with the youth workers):

> Here at Tirkandi, the teachers recognise our abilities and take the time to show us how to do things and we talk about things more; I can go slower, then I can get it.

Dally then interrupted to add:

> Back at school, teachers only teach the kids who already can do it; not me, I have trouble with reading and maths. They always tell me "We've done that already, why weren't you listening", or "I've already told you."

Adrian, at this point, took back the floor to continue speaking, as he sorted through to find a photo (Fig. 6.3) of him playing the didgeridoo he had made and painted:

> I like learning that I was good at something like art, playing the guitar and the didgeridoo… I am gonna keep trying and keep going as I want to be a teacher of my culture and tradition to all people even the teachers…

It is important to note that the substance of the photographs mainly captured images of the young people doing activities together—such as sitting by the fire, playing basketball, cooking, fishing at the river, on excursions to find Mallee or Box Tree eucalyptus branches hollowed by termites for their didgeridoo-making, their totems (Fig. 6.4), on the Tirkandi Bora ring, with the youth workers and Elders, with a few images taken of me, Aunty Liz and of one of the teachers.

The method was adapted from *photovoice* or *photo novella,* an approach developed and predominantly used in community-based participatory health research seeking to

[12] D & T is a common abbreviation for a high school subject Design and Technology; PE refers to the school subject Physical Education.

Fig. 6.2 Jimmy's photograph of fishing in the Murrumbidgee River

Fig. 6.3 Adrian's photograph of playing the didgeridoo

document and reflect the realities of marginalised, vulnerable or troubled participants, and generally used as standalone data for digital storytelling and/or analysis (e.g., Strack et al., 2004; Wang & Burris, 1997). It has been modified for participatory research within Canadian First Nation communities (Castelton et al., 2008) and refugee communities in rural Australia (Major et al., 2013). In this study, photo taking was a technique that accompanied the photo-elicitation interviews that allowed

Fig. 6.4 Photograph of totems designed and painted by Tirkandi participants

participants more control of the conversation as they spoke about their own individual perspectives and meanings of the images they captured (Edwards-Groves & Murray, 2008).

Walk-and-Talk

Walk-and-talk was developed in this study as an unstructured interactive research practice also intended to facilitate participant agency and engagement through creating practice architectures for *small openings* for more informal, casual conversational spaces with individual participants if they choose. My researcher/educator intuition at the time of the study, sensed the need for a *shift in scenery* in a responsive and principled move to support some individual's hesitancy (including at times Adrian, Dally and Jimmy), who, although they indicated their willingness and desire to participate, seemed to be holding reservedly onto their perspectives/comments. The shift of scene and activity ultimately afforded a dynamic yet finely calibrated technology for participation.

Fig. 6.5 Photograph of the Bora ground at Tirkandi

As Kral (2007) argued, it is the researcher's role to create responsive conditions for their research participants to feel comfortable and secure, so children and youth are able to, in their oral tellings, comfortably convey personal and interpersonal stresses and tensions. The rationale was that by opening less official communicative spaces (here outside the regular focus group interview) through this activity I described as a *walk-and-talk* (talking while walking) in/around/to a location selected by the participant, a *safe* space for them to open-up and speak more freely about delicate, sensitive and private issues was created (see e.g., Russell, 1999). Its general intention emerged as responsive to the circumstances at the time and illustrates the need for research practices, in their enactment, to overtly signal, establish, demonstrate and preserve respect for each individual's vulnerabilities, and personal and cultural sensitivities. For example, after some time (weeks) Jimmy took me on-Country to sit on one of the logs that surrounded the Bora ground at Tirkandi (Fig. 6.5).
Metaphorically, one door closed and another one opened—since these localised, spontaneous and more personal conversational walk-and-talk interviews generated an *accidental* creative benefit—the generation of poetry. The substance and discursive nature of the walk-and-talk became the inspiration for the production of jointly constructed poetry described next.

Think-me-a-Poem

Think-me-A-poem[13] is a literacy strategy used to facilitate poetry composition about aspects of nature, the senses, memories, or sensitive experiences. In this research, the idea to co-opt the *think-me-a-poem* strategy emerged spontaneously during a *walk-and-talk* conversation (with Jimmy), as a way to integrate ideas, information and insights individuals had generated in the *photointerviews* (which had been audio-recorded and transcribed) and the *walk-and-talk* (Edwards-Groves, 2006). Through the prism of my experiences as a literacy educator, I quickly realised the potential for adapting the strategy for use with these young Aboriginal males (who generally did not consider they were "good at school, or reading and writing" as said by both Jimmy and Adrian) as a strategic approach to promote their confidence and a sense of accomplishment (in literacy). I also capitalised on knowing that this group of youth liked the poetry of rap music (its rhythm, delivery and beat) and related to the discourses and sentiments it typified (particularly among marginalised groups analogous to their own). Therefore, as a responsive move the creative medium of poetry-making arose as a participatory agentic research practice that solidified the formation and acceptance of their Aboriginal youth voices, cultural sensitivities, identity and agency.

The interactive writing process involved working with individual participants to:

1. discuss the specific key ideas they had spoken about in the *photointerviews* (each looking at the transcript excerpts I had made of their comments) and recorded in field notes during the *walk-and-talk*;
2. use a coloured highlighter to mark and emphasise particular words or isolate phrases to which they assigned particular relevance, major significance or special interest;
3. organise the ideas into themes or coherently linked messages through further discussion, for example: racism, their desires, being at Tirkandi, school, Elders, cultural practices, learning, respect, etc.;
4. settle on a focus and structure as together we wrote a draft of a poem aligned with a theme/idea they preferred (my role at this point depended on the individual and shifted between advisor, scribe, editor and typist);
5. to decide which words, phrases and lines in a draft poem could/should be repeated in the stanza to evoke effect—these decisions were largely determined by the individuals (care was taken not to take control of the texts); and

[13] *Think-me-a-poem* is a free verse approach to composing poetry using the written form familiar to me as a literacy teacher; it:

- does not usually rhyme,
- does not have a set structure,
- makes strategic use of repetition of words, imagery, phrases or lines,
- is usually written about aspects of nature, the senses, memories or sensitive experiences, and
- may have rhythm to appeal to its readers. (Adapted from Wing Jan, 2009, p. 268).

6. to “publish” final drafts of the pieces of poetry (at this stage I typed up some of the poems for convenience); these were then read, shared and displayed.

This poem, “Sand through my fingers” is one example of a final published text.

The sand through my fingers

By Jimmy (14 years)

On my Country, I sit

The sand trickles through my fingers teaching me to look, to learn, to listen, to think, to accept my difference

I learn and I want to learn

I listen and I want to listen

I think and I want to think

I am different and I want to be different

I succeed and I want to succeed

I paint and I want to paint.

I learn

I learn my culture,

I learn the music, the rhythm and the sounds.

I listen

I listen to my Elders,

I learn to listen, listen to my Country.

I think

I think about things

I just sit in my quiet place and think back.

I succeed

I succeed because I can do it and I know it

My abilities are recognised.

I paint;

I paint Wiradjuri, x-ray and lines,

I paint my totem, my place.

I am different

Difference is mad,

I am different and I am Aboriginal.

On my Country, I sit

The sand trickles through my fingers teaching me to look, to learn, to listen, to think, to accept my difference

I learn and I want to learn
I listen and I want to listen
I think and I want to think
I am different and I want to be different
I succeed and I want to succeed
I paint and I want to paint.

So, as the sand trickles through my fingers I look, I learn, I listen, I think, I accept my difference

On my Country, I sit

Jimmy's words in this poem convey an important message of positivity and hope gained from being on Country at Tirkandi and being with and learning from Elders and recognisably shaping his identity, agency and culture. These words are set in contrast to the words he spoke about in the focus group which gave him the forum to speak about racism and difference (highlighted words were marked by Jimmy as we were engaged in the drafting process):

> I hate racism... that's when people don't respect you, they swear at ya' and make fun of ya' because you are black, because you're Aboriginal… people swearing at me all the time, fighting with me… I hate it...
>
> people don't understand what I have got to go through, my family stuff, and that I have had to look after myself, live with violence, drugs and alcohol and abuse all my life...
>
> it will take courage to say 'no' to the kids that always try to get us into trouble, but I think I can do it...
>
> it was good to learn about the importance of the land...
>
> learning about our culture and traditions helps us to understand ourselves more; what it was like for our family years ago and why Aboriginal people did some things like the dances to tell a story and that it was good to learn about the art, it is mad...

and symbolised in his poem "Difference".

Difference
By Jimmy

Difference
I am different
Everything is different
Everything changes
Everyone's not supposed to be the same
Difference is '*gnarly'*

Racism
It is hard
Growing up with racism
It is hard

People swear, swear at you
Try to get us into trouble
It is because I am Aboriginal

Darkness
It is dark
There is anger, violence, sadness
They don't know what it is like.

It is angry, red and dark
Serious, dull and black;
Grey, indigo and purple

I am sad for them; they don't know what it is like.

Happiness
It is bright, it is here and now

Learning;
Learning traditional things, my culture
sharing with my Nan and Pop

Exciting;
Bubbling in my stomach
It is fun; green, blue and scarlet
Courage;
Walking away;
going to a quiet place inside
It is gently and smooth, calm and relaxing

Difference
I am different
Everything is different
Everything changes
Everyone's not supposed to be the same
Difference is '*gnarly'*

It seemed evident that the methods described in this section—the *photointerviews,* the *walk-and-talk* conversations and the *think-me-a-poem* strategy—when integrated as they were in this study formed grounds for the kind of relationship building necessary for conducting research with more vulnerable, marginalised people. At the same time, the use of contemporary creative approaches shifted the power balance between the researcher and the participants in ways that privileged their visions and their voices—their ideas, information and insights—displayed in creative multimodal representations. The approaches positioned these Aboriginal youth as resourceful, confident participants (Moje, 2002), reframing the possibilities for intersubjective meaning-making in positive and generative ways.

Shifting Sands: Multimodality as an Intergenerational, Intercultural Bridge

Scholars Shirley Brice Heath and Brian Street (2008) in their book discussing ethnographic approaches for studying language, culture and learning, present reports from Aboriginal Elders who recognise that "although old sand-stories are still alive, the young 'know different', for their sense of what is 'alive' and 'relevant' for them is not the same as that of their parents and grandparents" (Brice Heath & Street, 2008, p. 16). In the central desert of Australia, for example, telling stories while drawing in the sand is a traditional cultural practice (Eickelkamp, 1999; Kral, 2007). Stories in this context have long centred on ancient creation stories, hunting and gathering practices, and family and land connections. Yet, the contemporary realities for the young—like those in this study—along with rapid and far-reaching disruptions to traditional patterns and family structures, have come new representational mediums and modes of communicating.

In a recent study, Hayton (2020) suggested that simply advocating for and valorising youth voice is not enough to promote cultural recognition, preservation of cultural identity and knowledge and change. Such approaches fall short of ethical conduct of research with Aboriginal, culturally diverse or marginalised people. A researcher's *good* intentions, perspectives, practices and analyses are always subject to cultural bias, ethical oversights, and latent agendas, and must rightly be questioned to avoid being considered highly tokenistic and unethical (Trudgett, 2013). As Thomson (2008, p. 4) recognised,

> voice is not only about having a say, but also refers to the language, emotional components and non-verbal means used to express opinions. Undertaking research which attends to voice thus means listening to things that are unsaid and/or not what we expect.

Recruiting youth voice in research means "breaking down the traditional barriers for those denied power" (Groundwater-Smith, 2017, p. 119). On this view, youth agency through voice and advocacy in the development, conduct and dissemination of culturally *and* socially appropriate research is a praxis-oriented imperative for the ethical conduct of youth research.

In new times, as Kral (2007) demonstrated, there is a distinctive shift in how Australian Aboriginal children and youth use new media technologies to communicate their messages and to tell their stories, and in doing so, "Elders see the children as continuing the ancient practice of storytelling and sand-drawing and therefore believe 'the tradition' remains" (Brice Heath & Street, 2008, p. 16). This suggests that multimodal data-collection methods with Aboriginal youth create a promising intergenerational, intercultural, interpersonal bridging space. This space makes possible the formation of relational architectures which disrupt power differentials and the interactive barriers that continue to restrict participatory equity for young Aboriginal people (Edwards-Groves & Murray, 2008). Supporting these youth to successfully negotiate the ties between traditional and contemporary practices and across generational, cultural and social spaces amidst ever-shifting sands of society is critical. This requires the genuine and honest access to their ideas, information and insights that

are afforded by the kinds of multimodal technologies available to the youth of today, making some inroads into ultimately changing the experiences and perspectives of the racialised marginalised other (Burnett, 2004).

Poetry composition, photography and walking on Country formed participatory agentic research practices that brought together Aboriginal youth voices, cultural sensitivities, identity and agency through valuing "collaborative conversations" (Njkinja woman and scholar Jeannie Herbert, personal communication) and these creative mediums. The multimodal research methods widened the affordances for the participants to engage in the processes and amplified sure-footedness for the participants. The visual and voice focus formed creative methods for contemporary youth-centred research at the same time as recognising the ways dynamic, creative, sensory modes form representations important for illuminating youth voice. Although the communication mode may have changed with new practices, the substance and message may not have. Simply put by Hutchins (1995), "humans, more than any other species, spend their time producing symbolic structures and representations for making sense of and sharing meanings with one another" (p. 370). By creating conditions or practice architectures for a rich process of joint meaning-making, an intergenerational, intercultural bridging space was established to support these young men to locate, negotiate and mediate their Aboriginal identity in intersectional, intergenerational and intercultural ways (Chisholm & Olinger, 2017; Commonwealth of Australia 2019; Compton-Lilly et al., 2017). The opportunities for listening, talking, viewing, composing and sensing emerged as practices that responded to and recognised the human needs of this group of participants. This, I argue, is praxis-oriented research.

Living Praxis in and for Research

Research practice does not occur in a vacuum, but within social, cultural, political and material conditions and circumstances influenced by practice architectures that enable and constrain what happens. Thus, it is inescapable that matters of research ethics attend, in principled praxis-oriented ways, to how researchers and research participants engage in the practices of research. This means considering matters from informed consent to the actual research practices unfolding temporally. In reality, research practices can always reciprocally enable and constrain practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014), and so the question of research praxis arises, alerting us to a researcher's ethical responsibility to be responsive to the individual needs and site-based circumstances at the time (Groundwater-Smith, 2017; Kral, 2007; Obamehinti, 2010).

Understanding research from a praxis stance considers the theoretical, ethical, technical and practical perspectives of research which simultaneously shapes the language, activity and relationships in the conduct of the study itself (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015). In this study, it was evident that changing the practice architectures in response to the circumstances at the time changed the researcher's

and participants' practices in the research. For example, the change of physical space to include the walk-and-talk as a response to some participants' hesitation to speak openly in the focus group made it possible for the co-production and publication of poetry. This material-economic condition simultaneously influenced the social-political and cultural-discursive arrangements that influenced how this research unfolded in real time. It was a move which made different sayings (words expressed in poetry, thinking and communicating experiences), doings (walking and talking, using cameras to take photos, co-writing) and relatings (researcher-participant collaborating in poetry writing, stronger relationships developing) come into being. This shift in practice was the right thing to do at the time—it could be described as being reflective of a praxis stance. As Groundwater-Smith (2017, p. 18) reflected,

> In effect, praxis becomes a form of communicative action through which participants seek to read common understanding and form their actions through which reason, argument, consensus and cooperation as opposed to forms of strategic action that satisfies personal goals and aspirations (Habermas, 1984). Praxis is this necessarily achieved through public dialogue rather than as an individual and often implicit exercise of power.

The methods employed with this particular group of Aboriginal male youth reflected a praxis stance, where "the moral disposition to act wisely in the interests of the wellbeing of humanity and the good life and informed by long-standing traditions meant being sensitive to the needs and rights of all who participate in a particular research study" (Groundwater-Smith, 2017, p. 17). The particular research methods were adjusted and varied to emerge as site-based culturally-responsive practices. The moves described in earlier sections reflect the kind of disposition, judgment and action enacted in educational circumstances which can be evaluated only in the light of their consequences (this is, in terms of how things actually turn out) (Kemmis, et al., 2014)—here that the research became a transformative practice for those participants involved. Such a view insists that research practice is more than knowledge and technique but that it necessarily locates educational research as a human, and therefore social, endeavour with enduring ethical, moral, political and historical dimensions and consequences (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2008). Thus, in seeking to conduct research that balances academic rigour and political agendas with improving conditions for all people, responsivity in research practice is crucial. This is necessary for preserving participant respect and agency set amidst the impediments of everyday realities of the human condition.

Research as Transformative Practice

In this study, participant words and images form powerful insights into the situated construction of agency and identity in everyday life, culture and learning among Aboriginal youth. Specifically, they show the complexity and deeply problematic

nature of how an individuals' lived experiences collide across social, political, material, linguistic, educational and cultural contexts. The use of the contemporary multimodal research methods described in this chapter was found to afford practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014) or enabling conditions for opening the communicative space between this group of vulnerable at-risk ordinarily less-than-confident Aboriginal young males to create and share, and the confidence to express their perspectives with me (the researcher). For these young people this experience was transformative, as 14-year-old Jimmy's comments illustrate:

> I hated poetry, I didn't even think I could do it anyway, but when we did the 'think-me-a-poem' it was mad, coz' we talked about it, it was so good, I felt so proud that I could do something like that… it was like rapping.

The methods employed in the study were practice architectures that not only enabled and constrained the Aboriginal youth participants, but also signposted broader oppressive conditions that they navigated on a daily basis. The photointerviews, the walk-and-talk and the think-me-a-poem emerged as methods that facilitated opportunities for a genuine engagement and participation in the research in informative and transformative ways for both the participants and the researcher. The strong connection and generative reciprocity between testimony and creativity, and the methods that stimulated these, is illustrative of the ways the youth voices—through the power of their poetry (for example) flipped deficit discourses from their own perspectives (Dyson, 2015). Consequently, the cultural-discursive and social-political practices that influenced the possibilities and potentialities of these Aboriginal youth were transformed. Participant engagement through the production of creative artefacts (as data) leads to research lessons that reframe, for researchers, what should be accounted for in securing and supporting genuine open participation in youth-centred research. As such, not only must the research seek out genuine ways for youth voice to be centralised beyond tokenistic representations, but research must "be able to stand up to the scrutiny of both the field of practice and the academic community's expectation that it will be systematically undertaken and theoretically robust" (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2008, p. 81).

Considering the processes of generating and sharing meanings as a core motivation in educational research, the unique on-Country approach used in the study and reported in the chapter facilitated an openly dialogic, collaborative and agentic process for youth participation in research specifically concerning their worlds. As a priority, the research responded genuinely to "the need to build transparent and collaborative procedures that are justifiable and transformative in the making" (Groundwater-Smith, 2017, p. 14), research which was both formative and transformative for participants and researcher alike. Edwards-Groves and Murray (2008, p. 174) concluded that, to be transformative.

> research must provide a genuine communicative space between researchers, educators and Aboriginal learners, a space which enables the student to be treated as a vital resource for knowledge building; this has the potential to create far-reaching changes to social relations with people in mainstream communities (p. 174).

This is nothing if not a critical move towards living well in a world worth living in.

To conclude, research of this kind with youth must be considered to be a socially constructed intergenerational, intercultural endeavour. The results of this study offer a new yardstick for repositioning these more vulnerable at-risk youth participants as knowledgeable co-producers in research by learning to listen and represent differently, as my colleague and friend, Njkinja woman Jeannie Herbert, consistently argued (personal communication). This is incontestably pressing for progressing education for Australian Aboriginal youth. Additionally, educational research practices whereby facilitating intersubjective meaning-making between young research participants like the Aboriginal youth in this study and the researcher is most desirable. Finally, if we are serious about understanding what living well in a world worth living in means from Aboriginal youth perspectives, then there is the irrefutable need to closely examine the methods and the opportunities that particular research methods enable and constrain.

The Final Words

> …being here on Country we learn to listen and appreciate and respect our Elders and teachers…we learn by using our senses, by looking and talking about it, as well as listening...we go out to the scrub and learn about our culture and the land and the geography stuff and how they all relate to each other… then we can understand it, it makes sense when we have to read it in the books back at school. (Jimmy, 14 years)

For Jimmy, being on Country in the scrub makes sense—teaching him about the connections between land, self, culture and schooling—all held together by listening and respect by the Wiradjuri notion of *Yindyamarra*. His words show culture as practice in acknowledging the juxtaposition between voice, identity and agency and the situational and historical imaginings of Aboriginal culture and heritage—bringing to life Keith Basso's words "wisdom sits in places" (1996). As Adrian, 12-year-old Tirkandi participant, told me "being here" (at Tirkandi on Wiradjuri land) is where "I was on the journey to respect, I journeyed to respect." In many ways, Adrian's comments, like Jimmy's above, teaches us about *Yindyamarra Winhanganha*—in the Wiradjuri language, meaning "*the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in.*" As Wiradjuri Elder, Dr. Uncle Stan Grant Sr AM (Grant, cited in Sullivan & Grant, 2016, p. 91) said:

> Yindyamarra has a big meaning for a little word, and it means so many different things. Not just respect other people, respect yourself, that's what I keep wanting to push, you must respect yourself.

For these young Aboriginal people sitting on Wiradjuri Country where Tirkandi is situated, with sand sifting through their fingers, the power of their words, cultural artefacts and images emerged as powerful transformative resources for connecting to culture and to self, and to flourish, despite backgrounds of suppressed Aboriginal

identities previously demeaned by racism, ignorance, injustice and inequity. Their poetry, artworks and photographs—and the processes of creating and sharing enabled by the research—served as windows into how their cultural voice, identity and agency are socially-culturally-politically formed and transformed. The words in their poetry and photo-stimulated interview transcript excerpts are theirs alone. Their meanings are unique, authoritative, situated and given prominence (Harrison, 2003) in ways not clouded by a researcher's (sometimes biassed, sometimes uninformed) (mis)hearings or (mis)interpretations.

The present research study, through its praxis-oriented processes, became a transformative learning and participation practice for these young Aboriginal males as they opened up about their lives and experiences. Not only that, but they were listened to by a teacher who was taught by them. Implications of poetry and photography as tools for personal and collective activism, moved these Aboriginal youth into a resolutely transformative position. Opening up spaces for their Aboriginal youth voices to be communicated in a range of multimodal expressions afforded the opportunity for their voices to be raised, be heard, be appreciated—and show insight and vision, as Dally's comment here reflects:

> they [teachers and kids] don't know about us and our culture so they ignore us…and anyway I think everyone should know more about Aboriginal people, even the teachers and the other kids…that'd make it better for everyone. (Dally)

The words of these Aboriginal youth form a collective voice to be taken account of in a world where their struggle for identity is real, as Dally (15 years) expressed:

> I am too black to be white and too white to be black.

The poetry is a powerful testimony to the kind of cultural and social resilience needed for young Aboriginal people to take their place in the world—one that these Aboriginal youth, too, see as one worth living in.

It is fitting to finish with poetry from Adrian, a young man who in our first meeting said he "couldn't do school, couldn't read or write properly", and wasn't "trusted by teachers because they wouldn't ask him to do a job like the other kids." Adrian's poem directs us to the hopeful and hope filled vision for *his* world—described in the video *Yindyamarra Yambuwan* by Sullivan (2016)—aworld where his Aboriginality, his culture and his humanity is treated with acceptance and a deep sense of shared responsibility, honour and respect. This really would be a world worth living in.

An extract from <u>My Voice: There and Here</u>

by Adrian, 12 years

There…

You didn't see me,

Look at me; really look me in the eyes

To listen, really listen

My hand went up,
But you didn't see it and I got tired
My hand got tired, my heart got tired
and it hurt

When you gave up on me,
I gave up on you and your teaching
You ignored me,
I was there but I was invisible

Here…
I journeyed to respect.
I learnt to respect my Elders, my grandparents and my parents
I learnt to respect myself. I am Aboriginal and I like it because I am.
I will continue to learn, to respect

It will take strength and courage, but I don't want trouble;
I will respect.

mandaang guwu ngaagirri-dhu-nyal guwayu.[14]

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Dedication
I dedicate the writing and sentiment of this chapter to my Wiradjuri family members (my lovely, kind and funny nephews and nieces); my best and long-time friend at school and next-door neighbour (in our schooling years) Wiradjuri woman Leonie Jones (along with her family where their Aboriginality was understood but not spoken about); and most of all my dad—who because of who he was, his actions and his spirit taught me to respect Aboriginal people in whatever I did and where ever I went.

[14] ***Mandaanggu*** is the Wiradjuri word meaning *thank you.* ***ngaagirri-dhu-nyal guwayu*** means *I will meet you in a little while, later or after some time.* Rather than "goodbye", as in many Aboriginal languages there's no simple way of saying goodbye in Wiradjuri. Traditionally, there was little use for such a term. The nearest word like that in Wiradjuri is ***guwayu***.

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