

Master of Arts by Research

Nunga rappin: talkin the talk, walkin the walk
Young Nunga Males and Education

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Preface.....	6
Chapter 1: Literature Review.....	20
Chapter 2: Rappin Methodology.....	38
Chapter 3: Rappin the Nunga room: space for transformation and empowerment.....	57
Chapter 4: Talkin the talk, walkin the walk: young Nunga males and voice.....	74
Chapter 5: The ‘Ghost Dance’ and Gaze.....	88
Chapter 6: Educational Context: towards a pedagogy of care and relevance.....	106
Chapter 7: Writing Us Home: a rap curriculum.....	116
Chapter 8: Mappin as Dream, Theory, and Action.....	136
Conclusion: Rappin ‘home’.....	146
References.....	149

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person where due reference is not made in the text.

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Abstract

This thesis acknowledges the social and cultural importance of education and the role the institution plays in the construction of knowledge – in this case of young Nunga males. It also recognizes that education is a contested field. I have disrupted constructions of knowledge about young Nunga males in mainstream education by mapping and rapping - or mappin and rappin Aboriginal English - the theories of race, masculinity, performance, cultural capital, body and desire and space and place through the use of Nunga time-space pathways. Through disruption I have shown how the theories of race and masculinity underpin ways in which Blackness and Indignity are played out within the racialisation of education and how the process of racialisation informs young Nunga males' experiences of schooling. The cultural capital that young Nunga males bring to the classroom and schooling environment must be acknowledged to enable performance of agency in contested time, space and knowledge paradigms. Agency privileges their understanding and desire for change and encourages them to apply strategies that contribute to their own journeys home through time-space pathways that are (at least in part) of their own choosing.

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Lastly but not least, I like to thank my family in North Queensland and Northern Territory: without their support, care and love, I would not be the person I am today; they keep me remembering who I am, and are never far from me, the deadly Rosas mob.

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Preface

I begin this thesis with the telling of four stories. The first two stories tell of horrific incidents. The third story is positive and has provided the metaphor for this thesis and for the possibility of change: that metaphor is 'getting home'. The fourth is my story.

First story

The image on the front page of *The Australian* newspaper, (February 17th 2004) revealed the events that followed the death of young Indigenous male, Thomas J Hickey. TJ, as he was known by his mob, was 17 years old and lived in the Sydney suburb of Redfern with his mother and grandmother. TJ was riding his bike on his way to see his girlfriend, when the police spotted him and proceeded to pursue him. TJ knowing there was a warrant out on him, to avoid confrontation with the police and possible imprisonment, 'allegedly fled' from the police. The article states that:

The police wagon screeched first into the car park, before backing up and hurtling down the narrow driveway. It stopped where it could progress no further – 10 metres to the right of where Thomas J Hickey lay impaled and dying on a steel fence. (p6)

The events that followed this incident will stay in the minds of Indigenous peoples in this country for a long time and especially in the minds of young Indigenous Australians. An outbreak of burning anger unleashed by young people surged through the community of Redfern that resulted in the taking up of weapons and confronting the police, showing the world that the young Indigenous people of the Redfern community had had enough of the surveillance and harassment upon their lives by police. The news reports on various channels compared the events that followed to Belfast (Channel 9 Sunrise Show, February, 2004). It was perceived as not being possible, in Australia, that the retaliation and the burning anger felt by T J's friends and family could lead to such a violent confrontation with the police. The clash between the police and the protestors/rioters was compared to a war zone. Such a comparison in such circumstances is worth considering. I wanted to respond to and attempt to address

a background in which brutality, violence, protest and disenfranchisement are a reality for Indigenous youth and in this thesis Nunga youth in and out of school.

Second story

The second story involves my working with Nunga students and the impact that the death of a brother, cuz, nephew and friend had upon a group of those young Nungas. The freak accident shook the Nunga community as well as the wider community, but it was the way it shook the young Nunga members of that community that led to me wanting to hear more of their voices. It wasn't simply a matter of saying, 'this will pass', that 'death can somehow be explained'. How could the death of such a young man be explained, a young man who showed potential and success in his schooling journey? I wanted to listen to the words below the words being said and I wanted other educators to understand the powerful position we as teachers are in, to listen and in listening to 'care' and in 'caring' to generate change. Violence - whether by design or accident affects our already sensitized community. I asked myself: how can that sensitization be used for positive change? This sad story inspires hope because the brother, cuz, nephew and friend was a high achiever who showed that educational institutions can be sites for transformation, where the reproductions of inequalities do not inevitably continue, where opportunities do occur to bring about change.

Third story

This is the story of a young Nunga male tagged aCa and his desire to get through his schooling to be with his father. aCa was involved in a situation during a relief lesson in which he threatened to 'knock the teacher's block off'. The Aboriginal Education Worker (AET) response was to ask aCa 'what he thought would happen and how he could implement strategies to ensure that nothing like this happens in the future? One suggestion was for aCa to apologize to the relief teacher. aCa's response to this was to adamantly refuse to apologise. aCa understood he was in trouble and therefore had to expect some form of disciplinary action. That was the only reason he had come to school on a certain day: to see what 'consequences' would be in relation to the incident: to see whether it would stop him meeting his father's expectations.

My story

When I was young, my mother said to me, if any child or person calls me a name that refers to the colour of my skin, I was to turn back to them and sing at them. The song I was to sing went something like this, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me'. I believed in that song. I sang it and sang it until one day I had had enough: and enough happened when I was about nine years old. A tall, skinny, hair over his face white boy came up to me while I was sitting at my desk doing my sums. He walked up to me and brushed against me in a quick manner, and said 'Yuck'. When I looked up, he slowly blew his hands as if he had germs. Behind him was a group of boys and they started laughing, so the poor skinny white boy started to jump up and down as if he was dying.

I knew this game. I had played this game before. I didn't like the game, but I tolerated it, because a boy of my own black skin had played this game with me. The 'oops, I'm gonna get germs' game if I sit next to you, or by chance happen to touch you: girl germs, black germs. Only this poor skinny white boy was in trouble now, because I had had enough. Without him realizing it, I walked up to him (he in the midst of pretend gestures of dying) stood in front of him until he realized I was there, lifted my right hand with all the anger that my skinny black body could muster, placed in that hand, written on my face - and slapped him as hard as I could. Poor skinny white boy. Tears began to appear in his eyes. I found my voice and said, before I walked away, 'Now you tell me what colour red is'. This is the story of girlhood rebellion (hooks 1996:xi). It is also the story of parenthood and of schooling. It is the story of talking up and acting up: my story, my rap.

i know this game, i've played this game
the game of shame, blame it upon the playa
sticks and stones will break my bones and
those names you say will hurt me i
search for me amongst the memories
and i find i can rise above the dark clouds of pain
to see the dawn of a new day again, where i can be
who i want to be, meant to be, must be
you won't take my name in vain, fill me
with shame i alone can be the real me.

This is also a story of resistance. This is the beginning of my story of fighting in/for my skin, line for line.

My skin speaks

my skin hears

my skin listens

my skin feels

my skin breathes

my skin is marked

my skin stretches and extends

my skin is wrinkled and layered

my skin is raw and slippery

my skin is painted and polished

my skin is cut

my skin is soft and tuff

my skin raptures and is toxic

my skin pushes the boundaries

my skin searches for my freedom

my skin breaks

my skin changes

I am a shape shifter.

My skin retracts

My skin is under surveillance

Contained

Controlled

Managed

strangled and choked. Without agency to resist, my skin will die.

I will crumble.

I break skin.

My skinny girl body slaps.

Now you tell me what colour bla(c)k is.

These four stories together draw attention to the mutually constitutive relationship between incidents of misfortune, accident and oppression and ideas of restitution, rehabilitation and empowerment. I want to pursue these ideas, using aCa's need to 'get home', into the broader complex fields outlined in this thesis, working from the particular to general propositions about youth and curriculum and from

practice to theory and back again. These four stories also set up the thesis to address the issues of body, space, gaze, voice, race and care discourses through use of the popular culture of rap and hip hop because that's what young Nungas are engaging with.

Introduction: Bla(c)k

This study of the relationship between big questions of curriculum practice and theory and the everyday lives of young Nunga fellas is important because it will allow an insight into a small group of young Nunga males in the schooling sector in one site, and the cultural capital and values they bring to the school environment. It also gives voice to their concerns, wishes, hopes and desires as they participate in initiating their own ways of getting through secondary schooling to achieve success and it will explore the pathways between micro and macro schooling. Many young Indigenous males are (or feel they are) already positioned, on the periphery and the fringes of society with limited access to the resources available. Some are closer than others to the center of our society and still feel unable to access those resources.

Their perception of ‘positioning’ raises the question of how race, gender, opportunity and policy intersect to create a ‘double consciousness’ (Du Bois in Ladson-Billings 2000:258) of inclusion and exclusion, margin and mainstream. It also raises the question of how best to use what they are good at and of the resources that they do have to shift their often adversarial perception and change their outcomes. It is the aim of this study to explore these ideas, and help to generate change within the schooling sector to ensure a socially just and personally satisfying education for young Nunga fellas.

Herstory/history

As a mother, grandmother and aunt, I acknowledge that this thesis and its argument are gendered and racially sensitive and in acknowledging my son, grandson and nephews, I also acknowledge all Nunga sons of those mothers, whose voices have been muffled or unheard, whose voices have screamed loudly yet seem silent, voices that are too often denied, ignored and misinterpreted. Packer (2007) cites Behrendt’s human rights speech in Melbourne (March, 2007) and her statement that ‘debate about Indigenous Australia is all too often about us but not with us, it is about what is best for us but not what we want or need’ (p25). It is with this in mind that I acknowledge that this thesis is not

representative of all young Indigenous males but that there will be, as Bhabha (p191) says, ‘similar experiences shared by a minority within a nation/s’.

Stories behind the facts

the art of humour hides the truth.
social analysis and political trails, move, shift the
stories and sway the people. So say some.
the revelation, revolution, evolution will not be televised.
So say I.
sample some of the mix, fix, shift into higher form,
perform, inform yourself to the gig dig it Brothas and
Sistas.
hista re is now, in this moment, now in this time
be a crime to forget, refine the art of living
in your body, your soul, your skin. Sublime.

Our existence in today’s society is unmistakably defined by a past that carries memories of pain, hardship and violence, ‘our sense of survival always existing on the borderlines of the present’ (Bhabha, 1994). This is precisely where many young Indigenous males are positioned: living in that borderline moment where space and time converge. That place where difference and identity, past and present, insider and outsider, inclusive and exclusive are produced (Bhabha 1994a:1). It is (and was) a matter for each of these young males and for so many others like them, to decide to be safe or unsafe, to escape or to stay, at all times resisting the ‘oppression’s loaded gun’ (Carmody 2006). To get these stories and ideas into a useful shape, with a standpoint position to allow for involvement and change, I decided to put my ideas about using the ‘available’ resources to the test inspired, again by the Nunga students in my care. Realizing the impact that the genre of rap and hip has on young Nunga males I decided to rap each section of my thesis. In this way, I would be asking of myself what I ask of them. I would have something to share. This is how the rap of my thesis and my thesis as rap works.

Indigenous peoples in Australia are viewed through a haze a gaze of colour - that is skin colour. The visibility and invisibility of skin caters to the classification of the ‘Other’ through the embedded and normalized ideological beliefs of white

Australians, to dictate and maintain the hegemonic norms of the dominant culture within our racialised society. To name myself as bla(c)k and to uphold the beauty and love for myself within my own bla(c)k skin allows for a resistance to the unspoken and unvoiced that would position me as ‘almost one of us’ but ‘not really like us’ (Minh-ha 1994; Bhabha 1994b). I write ‘bla(c)k’ to make a political as well as a theoretical point. I take the same standpoint for young Nunga males and speak back to the statements that seek to confine us to a position of powerlessness. I want to ‘talk up’ to the social construction of identity and to acknowledge our ways of ‘being’ in the world. In this case, I would argue that to be heard affects ways of looking and seeing. Being heard changes and challenges the mindset and position of the privileged viewer and opens up a space for change.

When any discussion about Indigenous peoples is taking place, it is important to understand that the ‘culture’ of Indigenous people is often taken for granted within the framework of ‘whiteness’. In this discourse the values and norms are racialised to dictate the dominant culture’s ways as the ‘right’ ways of doing things. This is oppressive. All others are not seen to exist in their own right. It is through this framework of racialisation that the ‘Other’ is oppressed and turned into an object in the minds of the (often) well-intentioned oppressor and in which the ‘Other’ replaces the actual Being (Moreton-Robinson 2002; Cliff 1982:272).

I wish to ‘speak back’ to the misrepresentations of my identity as a Murri woman, the responses from well-intended mialoos to my blackness, and ‘speak to’ my agency to perform and initiate resistance strategies and survival techniques. The importance of doing this empowers me to validate and acknowledge my own resistance strategies that allow my Murriness to be seen, to be heard, and to be - as rap artists say – “recogniz”. Brady (1996:270) highlights her own observation of white Australia and the responses to Aboriginality when she states that the majority of white Australians see us through, ‘skin colour and not as culture or kinship’. I want young Nungas to speak back and ‘recognize’ as well.

The point that Brady makes is very important and in my naming of my skin using the word bla(c)k, I am taking back the word and using it as an identity marker of my own choosing and right as a Black Murri woman. I no longer feel

uncomfortable, scared or powerless when I see how powerful the word can be, when used to describe the many emotions that connect me to my people and my country.

Growing up in the 1960s and 70s in outback Australia, in a time of change, to see images of the Black Panther people holding their hands up in the air and shouting 'Black Power' and words like 'Black is Beautiful', enabled a young Murri girl to feel proud and strong in her own identity as a Black/Murri person. Times have continued to change and now, as Hall (1997:270) asks, can 'negative' ways of representing racial difference be reversed by 'positive' strategy? I believe so and act, as an educator, on theoretically justified research as well as belief. Hall further states that meanings can never be finally fixed. If meaning were fixed by representation, then there would be no change and no counter-strategies or interventions. But blackness is a 'fluid' and changing reality. The struggle for presence is both constant and changing.

Trans-coding is the word for taking an existing meaning and re-appropriating it for new meaning (e.g Black is Beautiful or Bla(c)k). Therefore, back then, by [re]appropriation I was no longer afraid when I revisited the experience of a teacher naming me as 'you little black thing' or hear the drunken white cowboy swearing at my Uncles naming them as 'you bloody black bastards'. Patricia Hill Collins acknowledges that this term 'Black' fosters a shared recognition of common problems such as political, economic and social conditions that take different forms in a Black translational context in relationship to the histories of colonization and disempowerment and I strongly agree with her (2006:23).

I also acknowledge the point that Dr. Brady highlights when she says, 'we as Aboriginal people need to decolonise our minds of the imposition of identity based on colour and return to an understanding of ourselves as peoples of Aboriginal nations, now contained within this nation named Australia' (2000:270). It is through the ongoing decolonization process that I am able to take the terms Black, bla(c)k and black and use them to write myself and those I care for into my story and the larger story of education. It is as Barthes says, 'guiding one's body into discourse' (in Bhabha 1994), to have the right to speak one's mind,

recognize the tremendous responsibility one's words carry, act in ways that are careful of others, speak straight, use words to express practical wisdom, show respect (Hightower Langston 2002:79) and educate.

Within the context of our racialised society, expectations placed before me presume my conformity to dominant hegemonic norms, and values. This process and prescription of conforming impacts upon me as a Murri woman and leaves me at times confused and a little compromised. Throughout the process of my own journey from girl to woman, I have had to deal with contradiction and take cover behind a mask of concealment. Put on a 'face' which can present itself to the world, in one way to appear as blank/nothing, but to also appear as speaking volumes of anger, displeasure, and disapproval. The shift from one to the other is a kind of 'hip hop', I realized, and I see young Nungas doing the same. So, I add space to skin, boundaries, masks and agency. I also add strategy to race and voice and put them to work. This is what it is like to rap.

Rapping is the act of 'talking back' that is in itself an 'act of risking and daring' (hooks 1996). To state one's blackness is a political act, to state one's blackness is to be involved in subversive activities of empowerment and consciousness raising, particularly against the powerful institutions that somehow deem their knowledge and opinions 'correct', even those based on distorted facts' (McCall 1997:74). The positioning on the margins has meant that there exists the perception within our society that, as a Murri woman, I am deemed a 'victim' of the dominant society and therefore somehow in a position of contributing to my own 'victimhood' and not having any agency to resist.

In the case of my mob, we have been subjected to places of dispossession, denied humanness, mythologised as types of beings expected to 'die out', placed in the position of 'smoothing the dying pillow' and needing to be guided through the process of colonisation. With the realisation that we were not dying out but growing in population we were then positioned as 'problems' as well as 'victims'. To be named as 'victims' allowed the justification of government policies to be enacted and legislated in the guise of our safety and 'interests'. Due to this positioning of the 'victimhood' mentality, or 'internalized oppression' (Yamato

1987:20), we as a group alongside all the other nations/countries subjected to colonising forces have suffered emotional, physical and spiritual abuses to the point that some of us believe we deserve the oppression. We have had to construct and implement ways of being, to take on a 'war of position' (Gramsci), to work out our strategies of resistance that would enable the maintenance and survival of ourselves as groups of peoples that continues to have some connections to our land. I will come back to this idea of 'war'.

I move in a world that isn't mine. I am continuously confronted with norms and values that are not my 'ways of doing things'. This world I move through is uninviting, it is restrictive, it is controlling, it manages, it watches, it stinks, and it chokes, yet is the world that I have to somehow get to know. The world I come from is old. The stories that hold me together/contain me are ongoing: they never stay still - they flow beyond the skin. I remember bits of these stories, they haven't left me. I tell some of it to my own children. I tell them to remember their 'mob'. I tell them their connection to a world in which we could move freely within our skins, a world in which there is great admiration for our skin. Our elders held and imparted profound knowledge connecting with the sacredness and beauty of our country, the co-existence as one with country, lived within country and all that country had to offer them. Did not want anything else, just wanted to exist within country, within skin. I want my kids to know this and I want Nunga kids I teach to know and speak this.

objectified and subjected to being
visible and invisible
through the colonial discourses
of the white man,
who had stolen their land, their wives,
their children, their siblings
my black father
my black brothers
my black boy cousins
my black boyfriends
denied the true pleasure of their skin
denied the beauty of themselves
wrapped in their skins.

The question of knowledge about Indigenous Australians and the construction of identity are also highlighted by Dr. Irene Watson. She makes the point that anthropologists, in their hunting and gathering of the authentic native, constructed their identity on the guise of believing that some informants had more knowledge than others (in Moreton-Robinson 2002:12-13). Watson herself poses the question ‘How do they know this? How do they know that some people know more than others? These questions open up the debate about who has the power to give knowledge and to indicate what knowledge is to be given (2004:75). Living on the periphery and fringes of white society meant that we have had to construct ways and implement strategies that contributed to our survival as nations of people, whilst continuing to fight for our own cultural survival. We looked, as hooks says, ‘both from the outside in and from the inside out’ (1996:341).

Stories making space

The stories in the Preface constantly remind me of the lack of knowledge of young Indigenous people needing a space in which to grieve and thrive. This speaks volumes of how we as teachers need to negotiate ‘care’ when it comes to young Indigenous peoples within the school setting. It also reflects the inability by some teachers to acknowledge the strong and close relationship that young Indigenous peoples have with the Nunga community, regardless of misconceptions of ‘troublemakers’ and ‘gangs’ that are directed at them by some non-Indigenous Australians. In South Australia the media has represented the ‘gang of 49’ as Indigenous young men engaged in various criminal activities and presented them as contemptible, held up to the public as a danger to society, therefore needing tougher penalties when dealing with them. In this sense being black and young is connected to a life of historical community moral panic. I want to show the strategies of resistance that young Indigenous peoples have when dealing with such painful experiences and their own ways of voicing such experiences in contemporary Australia. They use and transform the genre of the African American popular culture of rap and hip hop, to convey insight into their ‘lived’ experiences. I took those pathways within the urban landscape of the Western suburbs of Adelaide with a small group of young Nunga to see where they would lead in relation to school and culture as I have already used the terms.

Rap as a Medium of Translation: towards transformation

To do this I set down the following research objectives to:

- identify space in which to articulate hopes, wishes, desires and concerns within their lives;
- find voice for empowerment, transformation and consciousness raising;
- encourage determination to ‘look back’ at those who think they alone have the power to see;
- endorse a pedagogy of care and innovation to influence the process of curriculum change.

Through the popular cultures of African American rap and hip hop, I discovered a way to explore gender, violence, empowerment, and spatial/conceptual/creative ‘freedom’ and their influence on young Nunga males. The popular culture forms of rap and hip hop have been appropriated, adopted and adapted by young people all over the world. They offer possibilities to young people to have a voice through which to make sense of their lives. Through the genre of rap music, the opportunity for young Nunga fellas to talk their stories has arisen here as well and allowed them and their teachers, to walk their talk.

The use of rap is complex. Violence, drugs, race, abuse and death are part of the rap genre and culture as well, and are glorified by some young males. They are seen to define ‘manliness’. This contradiction makes the thesis ‘edgy’ and rap ‘problematic’. This in its way is fitting. Just as the kids stumble over the contradictions so must the thesis identify them and point out the dangers and turn them to advantage. In its way it must ‘get home’ with aCa.

In the journey to ‘home’ each chapter signposts the pathway I undertake to complete the task. Chapters one and two survey the literature, theorizing rhetoric and tackling theoretical concepts, social issues and methodologies. Chapter three builds on methodology, identifying ways of ‘being’, through the framework of critical qualitative educational research. This, in turn, identifies the need for space

where space is alive and young Nunga males have voice and performance. Thus, Chapter four describes the conceptualization of space and how space becomes a lived embodiment that features chameleon-like qualities, transparency, with layers of cells that change with emotions, temperature and light to allow a process for the release of voice.

Chapters five and six are the center of the thesis. They add voice and gaze and to embodied action and space. These chapters give us an insight into what a small group of young Nunga males knows, and how its members can turn 'disadvantage' into 'advantage'. Their voices embrace rap and perform raps, unleashing the contradictories and semiotic gestures that allow insight into their hopes, dreams and realities. Engagement and performance with rapping and its acrobatics, moves into Chapter seven and gathers up the pleasures, realities, hopes and dreams shifting into action that make room for care pedagogy through curriculum innovation and implementation. Chapters seven, eight and nine consider ways in which education and schooling need to be transformed to enable mapping of ontologies and epistemologies of young Nunga males. In each chapter rap reveals itself to be a powerful tool in a transformative and empowering process for young Nunga males and teachers on their respective and shared journeys 'home'.

take you on a journey, get ready
strap yourself in
discuss, messin among the words
got the vocab in, out, that's where
I am looking in at you looking out
molotov cocktails and stones
breakin bones, head homies on the
streets of pain where life continues
to exist with others, fingers pointing
living, struggling, surviving and arriving

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Introduction

The Preface and Introduction indicate that the structure of and approach to this thesis is influenced by concepts of standpoint, agency, youth, masculinity, blackness, and institutionalization. They point to strategies of dealing with skin, borders and the discourse of race and the politics of space, voice and gaze. Young Nunga fellas need space to articulate identity construction and narratives/storytelling and find it through the genre of the popular cultures of African American youth. They need space to perform gender and contest race and find ways to represent themselves to bring about change in curriculum and other areas of education policy, to enable self-determination in ‘walking the talk’ in the context of education. The literature that informs the thesis and helps to contextualize these concepts and issues is drawn from the following areas: Black feminist theory; cultural studies – especially with regard to representation, popular culture and identity politics, performance theory, proxemics and spatial politics, cultural capital and racialisation; education government policy and sociology; and Indigenous research methodology.

Each area of theoretical or critical interest is given an ‘education’ slant or focus, in keeping with the contextual integrity of the thesis. What follows prepares a path for a concentration in the ‘core’ chapters of the thesis on space, voice, gaze, race and care as pathways to improved educational opportunities for Nunga youth through a reconsideration of relationships between Nunganness and curriculum innovation and change.

Indigenous, Black Feminist Theory and Race

The approaches to feminist and race theory that I favor can be found in texts by bell hooks (1981; 1992; 1994; 2000), Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989;1995), Gloria Anzaldua (1999; 2000), Tricia Rose (1994), Maori and Australian scholars Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2003), Marcia Langton (1993), and Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000; 2004). These black/coloured and Indigenous feminist scholars speak to the discourses of centre and margins as sites for resistance and transformation, as well

as to the genre of the popular African American culture of rap and the issue of research within Indigenous communities. Each of these concepts has a place in curriculum reform and regeneration. Their body of works also focuses on identity politics, cultural representation, race and gender, whiteness and educational theory. Langton (1993) and Moreton-Robinson (2000; 2004) reveal the positioning of Indigenous people in Australia and our relationship to a society that is based on the values of 'whiteness' recognizing the racialisation of the 'other' and how we as the 'other' are represented through past anthropological journals and curriculum approaches that deemed mainstream knowledge of Indigenous Australians as somehow 'true'. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) and hooks (1992; 2000) highlight the positioning of being insider/outsider, and point to the possibility of being on the margins as a site for resistance. A move from margin into the center makes room for transformation in many cultural 'spaces'. These discourses contribute to the shifting and flipping of the coin to present a 'different' view of the way young Nunga boys, for example, are perceived in contemporary society by putting discourses at their disposal. Through the works of radical feminist and race theorists the action of talkin back to past colonial discourses enables an understanding of the process of emancipation, empowerment and transformation for young Nunga boys.

Discussions of Indigenous peoples often takes place in mainstream discourse, through racialised knowledge invested in the practices of colonial dispossession, displacement and representations of 'difference'. Knowledge construction of Indigenous people as 'other' is such that it permeates the social relations of inequality and notions of Australian identity that have positioned Indigenous people outside the domain of an emerging and consolidating nation, in which the assimilation and integration policies and practices attempted to turn Indigenous people, denied their Aboriginality and sovereignty over land (Watson 2000; Moreton-Robinson 2002 and Nicoll 2004), into 'honorary whitefellas' through exemption certificates. Moreton-Robinson's *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (2000) gives an account of how the structure of whiteness progresses to keep Indigenous Australians out of the framework of contemporary Australian society and how the legacy of colonialism is implicated in how 'privilege' contributes to the oppression of Indigenous people.

Hollinsworth, McConnochie and Pettman (1991; 1992), and Reynolds (1987) among others, show the way race was constructed in Australia and attitudes towards Aboriginal people from the time of invasion and early colonization to present day Australia. Their historical and critical literature of race and racism in Australia, reveals the legalization of racialised policies and acts – and through the hierarchical status of ‘races’ in this country - adds to an understanding of the positioning of Aboriginal people in contemporary society.

Cultural Theory

These ideas of identity, representation, speaking and viewing position and historicization are discussed in detail within the interdisciplinary discourses of cultural studies and theory and it is to them that I now turn. Cultural and social theories meet in the works of Foucault, Bourdieu and Gramsci. They emphasise power and knowledge and the hegemonic values and norms that deem the interests of the dominant culture as the interests of all. These approaches to ‘interests’ will be linked to others by Giroux, Hall, Dyson and Homi Bhabha, which deal with borders, contact zones, popular culture as sites of struggles, representation, surveillance and identity, critical pedagogy and care in educational discourses and institutions.

Henry Giroux (1989; 2000; 2005) for example, makes the point of critical race theory as contributing to sound pedagogy for teaching and learning for students. He believes in the capacity of schools to reinvent themselves by connecting to the worldview of young people and in popular culture’s ability to teach a process of transformation and emancipation for teachers, cultural workers and students. This leads to understanding the role schools play in the production of knowledge and how students learn the skills to enable some control over their participation in the schooling terrain. Stuart Hall (1987; 1997) discusses how the feelings of dislocation can raise questions of identity in the process of shifting and moving, from one state of awareness and being to another, where the ‘unspeakable’ stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history and of culture. It is my contention, that rap succeeds in bringing these stories into the territory of recognized historical and cultural narrative: in the powerful signifying practices of representation.

Representation

In my fifteen years' experience as an Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW) and secondary teacher in the schooling sector as 'site of power' (Foucault), the views and attitudes held by non-Indigenous teachers, influenced at a deep (possibly sub-conscious) level by this history, continue to impact on all Nungas. Foucault identifies this kind of influence as biopolitics and biopower: the practices and discourses that manage the human subject, their body and behaviour (in Danaher 2000:79). Exploration of the significance of the representations/images production constructed by powerful agents such as government and the media, influences how the mainstream public - and educators as members of that public - see young Nunga males. Race and representation/images play an important role in contributing to their collective and individual sense of identity and their ability to determine 'from what positions they wish to speak or write' (Hall 1996). All too often, Nunga identity and culture have been represented by the colonisers in demeaning and derogatory ways. Age-old colonial discourses (Kaomea 2001:69), in regards to the representation of the 'other', were perceived through works produced by early anthropological ethnographic studies. Some works deemed Nungas/the Other, as 'savages', 'uncivilized', 'childlike', 'lazy' or 'noble savages', based on what evolutionary theorists like J.C. Beaglehole, Baldwin Spencer and W.E. Roth in Johnston (1981) stated as some form of 'truths'. Foucault notes that the epistemes of a particular field of knowledge are constructed in the moment of history, when 'man' looks to the past to understand the present, the search for origins, the development and progress of human existence (Danaher 2000). The construction of a colonial past is heavily reliant on 'othering' and the 'look back' is influenced by that construction.

Within the social structures of contemporary society, young Nunga males continue to be understood through the ideological discourses of negative stereotyping that position them as 'troublemakers', 'lazy' and 'criminal' (Social Justice Report, 1999:65-80). Nunga representation is still filtered through the lens of the viewer (for example the white teacher), which 'interpellates the colonized subject in a way that fixes their identity in relationship to the observer' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2003:266). Rey Chow strongly argues that, 'the native' as

image is viewed as naked, defiled and subjected to image-identification, a process in which 'our' own identity is measured in terms of the degrees by which we resemble the viewer (1991:127). Aspects of this 'othering' continue today, but there are ways of contesting racialised and anthropological constructions.

Hall (1997:15) highlights representation as occupying an influential place within the context of culture – as I will show in subsequent sections of this chapter. He argues that representation connects meanings and language to culture and that representation is the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. In naming the perceived object, it becomes meaningful through language. Representation and meaning for Hall are produced through different sites and different cultural practices and meaning can be interpreted in various ways by different peoples. If this is so, then meaning according to Hall is the result, not of something fixed out there in nature but of our social, cultural and linguistic conventions (1997). Meaning can be constructed and read according to context.

In the case of rap lovers, the difference between the meanings of the word 'niggers', is exemplary in this discussion. When changed to 'niggas' different meanings emerge depending on the group and the context of use. For example, Hall's approach is useful in showing how different locations and cultural practices can assist with understanding how meaning and representation occur for young Nunga boys. In making their own meanings in acting out or performing identity through rap they show how their identity has been constructed for them but it is also being asserted by them.

Popular culture identity and agency

The cultural phenomena of rap music and hip hop have generated academic as well as commercial interest in the impact popular genres have on the youth around the westernized world and especially in America, United Kingdom, Canada and now Australia (Dyson 1994, 2001 & 2003, hooks 1994, Kitwana 2002, Swezde 1999; Boyd 1997; Mitchell 2003). In particular youth involvement with Dj-ing, breakdancing and graffiti art is identified. Each reveals a strong interest in these phenomena and suggests links with deviant behaviour as well as identity construction. For the last ten years,

studies of the genre of rap music have included focus on the lyrics and musical format of rap music. hooks (1994) writes about the sexism and misogyny of rap music and its impact on young Afro-American people. In an interview with rap artist, Ice Cube, she allows him to speak about his own position in regards to his lyrics and rap. Ice Cube highlights the position of young black men in America, and the need to claim pride in their identity as 'black' young men (p129). Hooks problematises and deconstructs his response. She critiques rap in particular, the sub-genre of gangsta rap music and states that:

the music is seen to exist within a form of expressing the ways of behavior and thinking of the dominant culture [and that] the crudest and brutal expression of sexism, misogynistic attitudes portrayed by the dominant culture and is seen as an expression of male 'deviance' [and that] the lyrics of gangsta rap shows a real hatred of women and a glorification of the death of young black men. (1994:115)

These negative consequences and expressions must be examined and nullified if rap and transformational curriculum are to be brought into effective partnership.

Michael Eric Dyson's (1998) interpretation of his own love of rap music, and the historical aspects of rapping, posits the form in the context of religion and the ways that religious black discourse is articulated through the preaching and the repetitions of preaching. Dyson's critique of African American gangsta rap band Public Enemy (1996) highlights the way rap lyrics are performed and maintained through the influences and successes of the group. He labels them as 'prophets of rage' and suggests that in 'roughly stitching together of contrapuntal noise and prophetic rabble-rousing, the avant-garde group quickly became rap's conscience' (p 165). His critique of African American gangsta rapper Tupac Shakur (2003) is seen as 'representing the possibility of human evolution in the ghetto'. According to Dyson's analysis, Tupac Shakur was constantly changing and rearranging his identity in a world of chaos (p 267). Gospel, jazz, soul and rap music share cultural roots and listeners and the transformation of earlier forms offer a glimpse of rap's possibilities.

The fan - relationship young Nunga people have with Public Enemy (and to a larger extent Tupac) is seen in the way they 'idolize', 'worship' and 'embody' elements of

gangsta rap. This idealized view needs to be rationalized and decoded to retain Dyson's view on 'possibilities' whilst it examines 'deviance' and 'chaos'. There are of course, many other rap artists that young Nunga boys view as important, but Tupac is one whose name is mentioned regularly in my discussions with young Nunga males and he serves as a test case here.

Dyson (2000) highlights the problems surrounding black youth in America and the fact that they are eight times more likely to die at a young age than members of other youth populations. The death of these young men occurs from firearms at the hand of gang members and the police. Dyson calls for a critical analysis of the violence that exists within black communities and their relationship with the police, as does McCall (1997) in his examination of the gangsta rap and sexual violence. This connects with Nelson (1998) and his investigation of the collision between black youth and mass media and the way that corporate America reaches not just black consumers but also all young people. Henry Giroux (2000) argues that the American governments' application of zero tolerance in regards to young people contribute to how young people feel and act in society today, especially in schools. As Birch argues in his response to the aftermath of the Redfern riot following TJ Hickey's death, and the media's portrayal of him, Australia also has a long history of institutionalized police violence against Indigenous Australians. It includes the condoning of violence in regards to zero tolerance also the media's lack of care, decency or respect for the grieving families, inflamed the anger of the Indigenous community (2004:18-21).

The parallels are clear when it comes to surveillance of Indigenous young people within our society, using Foucault's theories of power and knowledge and 'technologies of the self' (1998) (in Pini 2004:160). These theories analyse 'our knowledge about how the body is 'invested' in the operation of power'. This 'investment' is important in contemporary education. Pini argues that to consider how 'power works directly upon the body, means thinking about the 'self' and 'identity' as 'always embodied'. In this respect rap signifies thinking on your feet.

Mitchell (2003) identifies and comments on the emergence of hip hop/rap, into other parts of the world outside of the U.S. He suggest that claims to an

essentially 'black' identity made the adoption, adaptation and appropriation of rap a smooth process for others who relate to or identify with 'blackness'. The combination of local dialects and slang idioms, musical forms and dance moves suggest that the form can be adopted and adapted to express the concerns of various groups in Australia (p199), especially Indigenous youth. Indigenous bands and their young (distinctively Nunga) fans are in the process of forging a space to transform and reinvent themselves, a space where they can also resist, destabilise and challenge the stereotypes and inhabit new urban identities, to articulate voice. I argue that the growth of Indigenous rap bands not only appropriates, adopts and adapts but also transforms the genre to enable their stories to be heard, and in the art of the rapping performance, act out their resistance and empowerment as young Indigenous people.

Tricia Rose (1994) asserts that when researching rap music and hip hop culture for her doctoral thesis, she couldn't believe that this music that seemed so local, so particular could capture the attention of so many people around the country. She makes no claim to offer a complete history of rap music; instead she describes, theorizes and critiques elements of rap, including rap lyrics, music, culture and style as well as the social context within which rap music takes place (pp xii, xiii). This thesis takes a similar stance and approach.

Through the critique and deconstruction of rap music and representation of popular rap artists and hip hop culture, the study will reveal that some young Nunga fellas 'generate new forms of cultural expression, in their music, fashion, cars, computers, media consumption and social lives' (Butcher & Thomas 2003:15), and that 'young people also reconcile their identity by selecting and adopting aspects of two cultures and developing for themselves a bi-cultural identity they feel comfortable with' (Guerra and White 1995, in Butcher and Thomas, 2003:17). This has clear implications for bi-cultural and cross-cultural education, policy and practice. It also connects to ideas of identity and performativity – of acting out or performing the self as agent.

Masculinity, youth and education

Palmer and Gillard write that scholars map the conceptualisation of youth in general as ‘strangers, associated with crime, delinquency and antisocial behavior and as a feared separate population’ (<http://www.api-network.com>, accessed 5/5/07). They argue that works written about Indigenous youth have featured them as familiar strangers, unsettling the lives of the respectable (white) citizens (p1). For example, their critique of the Indigenous male Vaughan, in the film by Iven Sen *Beneath Clouds*, portrays him as dark, both emotionally and physically. They claim that this representation is the ‘classic figure of the Indigenous youth as the masculine delinquent, violent and uneducated, angry and fixed in his view of the world’ (p 4). They further argue that contemporary films such as *Beneath Clouds*, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and *Australian Rules* have allowed space for young Indigenous youth to disrupt the taken-for-granted ideas about them, enabling a marginalised group to produce and insert their own meanings. I agree with their interpretation and see disruption and insertion of ‘other’ meanings as positive and productive – under particular conditions and particular circumstances. Rap has similar capacities and potentials.

Scholars write about youth as a category bound by the ages 13 to 25 years. According to Wyn and White (1997) in Australia, ‘age is a concept which is assumed to refer to a biological reality: however, the meaning and the experience of age, and of the process of ageing, is subject to historical and cultural processes’ (p11). Age, like time, is a culturally qualitative, relative as well as quantitative mechanistic construct. This distinction is important for the argument as a whole in this thesis because it hints at different approaches to social and educational maturity and readiness to learn. Robinson, in *Youth and Society* (2004:153), states that the field of child and adolescent research is based largely on white middle class children and adolescents, and its findings are assumed (or defined as) normative and generic to all children and adolescents. This mirrors Moreton-Robinson’s reading of feminism. Together these authors and their arguments help to explore the ‘perspectives on black child development and black identity formation’ in regards to South Asian, African, Caribbean peoples (Robinson, p153) and Indigenous Australians.

I will argue (and some of my discussions with students support the position) that tensions between curriculum and Indigenous student engagement with it reflect different ideas of age and presumed 'real-life' experience. Many students who are supposed to be 'behind' in their school work or disengaged from it are 'ahead' in confronting and attempting to deal with the difficulties presented by life experiences beyond the classroom. These experiences make many school tasks seem trivial and /or irrelevant.

Performance

In *Performance Theory* (2005), Richard Schechner discusses the theory of performance and its role as 'coexistent with the human condition'. He highlights how 'performance can happen anywhere, under a wide variety of circumstances, and in the service of an incredibly diverse panoply of objectives' (p x). In performances young people are able to recreate themselves and reconstruct their identity, as is the case for many black youths throughout the world, (Gilroy 1987) including, I argue, Indigenous/Nunga youths. Evidence for this appeared on the ABC television program *BlackOut* (2003) and SBS television program *Message Stick* (2005) and the implementation of programs in schools generated around the rapping discourse. As Schuellar (2006) notes:

the idea of the 'performative' as an explanatory paradigm for questions of identity has gained wide and popular currency. Performativity retains agency at the same time as it critiques essentialist notions of identity. Identity is what is performed. (accessed 31st May, 2006)

This is particularly so for young Nunga males. But these young people need a 'space' in public and in school to stage and perform identity and that 'safe' or 'dedicated' space is often hard to find for Indigenous youth.

Space, proxemics and surveillance

Schuellar's findings are comparable to those of Mandy Thomas and Melissa Butcher (2003) in their research with young people in the western suburbs of Sydney. They discuss the situation of young people hanging out in the Westfield Mall, and their relationship with space. In highlighting issues associated with

Indigenous community space, cultural space and public space and youth, the writers reveal the ways mainstream Australian society views the implications for public culture of congregation and the social and spatial needs of young people. The young people they speak with 'feel under surveillance and the regularity of being harassed by security guards to move on'. Butcher and Thomas reveal the relationship that the young people of Sydney have with space, the ownership of a particular spot/meeting place, gathering of groups of young people, from various backgrounds and with various displays of fashion. Again, the similarities of these young people's narratives and Nunga narratives demonstrate how public spaces can facilitate connection between similar collectives in different contexts – especially those identified as 'Aboriginal' or 'deviant' by mainstream institutions. To understand the relationship of behaviors to institutions it is necessary to understand the influences and impacts of policy over time.

To illustrate the point and with reference to the stories at the beginning of this thesis I offer three more variations on this theme. A young Nunga male related an incident (pers.com. 2000) in which, he was stopped by the police and subjected to a bag search, while on his way home from football training one night. Another young man told me of a fight that occurred between his younger brother and himself in a public park (pers.com. 2001). The fight was over a bike (theirs). The police were called and they took both the brothers in separate cars to the police station and kept them at the police station until late at night.

A group of young Nungas, who happened to be my students related to me an incident that happened one night of late night shopping (Thursday). While waiting for their friends at a regular meeting place, they were subjected to being told to move on. This happened three times. By the time their friends arrived and they moved on, they were angry at the security guard for harassing them. In remembering and telling me of this incident I began to see that they were again getting angry (pers.com. 2001). It was still fresh in their minds. When I asked them how they felt about this, they replied by saying, 'the guards always act like that around us. As soon as they see us 'blackfellas', they tell us to 'move on', or they want to search our bags. They don't stop the others'.

I relate these narrative fragments because they suggest the extent of surveillance that young Nungas are aware of and highlight their interaction and relationship with security guards and the police in the urban landscape. This surveillance impacts on the psyche of young Indigenous males. The continual surveillance from authorities is perpetuated in the context of the supposed 'safety and protection of community'. Giroux argues that, in the United States, 'young men of color' are demonized by government agencies and represented in the public's imagination as needing to be controlled, feared and under constant surveillance. He argues that this rhetoric is being translated into social practices that signal the shrinking of democratic public spaces (2003:60). I strongly support his argument and agree that, in the situation of young Nunga males, these rhetorics are reproduced to continue social inequalities, as they challenge the status quo (Bourdieu in Webb 2003). I will use Foucault's ideas on these matters at various times to connect young Nunga males' surveillance, resistance, representation, rap and blackness to illustrate selfhood, subjectivity, management and resistance (Pini 2004:164) in life within and beyond school. I also use Edward T. Hall's term promexics in my interpretation of space and relationships within a space connecting to relationships formed within the Nunga room in my fieldwork (Hall accessed 5/11/2007).

Government Policies

Government legitimised policies of containment and control, integration and assimilation have impacted on the lives of Indigenous peoples in this country in various ways. The enactment and legalisation of assimilatory practices were meant to 'save' and 'protect' Indigenous peoples, but instead contributed to the dispossession of land, family and cultural systems of knowledge. A lack of understanding about the diversity of Indigenous peoples led to their classification as 'one' group of people, having the same experiences and therefore needing the same governance, management and as a 'problem' for colonial and neo-colonial interests (Heiss 2003). Indigenous Australians are peoples, with their own languages and dialects for interacting within their own and surrounding communities (Reynolds 1982; Uncle Lewis O'Brien and Rigney 2006; Watson 2001). Colonial practices, processes and thinking were therefore, fundamentally wrong and their contemporary legacy is bound to be both offensive and

ineffective. Indigenous students (like aCa) know this from their everyday experience.

In contemporary times, the problematic solution of treating all Indigenous peoples as being the 'same' may seem easier for governments but Indigenous Australians, know our differences. Heiss (2003) suggests that, 'the intervention of the government in the lives of Indigenous peoples has both erased and reconstructed categories of 'Aborigines' to suit the governmental policy in vogue'. She further highlights this by citing Tony Birch and what he says about the issue of Aboriginality. Birch states that a simple understanding of our identities is not possible, as our communities (which frame our identities) are multilayered and diverse. We recognize and understand this, non-Indigenous policy makers generally do not. They have attempted to 're-create, and re-image us and re-present us as objects suitable for and benefiting their society' (Heiss 2003; Worby and Baker 2007).

Culture and Education: policy and sociology

This research is located in the field of education, and underlines the way schools are the 'mechanism connected to and sometimes through which the values and relations make up social spaces, that inform the way one is expected to behave in interactions with the wider world' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002:105). In this context, from my experiences as a teacher within secondary schools, having participated in and contributed to the teaching of curricula, I began to ask why some students resisted my lessons. At first this dilemma and concern left me questioning my ability as a teacher. Further thought and this research shifted my focus from the personal to the theoretical, social and constructional aspects of education. The challenge for teachers means having the obligation to teach students to be the best they can and to achieve this, educational institutions need to be seen as potential and actual sites for transformation, which do not reproduce inequalities but provide opportunities for every one, to bring about change: where education is critical empowerment rather than subjugation (Bourdieu in Webb et al. 2002; Education for Social Justice research group 1992; Giroux 1989; Dyson 2003; hooks 2004).

In considering empowerment and agency, I recognized that African American popular culture of rap and hip-hop offer the opportunity to share voice and concerns by engaging in what Michael Eric Dyson calls 'performance epistemology' in the discourse of 'rapping' (2003:44). This means having the 'vocab', as Fugees rapper Lauren Hill sings. They create and use the 'vocab' to talk the stories, to tell it the way they want it to be heard. According to Nathan McCall (1997), rap was created in the streets of urban hoods by the very people that society dismissed as worthless and dumb. Rap made it possible for young people to be politically conscious and expressive. McCall says, 'make no mistake about it rap represents the voice of the powerless, the forgotten, and the dispossessed' (p 40-42). It was exactly these young people that I wanted to teach and with whom I wanted to 'perform' education.

In Imagining themselves, imaging their future, Indigenous Australian students completing senior secondary education (2001), Mercurio and Clayton highlight the narratives of young Indigenous people, in their last years of schooling and completion of their South Australian Certificate of Education. The voices of the young people are heard, dealing with stereotypes, politics, Aboriginal culture, family support and issues, schooling experiences and relationships with peer groups as well as teachers. These narratives go to the heart of how young Indigenous students in contemporary schooling find themselves carving out a space in which to undertake their schooling journey and in meeting the demands of their families and the school community as well as their own needs. They contribute to ideas on 'Nunga space' developed in this thesis by providing evidence of the stories in need of telling, on the one hand, and the need for opportunities to tell, on the other.

Mercurio and Clayton and their contributors see schools as sites for transformation and empowerment, and for recognizing and acknowledging that the curriculum materials taught within schools are reproduction of knowledge about Indigenous Australians as silent, invisible and positioned in and by history as mere powerless, dispossessed characters on the landscape, 'objects who lack agency' (Moreton-Robinson 2000). They want to challenge this construction. Clare Bradford's *Reading Race* (2001), highlights the many and various school

texts that were developed within the school context to reinforce the orthodox history of Australia and the ‘explorers’ who ‘discovered’, ‘confronted’, ‘tamed and settled’ this vast, so-called unfriendly country. The colonial discourse governing Western ideology postulates that colonization was inevitable and necessary to development and progress and the history of Australia in regard to Indigenous peoples’ experiences is invisible from the pages of history because of this ‘inevitability’ (Bradford 2001:15).

This kind of analysis again raises the question of whose reality is being taught in schools? Whose reality is not being taught? Whose representation of us is being taught? Is this a true representation or a misrepresentation? Curriculum design, development and implementation need to have answers to each question. Apple (1996) and Grace (1985) offer useful approaches to necessary answers. What knowledge is being taught presents as dangerous when it denies the existence of Indigenous Australians and continues to place us outside the domain of ‘official’ history. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2003), states that ‘reading and interpretation present problems when we do not see ourselves in the texts. When we barely recognize ourselves through the images and representations presented’ (p 35). An important aspect to young Nunga fellas within the secondary schooling sector is how they perceive knowledge transmission occurring within their ‘educational habitus’ (Bourdieu), in which their experiences, attitudes and behaviors shape their selves and interact within the various fields of education (Webb et al., 2002).

In exploring what I call Nunga space and Nunga rap, I will look at the interactions between Indigenous youth and educational institutions by drawing from Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of ‘cultural capital’ as, ‘consumption patterns and culturally valued tastes’. I will refer to the way the individual-institution concept of ‘habitus’ operates (Webb et al., 2002:38) to test the reality of the effects of everyday education on Nunga students. This reality needs to be extended to include reconsideration and extension of the importance of the specific and often varied educational roles of family, friends, media, school and the community.

Groome’s (1994; 1995) texts on teaching *Aboriginal Studies in the Classroom* and *Purposefully Teaching Aboriginal Students* are still considered important works

and support the many issues raised by Indigenous individuals and communities when speaking about their children's schooling experiences. Groome's ability to identify issues of resistance, identity, language and belonging, allegiance to kin and knowledge of traditional lands and language groups reveals importance when talking about Nunga students' experience in schooling. I will lean on these ideas and connect them to feminist, postcolonial and black theory concepts and constructs discussed so far – including masculinity, deviance and the 'flexible' idea of youth itself.

This raises some questions in regard to Nunga students and the thinking that all is 'same'. Homogeneity impacts greatly on how schools represent the interests of young Nunga students and whether or not teachers 'see' Indigenous students and their needs within the schooling context. Government intervention and implementation of particular programs address some of the issues that determine Indigenous students' participation and success rates in schools. This is relevant in its particular applications as it is in any generic sense, for example 'The Report of the National Education and Employment Forum, 2002, National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Final Report 1995', the 'Report of the National Education and Employment Forum 2002' and 'National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000-2004', highlight the serious conditions that young Indigenous peoples are faced with. They draw attention to social indicators of unemployment, imprisonment, lack of school completion and health problems that continue to impact upon the lives of our young Indigenous peoples. The indicators are also turned into representations of Indigenous youth, then into 'profiles' and after that into identity markers to become conceptual inhibitors, even prisons. Schools are still not well placed (or in some cases prepared) to challenge and reverse the inhibition – but they could be more effective than they are with targeted curriculum innovation based on the development of skills that Nunga students find valuable and pleasurable. Despite these appalling social indicators, but also with them firmly in mind, schools must continue to identify, develop and implement programs that ensure Nunga students complete their schooling to the highest possible level.

The What Works? Project, 'to improve outcomes for Indigenous students' (March 2000), consisted of the Strategic Results Projects and Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programs, designed to explore how improvements in achievement might be accessible through dedicated resources and efforts (p1). Funding for this project made it possible for employment of Indigenous peoples to be involved in their children's schooling at every level from early childcare to tertiary. It also enabled teachers to implement programs which could lead to achievable outcomes and necessary changes – beyond surveillance. Further to this, teachers with Nunga students have begun to utilise outside Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations to also contribute to Nunga students' participation in schools, for instance by implementing units of work in which students work along-side accomplished Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. The genres of rap music and hip hop culture offer approaches to school 'work' which enable the students to be involved in 'keepin it real' by writing lyrics and producing CDs (for example), as well as gaining public voice in a community context (Dolan 2005:18) through involvement in public radio. Here is an instance of policy implementation that brings together voice and context and creativity.

Research Methodology

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) and Philip Carspecken (1996) describe various types of methods of conducting research, whilst ensuring the ethical care and safety of the participants. This way is important to Indigenous researchers and their subject-communities. Carspecken states that 'critical' qualitative research is one of several genres of inquiry into the features of social life concerned about inequalities, thus 'critical' qualitative researchers direct their work to bringing about positive social change. Issues of power, culture, race and human agency influence the processes of critical race theoretical research (1996:3) and methodologies. In fact methodology and methodological literature are 'subjects under investigation' in Indigenous research. Indigenous intellectuals have used the methodology of critical race theory to research amongst their own communities and to design Indigenous ways of research that contribute benefits to the participants being researched (Rigney 1997; Rigney 1994; Baker 2001). This idea of giving back is of great importance to my own research and influences my

decisions in the way I apply critical race theory, cultural and educational frameworks.

This research conducted with young Indigenous people is designed to reveal the extent to which they are also concerned about issues of quality (who is researched and how) as well as quantity (housing, employment, education, health, sexuality, violence and the law). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) regularly conducts research highlighting the significance of understanding where young Indigenous Australians are positioned in society. My research gives the opportunity for those who are positioned to offer a 'subjective voice'. This voice has a place in education and research, as the literature of Indigenous scholars' shows. Rap, if it is used constructively, is a conduit for expression of 'subjectivities' and can therefore serve as a personal and cultural marker in the process of making a way in and through theory, policy and practice in greater society.

My pen is my weapon, I sharpen its tip
I stab these pages, making changes, through the ages
In various stages, to explore, implore, pour the words
Out, come about, let shout.
Tryin to figure it.
Method in my madness to
Articulate, make haste, to rectify, reinvent the rhetoric.
What's truth when people are playin, sayin, complainin
About right and wrong, to map the past, present, future
Ensure the right, almighty fight, in places of power.
Knowledge gained, ashamed, insult, consult, translate.
Related.
The roles we take, the position we make, forsake others for
The spaces we shape.
My pen /s/ my weapon, I sharpen its tip, to flip the other side
Of the coin, to see, hear, know, flow...
The silences waiting.

Chapter 2: Rappin Methodology

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. (Tatiana de la Tierra 2000:368)

Shapeshifting

In the Introduction I argued that there was a need to ‘rap’ this thesis to test its central methodological proposition: that rap can help those trying to articulate a position. If the raps used so far ‘work’ in the processes of analysis, narrative and explanation then the proposition has validity. At this stage, however, rappin needs to be explained, not simply as a signature of the thesis but as a methodological innovation. I therefore begin this chapter on methodology by explaining a useful and adaptable process that I ‘discovered’ through rappin to find out what I was doing.

The ‘C/rit lit/rap’ at the end of Chapter one began life as yet another struggle to bring unruly material into some kind of order – to make it move to a beat at least. It looked something like this:

my pen is my weapon, I sharpen its tip I stab these pages,
making changes, through the ages in various stages, to explore,
implore, pour the word out, come about, let shout.
whats it about tryin to figure it articulate, make haste
to rectify, reinvent the rhetoric
what’s truth when people are playin, sayin, complainin
about right and wrong, to map the past, present, future
Ensure the right, almighty fight, in places of power
knowledge gained, ashamed, insult, consult, translate, Related
the roles we take, the position we make, forsake for others
my pen /s my weapon, I sharpen its tip, to flip the other side
of the coin, to see, hear, know, flow the silences waiting

In discussing its form and role in the chapter, it became clear that there were other ‘versions’ hiding within it. I realised that the idea of ‘shapeshifting’ – something Nunga kids need to do if they are to succeed and progress in the wider world – could be done in and through rap as a poetic form as well as an expression of a larger popular cultural phenomenon. This capacity to shift ‘poetic’ shape helped me to formulate a response, drawn from the value system of the critics, to the black and middle-class backlash against stereotypical gangsta rap. I decided to show that rap can ‘progress’ its impact from its raw forms of rhythm-driven protest, misogyny and violence to something which carries and supports progressive and complex ideas: something that can transform theoretical constructs into other forms of linguistic poetic practice and - through translation – into action.

By simply changing the form on the page, I was able to begin to play with the conditions for reception, to give rap more than one chance. The ‘new’ version of the original rap – rearranged on the page and augmented – gains a number of qualities: irony and a degree of playfulness in its parodic and tricky title (*C/rap*; *lit/crit*); layers of dramatic narrative; historical perspective and contemplation of time; reflexivity and strategic positioning in the thesis that lends itself to change, so that the rap turned free-verse poem sets up the next chapter (‘method in madness’ and ‘the spaces we shape’) instead of the conventional conclusion and prose transition:

My pen is my weapon, I sharpen its tip
I stab these pages, making changes, through the ages
In various stages, to explore, implore, pour the words
Out, come about, let shout.
Tryin to figure it.
Method in my madness, to
Articulate, make haste, to rectify, re-invent the rhetoric.
What’s truth when people are playin, sayin, complainin
About right and wrong? To map the past, present, future
Ensure the right, almighty fight, in places of power.
Knowledge gained, ashamed. Insult, consult, translate,
Related.
The roles we take, the position we make, forsake for others
The spaces we shape.
My pen /s/ my weapon, I sharpen its tip, to flip the other side
Of the coin, to see, hear, know, flow the silences waiting...
The silences waiting.

Following from this idea of formal shapeshifting and methodological usefulness I offer a further example. This chapter begins with an epigrammatic quote from de la Tierra. I decided to see what would happen if I rapped this idealize proposition. This is how it sounds and looks when the verbal and vocal dynamics are changed (Blanch and Worby npd).

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 right to be here

If I presented the quote to many of my students they would turn off. The rap is another matter. If, at first, they can't understand the words they can understand the beat and they can find the points of 'insertion' into the piece to allow them to make it theirs. They can shift it on the page and taste it. For students and teacher this is a version of Nunga intervention into the small circuits of exchange called youth popular culture and poetry, each of which has a particular 'capital' value in the mainstream cultural (educational) economy. If they make the switch with me they have virtual 'cash' – which can mean exchange value and status in two worlds. The first is theirs and the second is one that they can make theirs. What I am proposing is not unique. Other art forms offer similar opportunities – from dance to graffiti – but rap has the advantage of being attractive and accessible in comparison to the others for young Nunga males. All the resources needed to get started are space, attitude and columns of air (Blanch and Worby, ndp).

The politics of research methodology

In my view the approach I have taken to rapping methodology is broadly Indigenist (as defined by Rigney, 1999). I add a dimension of innovation with form and process to ideas on Indigenist research by offering rap as a subjective, reflexive research practice. This still allows for the employment of a critical qualitative educational research framework. Framework and rap process when put together allow consideration of the following questions. Whose interests does the research serve? Who loses and who gains from this research? Whose voice is silenced and whose voice is heard? Whose reality is privileged and whose reality isn't privileged? (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000; Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong 2000; and Ladson-Billing 2000). These are the 'political' questions at the heart of a struggle over and within the provinces of academic research and its methodologies. In the view of Linda Tuhiwai Smith:

Research, is one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary. (2003:1)

Research for Indigenous peoples has left a sour taste in our mouths, and in the past has intruded in community lives. The collections of information and interpretation have too often been conducted according to non-Indigenous interpretations, and theories written about us have been oppressive and driven by anthropological approaches (Moreton-Robinson 2004; Linda Tuhiwai Smith 2003).

My approach to the research around rap music and influence on Nunga boys came out of a desire to move beyond the 'outsider' research to 'insider' and 'border-crossing' research that speaks to the social issues of Indigenous lives and whole communities and to provide an opportunity for young Nunga boys to speak for themselves. To this extent there is a deliberately autobiographical element as well as an 'auto-critical' element to the 'method' of writing. I seek to compare my own experience with education to theirs, to consider change in intergenerational terms and to highlight their story/ies, and sense-making of their world and how they see themselves within the context of their surroundings (Rose 1994; Butler 1999), be it their immediate community or the wider community. Gaining an

insight into how they make use of the popular subculture of rap and hip hop to construct the 'self', that is their 'male self' (Macdonald 2001:6), will add to the thesis.

In the previous chapter I identified Bourdieu's theory of 'cultural capital' defined as 'consumption patterns and culturally valued tastes', as one of a number of theoretical concepts important in exploring what I call Nunga rap. In my approach to methodology I want to add to this the concept of 'habitus', which is identified by Bourdieu as understanding the relationship the individual has with society and their interaction with and within institutions (in Webb et al., 2002:38). This is especially important to an understanding of how Nunga youth relate to the 'spaces' of school and to 'occupation' of space.

Space is a material resource, a source of capital, cultural capital. It is 'taught' to us through our teachers and schools as well as other institutions in society. The influences from institutions contribute and impact on our identity and draw attention to the prevailing assembling and recognizing of 'value' in a material as well as ethical sense. Young Nunga males compete in the education sector for their own 'cultural capital' by resisting the authorization of certain discourses and activities that they deem as unimportant to them. Through performance and adoption of 'masks' young Nunga males interact daily in public performances to rupture the perception teachers have of them.

My methodology must employ critical analysis and practical application in equal measure. The questions I ask of texts and subjects are therefore crucial in choosing the right combination of methodological approaches. So, what are some specific questions that need to be asked to 'unlock' the problem of lack of agency and encourage culturally rich innovation in curriculum development? The questions have to be 'right' because young Indigenous men have too often been positioned as 'victims' and not resisters of colonial ideology (During 1995, p19). Bhabha argues that 'the gap between inherited or official meaning (ideology) and its individual performance provides room for resistance and individuation' (1994:189). It is therefore envisaged that the questions that yield data for this thesis will reveal, and (in general) support, the stand point epistemologies of

young Indigenous males' ways of being, and encourage them as active citizens in contemporary society. This approach challenges negative stereotypes and investigates Nunga youth culture with a focus on the positive and productive consequences of appropriation, adoption and adaptation of the African American popular culture of rap/hip hop into Nunga rap. The methodological approach to education history, policy and theory will have the same objective: to position each aspect in a way that opens it to change and effective 'ways of being', seeing, doing and exchange for young Nunga males.

This study is built on layers of questions in an attempt to construct another way of seeing youth experiences as well as voicing their 'Nunganess'. These questions point to a journey from increased and positive sense of self, through valuing engagement and creative skills via the Nunga room and community interaction, to positive participation in education and in the wider social context. They do not suggest answers that are the be-all and end-all but they point to other and better ways of thinking about change. Before I detail the questions however, I will extend and further contextualise the research rationale.

Research design and rationale

The research is designed to elicit and evaluate qualitative responses and, based on quantitative evidence of disadvantage, to extrapolate from them a beginning set of implications for certain changes to educational practice and perhaps policy. Its rationale is drawn from critical social and educational theory, policy formulation and most importantly lived/grounded experiences. The theoretical framework of the research is qualitative, grounded in the discipline of education but extending into others areas of social and cultural enquiry, theory and practice.

Angelina McRobbie in her paper 'Different, Youthful, Subjectivities' (1996), cites Gilroy and what he says about research amongst black youth in urban Britain. The perceptions are useful. Gilroy states that 'consistently black expressive cultures refuse the framework of the 'Eurocentric' structuralisms as useful tools of analysis'. Thus according to him 'structuralism, post-structuralism and even psychoanalysis need to be critiqued if they are to be of any use in dealing with the hybridic, inter-textual and antiphonic forms of black popular

culture'. These forms, he argues, require (at least) an approach, which integrates text and context through the social practices of performance, production and participation (McRobbie, p34). These practices and concepts connect to others identified so far: appropriation, adoption, adaptation, representation, cultural capital and cultural exchange, transformation via critical enlightenment and discourse positioning. They can be used in various creative combinations to interpret and inform this research, and enable challenges to the current educational paradigms as they relate to Nunga males. Their combination suggests new spaces of resistance and transformation, to help establish new identities, or to construct new knowledge/power relations through education (Giroux 2005:17) in partnership with educators.

Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) argue that, critical theory is always changing and evolving and there always needs to be a process of re-thinking of critical theory and qualitative research. This research intends to contribute to that re-thinking as it applies to minority Nunga males. Kincheloe and McLaren name areas of critical theory that need to be addressed for example: critical enlightenment, where analyzing competing interest between groups and individuals within specific situations is important as a form of analyzing power relations and relative benefit and critical emancipation in which the research goes beyond the surface and looks at the discourse behind theories of power, ideology, language. In the process they describe the critical hermeneutical methods of interpretation suggesting that no pristine interpretation exists; no methodology, social or educational theory or discursive form can claim a privileged position that enables the production of authoritative knowledge and researchers will always be interpreters of data in relation to and not outside the boundary (p286). The system is in need of 'enlightenment' and youth look for 'emancipation'. The relationship between youth and system is symbiotic but symbiosis is too often ignored.

It is with this in mind that I find myself resisting the Eurocentric framework and seek a space in which young Nunga fellas' voices are heard above the 'noise' of research, to enable their own consciousness raising and empowerment. What is needed is a space in which young Nunga males have a 'homeplace' where they

can feel safe and nurtured: a space where they are subjects and not objects (hooks 1990). A start to achieving this is (as McRobbie states) a different research mode in relation to the study of youth: a research mode which priorities multiple levels of experience, including the ongoing relations which connect everyday life with cultural forms (1996:35). This is a sound way of expressing what I am doing. These multiple levels can be seen in the ways in which Indigenous people talk to each other in the community and a 'talking circle' approach to formal communication has been developed accordingly. Together they lead to the layers of questions already mentioned.

Research Questions

The overall research question posed by this thesis is: How can Young Nunga Males Perform Agency in an Education Context? A sequence of four subordinate research questions flows from this. The questions are designed to position and invite analysis of current educational approaches, and identify the interests of a particular sub-group and apply theories of culture and education to foreground those interests. The premise behind the research question is that Nunga Rap is a clearly identified set of practices that fits the Indigenous concept of 'walkin the walkin and talkin the talk'. This means speaking out and acting out to achieve social, political, community and personal goals. It means accessing mainstream as well as alternative pathways to these objectives. Rap offers such a way.

The subordinate questions are: What kinds of educational 'space' do Nunga males need to succeed? How can interest in popular cultural forms be employed in this space to promote success? How can these ideas on Nunga space and Nunga creativity through a popular music and dance form and subculture be theorised and realised? How can this theory and practice increase understanding of Indigenous subjectivity? The generic and subordinate questions produce supplementary working questions to be tackled in a talking-circle field format to be outlined shortly. Answers to them provide ways of dealing with larger concerns, so my response to methodology begins with listening to what young Nungas are saying 'on the ground'. This is a way of taking small steps to deal with big business and big issues in close perspective. I will only begin to answer the questions here. Fuller responses underpin the following chapters.

In summary, to position practical questions in relation to the broader issues raised by the premise of the thesis, the research will work within the framework of critical cultural studies using qualitative research and a ‘talking circle’ format to explore the individual lived experiences and behaviors of young Nunga males. The method of inquiry lies within the framework of grounded/lived experiences, with a criticality interpretative qualitative approach designed to suit research by Indigenous people of Indigenous people for Indigenous people.

Methodology and protocol

The research methodology will include the ways of doing things that exist within the protocols of Indigenous community context. As an Indigenous researcher, in my relationship with academia and research centres, I find myself working from two positions. On the one hand, as Rigney (1999) argues, ‘continually functioning in this system by participating in the social structures that were and are instrumental in my/our own oppression’ and on the other hand engaging ‘in a collective process of “transforming” silence(s) into actions’ (Audre 1984:40) through interaction, engagement and involvement in academia. I acknowledge that sometimes it may appear I am operating from the margins. Sometimes I am in fact operating from the centre (hooks, 1996; Minh-ha, 1998). Both sites and concepts allow me the place and space to reinvent or at least re-imagine myself, or shapeshift – sometimes in the shadows and sometimes up front. This is an act of resistance to the expectations that I am simply conforming to the norms of institutionalization in our racialised society and not occupying a site where transformation occurs. ‘Nunga space’, as it operates in my life, and its various adaptations allows me to move and to reposition my arguments. This is also the case for the Nunga youth, I would say.

Methodology and principles

It is within this context that I acknowledging my own understanding of the life experiences and history of my mob and myself, from a number of social and intellectual position, and I take on board the principles of Indigenist research as outlined by Rigney (2007) and other Indigenous researchers. Moreton-Robinson (2000) and Tuhiwai Smith (2003) speak of researching within Indigenous

communities and point out that there are important points to consider when participating in research within Indigenous communities. For example these principles, as Rigney sees them are: (i) Resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research, (ii) Political integrity in Indigenous research and, (iii) Privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenist research, Rigney's contribution builds on these principles (2007). I add to these the construction and corporialization or 'embodiment' of 'space' to enable empowerment and transformation to occur through methods designed by Indigenous researchers in partnership with Indigenous peoples.

In following, recording and extending these principals set out by Rigney and others my research methodology brings together social sciences and humanities/cultural studies approaches with the aim of moving beyond the surface level, (where effects may barely be noticed or felt, where self-perception and understanding are often taken for granted and non-disruptive), to a deeper level, where Indigenous youths' 'sense-making' of their world, leads to consciousness raising and empowerment (Carspecken 1996; Rigney 1999; Spillman 2002).

Methods within methodology: from comparative analysis to the proxemics of the Nunga Room

My methods - the ways of actualizing methodology - involve: comparative textual analysis; creative engagement through rapping in my thesis; fieldwork using learning/talking circle and dialogic or conversational modes, both structured and unstructured, Nunga way; and proxemics or the practical reading of bodies in space. The first approach is a conventional aspect of social research. The others are not so obvious and I will refer to or concentrate on them in the next section.

Rapping in school

I have already discussed rapping as a critical/methodological matter at the beginning of this chapter, but it is also a method of engaging with students. To engage the students in the research I wrote words on the whiteboard inviting them to create their own rap. This method of teaching gave space and time for creation. Here is an example:

B2K: Hey Yo, it's the 2K depth
Yo homie, take care unit
I'm the hottest thing you know
When you look at me
You lookin at a kid wid a plan
Homie check sound stan, so so
Def u herd u know when
Beat follows the motto
I'm irresistible to all chicks
Listen to my remix

B2K: This is the one I just made up.

Just having the opportunity to 'make it up' shows how the actualization of opening space for creative play engages the students in structured and unstructured conversation and their own performance of bodies in deliberative space. The educational task involves translating this into conscious learning. Further evidence of their performance of rap will be in focus throughout this thesis.

Fieldwork: scope and definition

The field investigation was conducted at one site, a school in Adelaide's western suburbs, with only young Indigenous males in the participant focus group/talking circle. This allowed for one small but significant section of the Indigenous community's voice to be heard. The choice of site and the small availability of participants contributed to the outcome of the study. Times of access to students (lunchtime), in a particular place (classroom) further impacted on the outcome of the research. But these are real world research conditions in schools during school hours and reflect the exposure of teachers, students and researchers to the issues raised by this kind of work. Students have volunteered to participate. Volunteering in an otherwise managed and compliance-dominated environment also affects the research.

In the early stages of the investigation, meetings were arranged with the Principal of the chosen school, the Aboriginal Education Teacher (AET), the Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW), parents and caregivers to discuss the research project, and to seek the participation of each student. The second meeting involved the

interested participants and the Aboriginal Education Team (Ab Ed Team) giving me the opportunity to outline the research project and inviting their participation in the project. Each meeting allowed the parents and participants the opportunity to meet and ask questions. Contact was maintained with the Aboriginal Education Team and Principal within the chosen site to address any issues of concern that rose out of the meetings. The support of the Aboriginal Education Team enabled the project to go forward successfully and ethically.

Talking/learning circles and Aboriginal English

The main sampling and data generation was through the focus group/talking circle discussions. Focus groups can be empowering. They are not structured like interviews, and therefore assume a more flexible researcher/subject relationship, but leave room for participants to be interviewed, particularly if there is a need for follow up on an answer. The methodology of focus groups operating as ‘talking circles’ – a term used in the Reconciliation process and elsewhere- should allow for interaction. This way the whole group generates the data. Questions can stimulate discussion that can be guided or unguided, addressing a particular topic of interest or relevance to the group and the researcher. Flexibility of the questions means that they can be modified, within ethical limits at any point during the study, depending on the answers generated (Berg 1998:100; Carspecken 1996; Paul Aylward pers.com. Oct, 2004).

Nunga ways of achieving outcomes through the format of a talking circle can occur when there are clear signs of respect given and received. Further to this is the recognition by both parties that there is a sharing of the power base. In this case, participants contributed to the research on the understanding that I, as researcher, was not conducting research ‘on’ them (Rigney 1997). In the process of collecting data, the use of Aboriginal English to guide the questions and extend on the answers to achieve the outcomes of the research is important in this more equal approach. It is one of the signs of respect and allows a sense of ownership of the project for the young Nunga males. The ‘What Works’, the Work Program Improving Outcomes for Indigenous Students Successful Practices (2006) highlights the importance of Aboriginal English in our life:

Aboriginal English is a dialect of English and is an important marker of cultural and linguistic identity amongst us. It is the home dialect of a large proportion of Indigenous people across Australia. It is a modification of Standard English and reflects our worldview (p24).

The concept of a 'talking/learning circle' highlighted in the Reconciliation Learning Kit, suggests gathering in a learning circle format is a meaningful way of involving people in the process of reconciliation in this country using their own language of choice. It is practical and symbolic. The talking circle is grounded in Native American culture to give the participants the opportunity to speak without interruptions. The rules in the circle ensure the conversation to flow in a safe and respectful way and that everyone is given the right to speak, whether they choose to or not (Hartmann 2001:1).

In my experience, young Nunga males engage with this format, or find it easier to learn than other interview-based approaches. Implementation of a talking circle format reminds me of the cultural expression of rapping. The antiphonic (call and response) aesthetic of the African-American musical culture means that its meanings are open-ended rather than closed. Answering back or talking back in an improvised or immediate way is what gives black/Nunga expressive culture much of its character and structure. This is also a way of creating new meanings by adding and replying to the cultural 'bank' of black history. I do not argue that Native American, Black American and Nunga social interactions are the same – but they each have relevance in the construction of rap as a research subject, to contribute to existing cultural forms and the production of new forms and new meanings, central to the analysis of black expressive cultures (Gilroy p35).

Within Indigenous 'ways' when trying to gain information from or share with another Indigenous person, one does not ask a question directly with the aim of seeking a direct answer. Instead there is the talking before the 'getting to the point', and the questioning process takes part in the talking. The answer is sought by asking the question, expecting to be answered with a question. It is one of the ways to seek clarification. We may know a little about the topic but need further information to feel confident in the asking. This, in a sense places one in a

position of being humble and patient, trusting that the answer will arrive, as Trinh T. Minh-ha puts it:

In discussions never does one open the discussion by coming right to the heart of the matter...the heart of the matter is always somewhere else than where it is supposed to be. People approach it indirectly by allowing it to emerge, to let it come when it is ready to arrive (1994:3).

Talking circles have been used with the process of reconciliation to invite a partnership between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians to find a way to meet and discuss issues about the history of Australia (Reconciliation Learning Kit), but the concept applies to Indigenous communication in the community as well, especially in relation to small self-managing discussion groups.

In the case of this project, self-management is a somewhat limited idea given age and the power-differential between participants and researcher, but it does have a place in the process. The group met in an identified room familiar to the participants as the 'Nunga room', their room. Through the enabling practices of a version of the talking circle, the participants were able to feel confident in sharing their own experiences, in their own time, at their own pace without too much direction from myself or the Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW). It invoked their own understanding of as well as resistance to formal structures and encourages practical integrity and 'voice', engendering creative engagement.

Making Nunga space

Whilst space is defined in theoretical terms elsewhere, the method of using such a space needs to be identified specifically here. In everyday practice students and teachers come to the Nunga room when they need to discuss issues with the Aboriginal Education teaching team. The students go to the Nunga room when they have meetings with family and community members, or when a particular education program is implemented. It is also the working space for the Aboriginal Education Team because it can be made into a sanctuary as well as a punitive space, depending on the situation. Communication in the Nunga room as 'made' space involves recognition that: rooms and open circles summon up

contrary dynamics in need of resolution. Rap, graffiti and food break rigid communication conventions and replace them with others more conducive to learning for young Nunga males.

Enabling communication

It is my desire to encourage conversation to flow between the participants and with me, but I am aware that from time to time the particular participant may need direction to achieve the outcomes of the research as well as effective, collective communication. As McLaren states 'in education one still has to recognize that one is working within a logocentric tradition that, to a greater or lesser extent, privileges words over actions' (2000:302). The use of stimulus such as rap artist lyrics, film and posters will be implemented to enable the flow of the conversation. Empowerment is, after all, dependent on enabling communication. In enabling communication and empowerment to occur, a space to generate this process can develop to accommodate application of a critical race discourse. Rolon-Dow (2005:77) articulates 'that critical race theory begins with the premise that to understand how race shapes social life, one must contextually and historically examine the formation of social power along these lines'. A sense of enabling space helps to understand such formations.

Limitations to the study

Limitations to the study are dependent upon the kind of relationship the researcher builds with the participants, as well as day- to- day matters of attendance, truancy, illness, transition and retention of the participants and the impacts of community related events. All of these things relate to the research parameters outlined in the 'Culture and Education: policy and sociology', in Chapter 1 above. These social factors are part of the everyday social reality and schooling context of schooling.

In *Critical Ethnology in Educational Research* (1996), Carspecken discusses the limitations and dilemmas of conducting research within the school context. I have to agree with what he says about the site, setting and social system that exist within the schooling sector. He suggests that the classroom is a good example of a social site. Social sites are regions within society in which routine activities, usually including interactions, take place. The site used here is situated on school

property, within the timetable of students, and will be open to influences from outside the classroom. Therefore I acknowledge the impacts of timeframe and site on the research outcomes. The site has its inhibiting as well as its enabling characteristics and both must be acknowledged. It is acknowledged, for example, that through the talking circle the group will interact with each other at a specific and not always suitable time to participants.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2003) argues for the right of Indigenous peoples to design the tools that are needed to conduct research within their own communities (p38). I agree with her and understand that for research to take place within the Nunga community, there has to be space to recreate/design the tools to enable this research to take place and that this is a necessary part of decolonization, of the research process as viewed through the lens of western ideology. Re-claiming and re-naming space is just one example of a wider proposition.

This gendered, aged and place-specific approach to Indigenous research is built on a combination of cultural and social research practices, modes and paradigms which apply to students' lived experiences of schooling in context via policy, curriculum development, learning/teaching practices, community protocols and inter-subjective processes of data gathering and interpretation. It resists, it aspires to political integrity and it privileges particular voices. It is 'pro-activist' research. It raps and the rapping does not always sit easily with method and methodology. In fact, resolving the tension between conventional and unconventional approaches to methodology is one of the major struggles in Indigenous as well as Indigenist research for researcher and their subjects. To help understand the process, I wrote about that tension this way – my voice and the voices of the Nunga boys overlapping and parting as roles switch and blend:

ya talkin don't make sense, ya representin
ya representin of me, don't hear, don't see, unclear
images play with my mind, unkind, don't find
me amongst the concept of definitions, inscriptions,
subscribed described as something untru, construe,
impure thoughts of me
constrained, contained, maintained, in ya
description,

refrain, retain, resurrect, retrospect, respect
my talking make sense, my representin
consentin to see me, amongst the image
portrayed, played, conveyed configurated
between the pages of time
clarity, charity, validity shines through
I smile, I smile, a portrait is refined
defined, complete, sweet sublime me.

Consultation and ethics

The research is designed to follow the ethical guidelines outlined by Flinders University, Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Research and Education, Department of Education and Children Services (DECS) and Aboriginal Education. It is important that Indigenous ethical guidelines are also adhered to, particularly in situations in which questions of academic honesty are raised as well as power relations and the responsibility of the researcher to the researched and collaborators. In this sense pedagogies of care inform the ethical practices of this research.

Clifford Christians (2000, p138) highlights the issue of ethics and the importance of maintaining a code of ethics. Informed consent and proper respect should allow participants to agree to participate in the investigation voluntarily, without physical or psychological coercion. Identities and location of study should be safeguarded and data gathered must be secured in a safe concealed site. The study will be conducted with cultural sensitivity and care as defined by Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and other agencies charged with Indigenous research. The confidentiality and safety of all involved participants must be paramount. In the talking and learning circles, participants varied in age between 12-16 years. A letter introducing the researcher was sent to possible participants, parents, and caregivers outlining the research project. The letter of introduction included details of contact, to cover any concerns or queries in regards to the research project. All participants have been given tags and pseudonyms to ensure anonymity but sustain character and presence.

Accompanying the letter of introduction was a consent form, seeking consent of participants and a 'flyer' summarizing the research project. The 'flyer' was used to organize a meeting time to further discuss the project with both parents and participants. The research hinges on a healthy relationship with the participants involved and depends on no harm being done to any participants. All information was treated strictly confidentially and apart from time, there was no burden on or risk to the participants. Information gathering has been spread over a period of time, and any specific time period placed little demand on the participants. In addition, it was guaranteed that if the researcher, Principal, Aboriginal Education Worker and Aboriginal Education Teacher became conscious of a risk – real or otherwise – the participants would automatically be withdrawn from the research. The researcher worked closely alongside the Aboriginal Education team within the school to also ensure the safety of the students.

The Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW), a Nunga male with high respect status and knowledge among students and Nunga parents and caregivers within the school community and the wider community, was also involved in the process. This involvement is important as the ethical guidelines of the Nunga community insist that when one is working with the opposite gender, protection of all parties is taken into consideration. In this case, the researcher is female and the research group composed of young males. The Aboriginal Education Worker and Aboriginal Education Teacher were contacted regularly to seek advice. The need for professional counselling was not envisaged nor was it needed. Researchers also need support and protection and care. One of the co-supervisors is Indigenous and operated as a critical mentor, further safeguarding the ethical obligation to do no harm. In addition, the teachers, Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW) and school counsellor, are all in positions to monitor for any unexpected and potentially harmful effects from the research. In the event of such effects being identified, the research project was able to be terminated immediately and the various interested organizations notified.

Methodology, method, care and respect

I return now to the ideas introduced at the beginning of this chapter. To encourage my own understanding of methodology and method, I used writing

raps to guide me through the thesis. I wanted the young Nunga fellas to see and write a road through their schooling experiences as I saw pathways through my research using rap. I employed rap/poems to identify my own standpoint and positionality and encouraged them to do the same. The interface between 'external' and 'internal' approaches to research was stripped down to enabling and strategic de- and reconstruction. This proved to be a useful way of coping with writer's block, the theoretical concepts and jargons. It also allowed an immediate understanding of the significance of 'voice' in the writing and researching processes and of performance in the process of writing itself. It showed young fellas 'a way' of using their skills. In this way, a method of dealing with complex and unfamiliar material developed into a methodological construct: rapping as a point of translation of theory into practice. The other aspects of methodology fell into place around the central act.

Chapter 3: Rappin the Nunga Room: space for transformation and empowerment

in ya face, yea, in ya face

rappin the Nunga space, in this place, in ya face
you speak without sayin, your voice is loud
the silence booms forth from your resistance
insistence to be heard, my listenin leaves much
to be desired, fired from within your embodiment
the action moves your body, flexibility
stylin up in this Nunga space, this place,
up in ya face

awaken your voice, rejoice in moments of clarity
possibility to establish your rights in this site, all
might be okay you say when speakin about your
culture fixin to shift gear, near to the fore, glory to
ya story telling it like it is, no dismiss-ing of progress process
to know the collective memories exists within this site
hist-a-re is clear when victories are celebrated, congratulated
within this Nunga space, this place,
up in ya face

pictures tell the story, shows the ménage of family extension
conversation takes centre stage, struggles are confronted
slotted into the groove of spaces, places surrounding
bodies of curiosity, await their time when things will show
the fine details of livin for and amongst ya own people
to emerge the victor within Nunga space, this place,
up in ya face, say it yea.
up in ya face

Building upon the intellectual and methodological contexts and processes at play in this thesis, it is now time to focus on the principal sections of my research. I begin with space in preparation for voice, gaze and a curriculum design that help to get young Nunga males ‘home’ through making good use of what they already know. In keeping with my approach in methodology, I use rap as a way to give voice to stories unfolding in what I call Nunga ‘space’, in a Nunga room that serves as a ‘home’ base for Nunga kids in school. Their stories set up discussion and application of some important theoretical and analytical cultural and social concepts – especially concerning generic ‘space’ and ‘place’ (and the

organization and layout of schools as cultural and social space), Nunga space and place and ‘time-space pathways’ or life journeys through and within space and place. It also expands on the context in which the stories at the beginning of the thesis can be understood. Through the use of narratives and story telling I look for as Gibson states ‘residues, and see them as scenes, places where dramatic accounts might be staged for appreciation and critique by a stringent audience, a scene full of hints patterned somehow with the imprint of an event or social process’ (2006:12). Through the exploration and analysis of Nunga space in the Nunga Room, I hope to see the position of young Nunga males within mainstream society, their schooling experiences and their engagement with the genre of rap and hip hop culture to gain agency and voice, as well as to learn, move, shift and extend on my own educational journey both as a teacher, mother, researcher and community member.

A young Nunga’s experience in school space and time

For the sake of confidentiality and safety for the student and the teacher involved in the following ‘scene’, I use the tags throughout this thesis, in this case aCa and Ms. On this particular day aCa was found waiting outside the Nunga room. Ms the Aboriginal Education Teacher (AET) and I came upon him when heading to the Nunga room to discuss the next section of the research project. The first thing Ms said was ‘Oh there’s aCa and he’s not in uniform, it’s almost lunch time, I wonder what’s going on? As we neared aCa, Ms asked him, ‘how he was and why wasn’t he wearing school uniform?’ aCa’s response was: ‘I am not really at school. I just came to see if I needed to have a meeting with the Deputy Principal about something that occurred during a relief lesson yesterday’.

This was the first time Ms had heard of the incident and wanted to find out more. According to aCa it involved his threat to ‘knock the block off’ a relief teacher who had raised his voice at aCa during a lesson. In aCa’s words he had, ‘gotten off his chair and walked to the door of the classroom and looked outside to see what was going on’ and was asked by the teacher to ‘get back inside and sit down’. aCa informed Ms that the relief teacher had shouted at him and made him feel ‘shame’ in front of the other students. aCa responded by saying ‘an I’ll knock your block off, if you don’t stop shouting at me’.

Ms asked aCa what he thought would happen to him. aCa's response was that he wouldn't apologise, but he also realised that he was in trouble in respect to the threat and therefore had to expect some form of disciplinary action. That was the only reason he had come to school that day, to see what 'punishment' would be handed out in relation to the incident. While they were talking and finding solutions, I was aware of how comfortable aCa appeared to be in the Nunga room and how open and easy he was with Ms. I also wondered if he felt 'okay' about discussing the incident in front of me. I felt privileged to be a part of the conversation, and Ms asked aCa if he minded me speaking with him and he replied, 'No'. I told aCa: 'You have the right to an education and sometimes to get that education you have to play the game. And if playing the game means you have to say sorry for something, then you may have to say sorry'.

I am aware that it is easy for me to tell aCa that to get through a situation you have to treat it like a game. I'm not in that situation, but for a young teenager it is different and aCa was feeling vulnerable and angry about the incident, and saying a simple sorry is a hard thing to do, because it placed him in a position of being the instigator and not the victim. aCa reacted strongly again to this by saying point blank: 'I won't apologise. It should be the teacher that apologises. He shouted at me'. I was also aware of the further dilemma he faced in having to apologise. It meant that he admitted to doing something wrong, and he felt that is was unfair. As a popular young Nunga fella, he had to save face. He had to appear to be tough, uncaring and cool and right.

In using Gibson to think about aCa's dilemma as an encounter, or a scene occurring at a staging point along a journey, I realized that the approach gave me access to a comprehension of numerous and often contradictory perceptions of reality. It linked to theoretical ideas I had been contemplating and years of teaching practice. In that moment a number of concepts of time and space collided. No wonder there was a confrontation which drew to a head: aCa's time 'in and out' of school; 'relief teacher/casual time' as opposed to 'full time'; the 'class time' of the encounter; the 'time between' the encounter and the telling;

schooling as a ‘time of life’ within a lifetime; ‘fast’ time and ‘slow’ time in the playing of the game; time to resist and time to relent; and so on.

In spatial terms, again, the encounter was complex. aCa was ‘at’ the Nunga room on school grounds but not ‘at school’; the Nunga room was a school space, but not only a school space; stories that could not be told outside the room could be told within it. Taken further, the time-space context for an ‘apology’ from aCa – when other larger historical apologies were being refused – repositioned and contextualized aCa’s behavior. Such processes opened up discourses that I might otherwise have recognized but undervalued – habitus, stereotyping and performance of masculinity, cultural pride and history. In an attempt to understand what was needed to divert surveillance and punishment into a more positive pathway, these concepts will now be considered in the next section.

I tell this story this way because it gives an indication of how one young Nunga boy coordinates resistance and strategises agency from his own interaction within Giddens’ concept of time-space convergence. As I drove away from the school, I thought of bell hooks’ words on the subject of teacher/student relationship:

in order to create a learning environment within the classroom one must diffuse hierarchy and create a sense of community where the classroom can be a place that is life sustaining and mind expanding, a place where student and teacher can work in partnership. (2003)

Can this be possible I ask?

Space and place as cultural constructs – time-space convergence

Simon During offers one view of culture that applies to ‘white’ Australia. He states:

even assuming that we know precisely what “contemporary culture” is, it can be analysed in many ways – sociologically...by “objectively” describing its institutions and functions as if they belong to a large, regulated system; or economically, by describing the effects of investment and marketing on cultural production...it can be studied “critically” by celebrating either large forms or specific texts or images. (1993:1)

This view of culture is something that constantly changes, drifts, moves, shifts and returns in different packaging with a different name. It contributes to how we 'fit' into our worlds and make sense of our worlds. Indigenous Australians live with this mobile approach to dominant culture and with another idea of culture as well: culture as the thing that connects them to past and future and country – dynamic but secure, in which there are certainties. The study of western culture within the contemporary framework yields a number of ideas about how to position Nunga education. It offers Giddens' approach to time-space pathways, for example. Giddens states that the 'pattern of relations' (in Carspecken 1996:34-35), and the routines that are followed in one social site, namely a classroom, are influenced by routines in other locales, settings and sites and are conducted from one to the other along 'time-space paths'. This is a useful concept.

Western cultural theory also highlights the role that Bourdieu's writing plays in the critique of 'contemporary culture'. Bourdieu approaches the notion of culture through the concepts of habitus, field and capital (Webb, Schirato & Danaher 2002:1). His term 'habitus' focuses on the everyday practices of the individual and their performance within certain contexts which include the encounters with particular people they interact with on a daily basis. This idea of habitus is useful because it recognises role processes and enabling of cultural production in historical and social contexts. If approaches to space and place offered by de Certeau and Casey via Reilly, are added – in which space is read as 'an abstract concept awaiting definition' and place is read as 'the locus of significance connected to recognizable terrains and transformations' (Reilly 2006) – then one method of understanding the relationship between education and young Nungas begins to take shape. What they do can be read as: a set of everyday practices and encounters, along particular time-space pathways in a locus of significance connected to recognizable terrains and transformations.

But there is the Nunga idea to factor into the understanding of culture as well. Dr. Irene Watson, Nunga lawyer, writer and activist, asserts what Nunga culture means for Nungas. She says:

our laws of ruwi are ancient. They come from a time the old ones called Kaldowinyeri – the dreaming, the place of lawfulness, a time before, a time now, and a time we are always coming to, a place where Nunga history, songs and stories of spirit-law, were always embodied in the land, the greater natural world and universal order of things. (2002:254)

In the case of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains, their creator ancestor Tjilbruke the Fire eater, plays a huge role in their understandings of themselves and their connection to land, and their people. Watson says:

Nungas coexisted in the law; we were not waiting to be ‘discovered’ or waiting to be ‘granted the right to be’ self-determining, for we were already the truth of who we were as Nungas. The colonial state cannot ‘grant’ us who we are, for it was never theirs to give. (2002:256)

Here she reprimands the colonizing forces and insists that they allow Nungas to be who they are and to be recognized as the first peoples of what is now called South Australia. Expectations to conform to the hegemonic norms of the dominant culture, regardless of Indigenous groups’ co-existence with ‘traditional’ land and use of language and other dialects of surrounding language groups, is enforced by policy and law in contemporary society. The ordered colonised space since invasion has gone through a process of nullification, classification, and assimilation to present a view of Australia as a nation with one prevailing culture, which is another way of saying without cultures. Deborah Bird Rose states ‘to create order is to promote loss’ (2000:60). When taken together these colonised and Indigenous approaches to culture and the construction of identity arising from cultural positioning present contradictions and problems for Indigenous young people. Loss is very much a part of their experience. Among the challenges for young Indigenous Australians is how they have been perceived and represented over time and how they are now perceived by the wider community. Are they for example, ‘too fair’, and ‘half-caste’ or full-blood? This blood quantum ideology, as one stark example of many classificatory practices, has played a major factor in the discourses determining who is and who isn’t Aboriginal. This has affected their schooling.

Groome (1994) highlights the experiences that Nunga boys (and girls) face in educational institutions when dealing with complex cultural pressures. He states that boys are frequently stereotyped by teachers and will find themselves in positions of having to 'perform' particularly in response to authority and racism. Performance here means acting out compliance with, as well as resistance to, dominant western paradigms of order and cultural priority. aCa's performance of bravado, cool and flippancy may seem disrespectful but turning up at school to seek what the punishment would be, reveals his interest in his schooling and his sense of moral obligation. By waiting to see the Aboriginal Education Teacher or the Aboriginal Education Worker, he shows his understanding of roles and involvement the Aboriginal Education team play in achieving schooling outcomes.

aCa deals with schooling through complex, often reflexive role-play: his Nunga self and his response to his family, his education, his peer group and his relationship with the intersections of all of these factors in his life. He understands the rules of the school and the control that the school has over his participation in the schooling sector, but he is also very much aware of his Nunga place in the schooling terrain. His conflict with his schooling may seem disruptive but he is in a sense a critical agent in his decision to rule his own life, to inform his own identity as 'Nunga' and as 'male' to succeed in his journey through school – his way and Nunga way.

In this conflicting encounter the power balance between student and teacher, adolescent and adult is, as always, unequal and ambiguous and if his/her rights are not clearly defined, then he/she lacks the power to influence their own decision and control over their life. The experience of powerlessness is a common one for adolescents and its significance cannot be overestimated. Relationship between students and teacher are based on a power that enables the teacher to be in the superordinate position because the subordinate consents to this positioning according to institutionalized norms (Coleman et al. p228; hooks 2003; Carspecken 1996; Blanch and Worby npd).

The systematic institutional control over the lives of all Indigenous peoples since dispossession of land continues to impact upon the lives of the Nunga young

people and is evident in schools, and their agency to resist is performed in the act of refusing to 'play the game' as I suggested to aCa. I came to understand that he understands his own decision in the process and the 'field' of play (Tucker, 2004:88) and his part in how far he wants to control the outcome of this decision. Because for aCa a much bigger issue was at stake. He wanted to go and live with his father who had left to work interstate. His relationship with his father was important to him and he needed to be with him. He missed him. aCa revealed to Ms his father's wish for him to finish his schooling. For aCa this was too far away, he wanted to be with his father now. This intersection of deeply psychological, personal forces in already complex and politicized time-space pathways pushed student, teacher and institution into confrontation – as so often happens in one of the most obvious but least recognized of Australia's cross-cultural contact zones.

Young Nunga males like aCa negotiate and move between two different cultures, Indigenous and dominant white culture. They belong to both worlds, speak Australian English and their own Aboriginal English, and mix with other young people from other cultures (Hall 1996). They speak from the 'in-between' of different cultures, in an in-between age group, always unsettling the assumptions of one culture from the perspective of another, as Butcher and Thomas (2003, p15) emphasize, to find ways of being both the same and different from the others amongst whom they live. Cross-cultural interaction with popular culture helps to make a speaking space in-between the public and the private. This is how I see that combination, voice and space as aCa's story tell:

be cool, no fool, this school is my stage to perform the
moments of sadness, badness
gladness, madness, people think they know me
show me how to do this thing, expect this
apologize, smile, be quiet, stay still, no thrill
it kills me, to do it their way, sway to their tune
make my own rules, do this my way
play this game, gonna play it clean
scheme glean the best from the situation
maintain my Self, apologize no way
ostracized if need be, I stand tall, won't fall
resist the play
put on a face, hide behind my mask, take it to the core

store my anger, use, even abuse, pursue the journey, gotta get
to the other side, look behind me, know my enemies
naked to the world, vulnerable and exposed
must stay strong, not long, fake it,
until I make it.

Nunga Space(s), place, resistance and time-space pathways

Through theorizing a concept of 'space' and applying it to the 'Nunga room' the question of what kinds of educational 'space' is needed for young Nunga males to interact successfully in school arises. This is an important question because it reveals how schools use resources to engage and keep young Nunga males in schooling. This chapter now aims to look at the improvised actual space(s) of the Nunga room and conceptual Nunga space to identify ways that space impacts and influences Nunga males' schooling.

The Nunga room can be understood by young Nunga males as a place where they can literally and metaphorically 'move' freely even though it is apparently ordered space within the context of their education. The space is available to Nunga students, parents, community members and other 'visitors' as a priority. This makes it important and significant for dialogue between researcher and researched, teacher and students, students and students, community members and teachers. The Nunga room and the process that is undertaken within that space, help to shape and articulate Nunga identity and cultural participation. The Nunga room is a very important site for possibilities, where the ambiguities of site and sight help define blackness/Nunganess, masculinity and performance. In order to understand space in relation to performance of blackness/Nunganess, masculinity and schooling, I return to Giddens. Giddens 'trajectory of the self' (in Du Gay et al. 1998:249) offers a useful explanation of and how young Nunga bodies in space perform/make use of space through time-space pathways.

Place is a concept with binary meanings. For some Indigenous people the word 'place' can mean a site of identity, a particular totem or dreaming, a connection to a story, an important site needing maintaining and ceremonial business. Within the context of colonialism, the dominant concept of 'place' exists within the dispossession and dislocation of land and place is seen through ownership which

has an economic base and is open to community exchange (Ashcroft et al 2001:179; Reilly 2006). So what does having a 'place' mean to this particular group of young Nunga boys and their time-space paths within Nunga space? How do they use the space to reinvent themselves, to create identities, to transform and transgress, to play and perform, to rap and have voice? Is care and respect between students and teachers spatially engendered?

To answer these questions I will consider how the intersection of race and gender in young Nunga boys' lives notifies their experience of knowledge production and power relations in schools. Furthermore I will explore the way young Nunga males negotiate their sense of 'self' so that they are able to continue their education to achieve success in their own terms. I also want to pass through their negotiation of sense of self in the 'moment', to a recognized place, where the young Nunga fellas themselves are able to determine their own status, their own decisions and to see them come out the other side equipped with skills and strategies to live fulfilled lives within and between cultures. I want to do this because it may be that the presence of a Nunga room in a school is a symbolic cue to triggering larger processes of transformation if it is understood correctly and used creatively. From my perspective the most promising response to the Nunga room offered is the one which invites friendship and safety – building blocks for/of reconciliation – in equal measure.

Locating the Nunga room in school landscapes and 'thoughtscapes'

The material and architectural form of a school speaks volumes about the ideologies and methodologies – the regimes of management – that take place within it. In the fieldwork for this thesis, the site of location is away from the main classrooms, staff room and reception area of the school. This location can be perceived as a 'problem' for teachers of Nunga students due to the fact that some of the students may seek refuge there. In the eyes of some teachers and students, this 'refuge' is seen as 'a place of avoidance' for Nunga students. In conversation with the AEW (2006) about the Nunga room and its location, he stated 'there are plans for the Nunga room to be moved into a central position in the school; this will allow teachers to see how the Nunga students are working and also give greater focus and identity'. I see this as a mixed benefit. Centrality

can mean that the visibility of Nunga students is checked, and the authoritative gaze is exemplified, and students' progress is monitored. This way of looking and acting can function to survey the body and the way it moves throughout the day within a systematic and institutional space (Danaher et al. 2000, pp 54-55). On the other hand centrality can enhance Indigenous presence in schools.

Contentious attitudes to and public perception of the Nunga room, and its role as a site for empowerment and encouragement are evident, in the following comments:

All them mob, the teachers, always think the Nunga room is just where they can send the kids if they have problems' (AEW per.com 2005).

I don't think we should have this Nunga room; it causes segregation (AEW per.com 2006).

You know you can't come here, if you're not going to do some work (AET, 2006).

You can come in, don't be scared, any friends of _ can come in here (AEW to a non-Indigenous student 2006).

Such responses summon up incompatible discourses of: deviance and disfunctionality; racial segregation; social, industrial and educational facilitation; work and safety. This suggests the Nunga room as a site for maintaining issues of behavior, a site of segregation, a personal space, a learning space and a space for social gathering. Each of these proxemics intervenes and converges to impact on how Nunga space is politically as well as educationally defined. My research indicates that it is in the modes of occupation of Nunga space, rather than location, that young Nunga boys find strength. The Nunga room plays a subversive role in their resistance, regardless of the interference of 'outsiders'. The space gets contested and knocked down but it is built up again each time the boys interact through processes of transformation and empowerment which ensure their capacity to engage with each other as well as others. Their agency through resistance occurs when I least expect it and I would add, when other teachers least expect it. It is not always seen but it is always there.

One day while the AET was working with senior Nunga students in the Nunga room, they were interrupted by a young Nunga boy being pursued by a non-Indigenous teacher. With no consideration for what was occurring within the space, nor the students and AET, the teacher proceeded to admonish the student in front of the others. As this happened, one of the senior students objected to the teacher and said, 'You have no right talking to him that way, and we were working here when you disturbed us'. The teacher, the young student, the other students and the AET were surprised at the way the senior student had voiced his displeasure. This is the 'flip side' to aCa's story. It reveals the negating and devaluing of Nunga space, which tends to occur often through the disruption of various teachers entering the Nunga room/Nunga space without invitation but it also reveals agency. As Hemming and Rigney (2003) state, inference produces 'a range of competing meanings with the dominant ones reflecting existing power relations'. The Nunga room offers the space to challenge the dominant culture's power and to suppress difference (Giroux), by constantly recreating and re-negotiating the space: teacher's space – students' space – parent space – Aboriginal Education Team meeting space – research conversation space. Within Nunga space, reaffirmation of Nunga cultural identity is to be found and 'finding' is important. The opening of the space to other students of colour, for example, re-identifies the space as 'black' and allows change to occur depending on the situation.

Nunga space is also subjected to exploitation and abuse however, through the refusal of students to respect it. This is part of its negotiated value and its institutional contradictions. The Aboriginal Education Team member can at times question their own role in the Nunga room, particularly if subjected to circumstances needing decisions made that might impact on the students or families that they work with. Although these moments are challenging there is still the room for shifts in Nunga space, for students, parents and teachers to have the chance and experience of developing their own voice, place and sense of history (Giroux 2005:168). The Nunga room can be productive in releasing as well as containing emotions of joy or sadness, anger or pleasure.

The naming of the Nunga room signifies recognition of necessity, access and equity by mainstream teachers and students as well as the mainstream community. Naming the Nunga room with a Kurna word symbolizes, respects and recognise the first peoples of the Adelaide Plains, the Kurna people. For it is through the process of naming that empty 'space' becomes 'place'. Because it is written and named, space is filled (Ashcroft 2000; Reilly 2006). Naming the room and shaping what happens in it are related. The site is embellished with posters representing Indigenous Australians, art symbolizing Aboriginal traditional and cultural connections, displays of students' work and the production of a mural depicting Aboriginal motifs and earthy colours that connect the students with their cultural background. The Nunga students are comfortable in this place, creating a sense of ownership, through the knowledge of their right to be there: in school. The Nunga room is dynamic space in that it is a site of change and consolidation and resistance. It provides opportunity for mapping, rapping, and nicknaming. Informal and formal powers co-exist within a space that is also acknowledged as 'black space' where 'temporary segregation' (Dyson 2005) is practiced to ensure Nunga families and students gather strength and solidarity. In accessing the Nunga room for meetings and gathering, parents and caregivers are able to seek support and counseling when discussing issues of concerns. It is the institutional space where they can have a say in how they want things to proceed concerning their children. Jameson (1991) suggests that, in speaking for alternative views of space and political action, it is through mapping that oppositional cultures emerge to capture space for their interests to create history against dominant interests (in Hemming & Rigney 2003).

Defining the significance of the Nunga Room and Nunga space provides a way of grasping the importance of such a site, thinking in terms of 'pathways' helps this process. In Figure 1, the Nunga Room is represented as the focus of a number of social/systemic interests and cultural/sub-cultural practices of particular relevance to Nunga students. Thus, the 'transportable classroom' reads as: a sign of Indigenous presence in education as a conduit to employment; a site for the expression and recognition of individual acts of 'blackness', desire and deviance from mainstream schooling practices; an instrument of school care and discipline for a particular sub-set of students whose health and wellbeing is important to

successful systematic function; and expression of government access and equity practices with legal responsibility and so on.

These interests, practices and discourses meet in embodied form each time a Nunga student engages with the space and through engagement transforms it into Nunga place. Life pathways intersect at the Nunga room and make it a dynamic site. The meeting of social and cultural forces makes for dynamic interaction and Figure 2 suggests the potentials for interaction in its nomination of the kinds of enacted and embodied behaviors encouraged or released by engagement in and with this place. This diagram suggests that Nunga place is reaffirmed and Nunga space re-created every time an encounter occurs. This is a complex and contradictory process but the Nunga room functions best when it gives rise to acts of border-crossing, creativity and affirmation. The Nunga room is also a representation of the sum total of life pathways that lead to and stem from it. As group-space it represents care, Nunganness, safety. Individual and group identity practices and politics define and redefine each other and are transformed into acts of survival, recognition, community-reinforcement and creativity (Blanch & Worby unpublished manuscript). These are represented in Figure 3.

Fig. 1

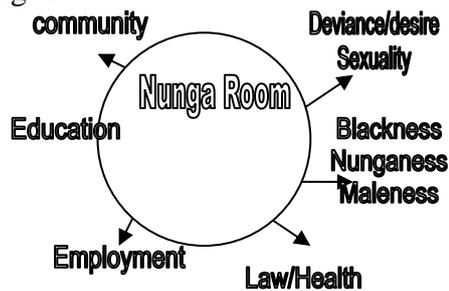


Fig. 2

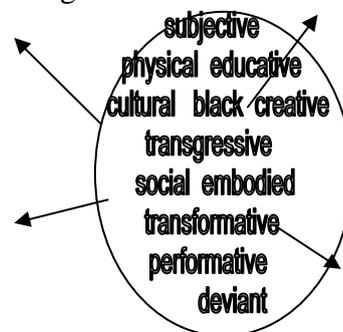
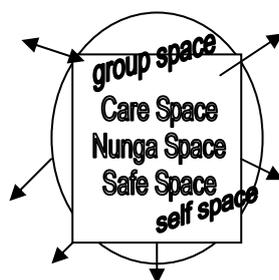


Fig. 3



This combination of embodiment, identification, representation and transformation is summed up by a student B2K when he says:

I haven't been in here a lot of times but the way I look at it, yeah pictures on the wall, like Aboriginal drawings and stuff. Yeah it's like a home, you know what I'm trying to say? It's like a home for like the black kids cause, they know they're welcomed here and stuff like that yeah.

The young Nunga fellas themselves see that the Nunga room offers an opportunity for 'voice', to talk their resistance, their own war of position, as Gramsci puts it, their own understandings of representation according to Hall and their strengths in surviving a dominant racialised education system that denies – or seriously undervalues and misunderstands - their own systems of knowing and politicizing of their identity as Nunga young fellas (Tur 2006; Rigney 2002; Rigney and Hemmings 2004; Wilson 2000).

Home, Home, my place for safe,
Comfort zone, alone
In times of worry, times of need,
Greed brings me here
To see my family, friends and countrymen,
When I need
Reminding of how it was,
Is, can be, drawings on the wall
All done by us fellas, joy flows through me,
Welcoming is
True, pictures tell the stories,
Posters highlights the faces and
Places, yeah (its like a home), as safe,
As safe can be

The importance of having a space in which to reside connects with cultural identity and as Haymes says, 'cultural identity (is) associated with and organized around a specific territory' (2004). This specific territory connects through memory and reinforces cultural identity defined by the meanings and uses that they assign to their specific territory around memory. What does this mean for young Nunga male students and for that matter Nunga community members and

parents, who construct their alternative identities around the use of the Nunga room, which plays a huge role in their lives? The ability of the space to contain alternative identities and relationships based on ties of friendship, family, history and place, links it (Nunga space) to a place of ‘popular memory’ (Williams 1998:3), regardless of where they are situated in a particular moment within the Nunga room.

Educational journeys of young Nunga males

In mapping the educational journeys of the students, evidence of who has gone before is inscribed and memorized into the tables, desks and walls of the room. In bold coloured pens names and tagged signatures indicate presence and link ‘popular memory’ to meanings and uses that relate this specific territory to current and former students (Haymes 2004). Each student can tell a story about others, or can reveal their own relationship with a former student, from sibling to sibling, cousins, and friends. The memories are encouraging and maintained through the telling. It is their space and they have claimed it, they have asserted autonomy over the space.

The boys are aware of the emotional connection to this space in which they can feel safe because their safety is often if not always contested outside of the boundaries of the Nunga room. This awareness of being unsafe is in their homes, while walking down a street, while sitting at the train station, even while walking home from a football training session. Indigenous young people are so much aware of not feeling safe that they arm themselves with coping mechanisms to counter these feelings. These are real examples that Nunga students have related to me over my 15 years of working with students, and I have experienced this myself.

Discussing space as a factor in the struggle for transformation and empowerment, I have outlined the use of the Nunga room and positioned the space as Nunga space, allowing for an idea of sovereignty to be tested by young Nunga male students in a secondary schooling site. For these young males the space becomes theirs each time they enter the named and known space. That in itself is a

powerful stage for giving ‘voice’ to presence and purpose in a foreign land – schools.

Chapter 4: Talkin the Talk, Walkin the Walk: young Nunga males and voice

the time is ripe all rite
don't lose it you're got it
be tight have it raw
what's the purpose of stressing
be cool stay chilled

In the last chapter I proposed that young Nungas interact with the popular cultures of rap and hip hop to create a space in which to speak: an in-between space of their own in which public and hidden texts/transcripts collide, intermingle and resolve. This chapter deals with that process as it investigates the phenomenon of rap and the adoption and adaptation of it by young Nunga males in search of voice. The voices of young Nunga males highlight the way they view their own world and make sense of their world, whilst interacting within a site of power and knowledge (Foucault in Danaher et al., 2000). This chapter touches on how rap and hip hop culture can be used as a method for generating conversation to highlight certain issues that young Nunga males deem important. Through the format of a talking circle in the Nunga room and over a four month period, during the last two terms of 2006, this group of young Nunga males spoke about issues of masculinity, school, relationships, fashion and culture through the process of what I will call rapping curriculum. Curriculum at this point means what is given to be learned and a way of learning. I will define it in more detail later. Rapping means putting prescribed material and ways of doing things under scrutiny on notice and into discourse.

In the process of engagement with rapping curriculum I also used rapping as a methodological practice to gauge the experiences and knowledge of young Nunga boys with the popular African American rap and hip hop culture. I began by showing DVDs of Tupac Shakur and Fifty Cents whilst introducing my own interaction with rappers that I listen to and by encouraging the boys to bring to the talking circle session's music of their favorite rapper to play and discuss. The boys watched and talked in this safe space. They spoke about issues highlighted from DVDs and CDs. This enabled them to play a big part in how the research

process would go and the data would be gathered. There are important themes that came out of the conversations in the talking circle, of relevance to this chapter and the next. What follows allow glimpses of their lived experiences and understanding of race, desire, masculinity and relationship with others in school. The rap methodology which follows from this, as outlined in Chapter two, has enabled the possibility of drawing attention to counter discourses that make it permissible to challenge institutions of power in the process of fashioning and constructing a site for liberation and transformation (Giroux 2005) for young Nunga males within contemporary urban society and more particularly in contemporary education.

I am aware that counter narratives allow a concept of ‘talking back’ to the dominant discourses as a form of ‘liberation’, but there is always the responsibility of the researcher to protect the participants as they talk. This is also a duty of care. There are ‘hidden transcripts’ (Rose 1994; Scott 1998) inside knowledge and dialogues, therefore, that are not meant for public consumption and I respect those confidences here. The counter narratives told in the ‘in-between’ spaces of the Nunga room generally elaborate strategies of selfhood and signs of identity within sites of difference in which inter-subjectivities and collective experiences of nationness, community and cultural values are negotiated (Bhabha 1994:2). The concepts of ‘hidden’ and ‘public’ transcripts will be explored in this chapter through talk and rap.

Hidden and public transcripts

Tricia Rose (1994) cites James C. Scott and his emphasis on public and hidden transcripts in her examination of rap music and black culture. In Scott’s exploration of the dynamics of cultural and political domination and resistance, he interprets ‘public’ transcripts as characterizing the way power relationships are solidified and challenged in the dominant sphere. In naming social interactions in society as ‘public’ and ‘hidden’ transcripts, Scott suggests that the ‘public’ transcript pertains to the ‘open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate and support the established order’, whereas ‘hidden’ transcripts are the discourses that take place ‘offstage’, which critique and resist certain aspects of the dominant culture (Rose p100). The interplay between hidden and public discourses is of great importance to rappin methodology and any curriculum

innovation that might result from it. In the previous chapter the Nunga room was identified as a staging place for encounters. It is also an 'off stage' in Rose's terms; a place to transgress public discourses.

In exploring these notions of public and hidden transcripts, Rose makes meaning of them by highlighting the way the hidden transcript is a 'disguised form' that undermines the public transcript by creating codes that divert attention to groups that are oppressed in some way. These young Nunga males not only converge with and critique the dominant public transcripts they also appropriate and embody certain aspects of the dominant culture in order to enable participation in schooling on the one hand, and counter production of knowledge about them on the other. Rose posits rap as a resistive hidden transcript that attempts to undermine the power lock that polices the way people behave and perform in the public arena and in particular the way young black men behave and perform in public space (p100). I would suggest that this is also the case for young Nunga males who adopt a 'mask' to protect their performance in public space as well as to free that performance. The mask has important features which relate to the sequence of characteristics outlined above: blackness; sameness-in-difference; provocation and security. It is cool as well as being hot. To that extent it is contradictory and unpredictable to mainstream society and that is attractive to the otherwise powerless.

Aboriginal English: the language of hidden transcripts

As I have established in Chapter 2, Aboriginal English is an identifiable and highly respected form of communication when speaking with and amongst our family members and other Aboriginal groups. It also remains a site of struggle and contention in formal education, where 'standard' English language dominates linguistic conventions and practice. Today the majority of Aboriginal Australians speak varieties of Aboriginal English as their first language as well as standard Australian English. Aboriginal English is a distinctive dialect of English which reflects, maintains and continually creates Aboriginal culture and identity. Aboriginal English differs from Standard English in every area of the language, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, meaning, use and style (Eades 1992; Williams and Thorpe 2003). In this thesis I use Aboriginal English strategically

as well as Aboriginal language terms like Nunga, Murri, Goonya and Migaloo to identify communities. It is a staple of Nunga rap and rap adds to its store of words and creativity. The mask goes with the talk that goes with the walk. It is a staple of 'hidden' discourse.

I have established that my aim in this thesis is not only to create a space in mainstream education in which young Nunga male students gain the opportunity for voice, but also to maintain all aspects of Nunga/Indigenous identity through the experiences and cultural capital that the boys bring to the research and schooling environment. This means keeping faith with the way we communicate amongst ourselves through Aboriginal English and recognizing the silences in public discourse that come to life in the hidden processes. For it is also in the silences that communication can be heard (Lashlie, 2005), by those who know the code and the score. Positioning is important and young Nunga fellas know the score and the code.

What's the score?

Indigenous young people are a minority in this country, yet remain over-represented in prisons and training centers. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2006) states that in 2002, one in five (21%) young people aged between 15-24 years reported that they had been arrested by police and 8% reported having been incarcerated in the last five years. Rates of arrest and incarceration for young males were more than twice as high as those for young females. Over-representation in the Australian prison system for young Indigenous Australians is 13 times more likely than non-Indigenous young people. The work force statistics reveal that the unemployment situation for young Indigenous Australians continues to be high in comparison with other young Australians. These are just some of the facts of life that young Nunga males have to engage with: demographics; surveillance and incarceration; employment opportunities; health and wellbeing; youth identity in an ageing population; and education. They lie beneath and underpin the everyday stories that were told in rap and yarnin in our talking circles. They underpin all the stories. My conversation with aCa offers an example. In the first section of the conversation he relates his connection to his cousin then goes on to tell why he hadn't seen him for a while:

aCa: I found my cousin at this party on Friday night.
Researcher: How did you find out he was your cousin?

aCa: He's got the same dad as M M. my uncle D...Uncle D is from Coober Pedy, that's my Dad's brother...I don't know. I'm related both ways, through his dad and his brother.

Researcher: Aren't M's from Pt Lincoln way?
aCa: Yeah...Pt Lincoln way...

aCa: I haven't seen him for awhile because he's been in Cavan.
Researcher: Cavan, that's that training place aye.
aCa: Nah...Cavan is a step up from Magill.

Researcher: So Magill is the...
aCa: Younger boys...yea.

Researcher: And he's gone from there to...is that what you're saying – from Magill to Cavan?
aCa: Magill is 10 – 15 [yrs] I think and Cavan is 15-18 [yrs].

In this apparently straightforward exchange the facts of life are clear. There is family separation, youth incarceration, community and family identification, hierarchy of offence and segregation by age of offenders and an intimate and assumed knowledge of the 'system' of control that faces 'offending' juveniles. There are also good news facts of life. aCa is in school and the educational outcomes for Indigenous young people show that from 1996 to 2004 Indigenous retention and transition rates in secondary schooling beyond year 10 to work and higher education increased according to the ABS National Schools Statistics (ABS 2001). It is with the good and the bad statistics in mind that this investigation into the lives of young Nunga boys within the terrain of the schooling sector takes place. This is essential if their relationship with the educational institution and its impact and its influences upon their representation, identity, meaning making, subjectivity, agency, power, culture and interaction in mainstream society is to be truly represented.

In offering aCa's voice I do not claim to act and speak for all young Nunga boys. Each fragment of conversation and talk however, reveals some of the realities for

young Indigenous Australians living in today's society. Surveillance of our every move is marked in one way or the another and our existence in contemporary living is unmistakably defined by a past that carries memories of pain, hardship and violence, that forces our sense of survival and existence on the borderlines of the present (Bhabha 1994).

In the face of this reality it is important to connect an approach to education and curriculum to other initiatives and realities. If young Nunga males are attending school and confronting the forces of the law concurrently, the overlapping experiences must be acknowledged. The *To Break the Cycle: Prevention and rehabilitation responses to serious repeat offences by young people Report, 2007*, undertaken by Monsignor David Cappo AO, Commissioner for Social Inclusion in South Australia, spotlights 'the serious gaps in our youth justice and other support system' (p1). Monsignor Cappo states that these gaps have contributed to the problems we face and that young people at the heart of his report display serious personal and family dysfunction that is not being properly addressed. He asserts, 'this needs to change' (p 4).

The Cappo Report (2007) investigation of many of the socially problematic issues discussed so far came after the public and police were concerned about the number of crimes committed by a series of young people – including Indigenous youth - throughout 2006 and 2007. Education was seen as vital to change in this report. Recommendations reinforced the position taken in this thesis that 'from a growing body of evidence the use of more flexible learning approaches can contribute to engaging young people in learning' (p. 34). Monsignor Cappo reveals, in his discussions with many of the young people caught up in these criminal activities that they spoke about feelings of having no purpose in life, of the constant experience of racism in their contact with non-Indigenous society and the omnipresence of death and the funerals of kin and friends. Repeat offending for the young people was one of the social realities in their lives of poverty, others include overcrowding or lack of an adequate home, low incomes, family environments marked by chronic and sometimes severe alcohol and drug consumption, illiteracy and failure to connect to positive role models for a variety of reasons (p12). This report brings to the fore the issues that continue to impact

on the lives of young Nunga people in contemporary society and highlighted in the fieldwork undertaken and referred to here. Education is the place where significant issues that the Capps Report identifies can be addressed and changes can occur. It is the place where young Nunga males can participate in the process of decision making concerning their lives, if the conditions are right.

The conversations undertaken in the talking circle reveal some of the gaps and obstacles that impinge on young Nungas' lives. As this report signifies, offences committed by young people need to be addressed and programs need to be implemented to generate chances for young people to gain basic human rights as citizens of this country. Many of those chances still reside in education: but not any kind of education. What is needed is a way for young Nunga males in the schooling context to get to talk about the reality of their lives both inside and outside of school, within the public discourse as well as the hidden discourse of Nunganness. The crossover practice of rap can help do this.

Rap story: guiding body into discourse

Rap gives space to play and create, it filters controversial and important messages to bring to the fore public and hidden discourse/transcripts. Rap and hip hop are where young Nunga males 'want to be', as Grandmaster Flash and DezertFish state:

Hip hop is the only genre of music that allows us to talk about almost anything. Musically it allows us to sample and play and create poetry to the beat of music. It's highly controversial, but that's the way the game is. (Grandmaster Flash 1999)

It's a way of popularizing, and making more palatable, important messages about black rights, as well as refugees and social ills. (Steve Gumarungi Hodder – DezertFish 2005)

The young Nunga boys in this project are individual agents who participate in a performance of resistance and human agency to disguise themselves and confuse the surveillance that follows them wherever they are situated in the moment. If this is their principal experience, and mainstream education ignores this, then the system is fighting a losing battle for their attention and involvement. They sustain their Nunganness with

and through their interaction, appropriation and adaptation, of rap. Here is a way to regain that attention – by allowing the out-of-school realities into school in rap and its creative construction and performance. I argue in previous chapters that young Nunga males are social actors, human agents constructing relationships through space and time (Giddens 1994). It is therefore a reality that young Nunga males are always in the process of renegotiating, and renewing their skills to navigate their own pathways in life. Conversations within the talking circle reveal the way young Nunga boys take the rap genre and fit it with what is going on in their lives. This merging of rap and hip hop culture of the everyday allows a space in which they can find a moment to re-position themselves, to gain an inside/outside perspective, like [w]rapping themselves in a cloak and then turning the garment outside-in.

Edward Said talks about a contrapuntal reading, in which texts are read in a way that brings to the foreground hidden meanings (in Ashcroft et al., 2003). Rap genre, when used to draw from the participants creative acts relating to issues in young Nunga lives, brings to focus the way they read rap music contrapuntally and find their own position, through interpretation of texts and lyrics of particular rap artists. This critical skill is illustrated in the following conversation between me and B2K about a rap he wrote.

Researcher: ...and you with your rapping...you still rapping and stuff?

B2K: Yeah...just writing like everything I'm feeling at the moment. I just write and afterwards I look at it and then I go and make something out of this...I just like to put headphones in my ears and stuff...like sing and stuff like that.

B2K reveals how rap is a part of his life and the confidence he has in using rap to think through and 'invent' or 'create' his worldview and lived experiences. But more than this, rap provides a connection between 'thinking', 'writing' and making something out of it. This is what teachers want and what educators should recognize as a process of literary invention resulting in song and performance. The way that B2K is able to show his strengths in articulating his own rap was revealed a few weeks later in the talking circle: (*B2K is singing in the background*)

B2K: Yo, this is Tupac up,
Yo, homies take care unit
I'm the hottest thing out
And when you're looking at me

You're looking at a kid with a plan
Yea homie check us out man,
So, so dead you hurts
You know that motherfuck with that violence
Take care my...(fades off)
(There is laughter as B2K finishes rapping).

This laughter reveals a sense of achievement, as well as embarrassment. In producing a verse, B2K shows how his appropriation of the elements of the genre of rap gives him voice, gives him a framework to create, a platform to perform, an action to empower and a process towards transformation. The product may be formulaic but it sets up discussion on masculinity and violence as I will show later. The benefits are instantaneous and pleasurable. The sense of 'play' with language gives an insight into thoughts and worldview, to produce rap through disrupting and challenging ideological discourses that attempt to give hegemonic 'normality' to his life (Bhabha 1994:190).

Rap plays a part in young Nunga lives through the accessibility of Black/rapping discourses (Dyson 2003) that operated historically through voice, storytelling, music and dance. B2K is (as Barthes emphasizes) 'guiding [his] body into discourse' (in Bhabha 1994), his statement gives an example of how Nunga space can encourage and articulate a risk and thrill factor. This is what B2K does with his production and performance of rap - his mixing and remixing of language to create his speaking position and to position himself as 'the hottest kid you know with a plan'. He calls to his audience (the others in the talking circle) to listen to his remix and the response is laughter blended with admiration and pleasure - and a follow-up statement of being what the AEW calls a lyrical gangsta. Here language is transgressive but legitimate. It is not an act of antisocial behavior. His rap does not have to follow the expectations or guidelines of the dominant English language that lays down the approved grammatical framework. He is able to interact instead, with the ebonics of Black/rapping discourse of Black America (Delpit & Kilgour, 2002). Language is the medium through which power is perpetuated and young Nunga males make use of this to capture and subvert that 'power' so that they can be the authors of sentence construction and narrative (Bhabha 1994:197) and agents of change.

To perform is to remove what hinders the physical side of discourse, what you can see as a discourse: the performance of dance, the performance of rapping, the verbal performance, to express meaning and in which meaning is articulated (Bhabha p189). This example of how the popular culture of rap features in young Nunga lives offers an insight into how B2K uses rap lyrics to state subject positions. There is the voice of Tupac, 'a voice beyond the grave', telling his 'homies' to take care, and death occurs through violence 'so, so dead you hurts, you know that motherfuck with violence' and his own voice of a 'kid with a plan'. The way that B2K is 'himself' and the voice of 'Tupac' in the same space reveals the intelligence of creating speaking voices or subject positions to play with oppositional stances, and this is a skill that can be worked on to engage young Nunga males to have successful learning outcomes in school. Of course mimicry is involved but this is also part of the masking and role-playing of public and hidden discourse already discussed.

In 'Searching for Black Jesus, the Nietzschean Quest of a Metaphysical Thug', Dyson asserts that the life of Tupac represented the evolution of possibility in the ghetto, the constant rearranging of his identity and piecing the puzzle together of what it means to be a human being. Tupac's articulation of poverty, material deprivation and social dislocation according to Dyson was what attracted people to him (2003:268), but his transformation of this into popular success and wealth goes beyond attraction to desire and emulation as aCa, JJ and B2K outline their reasons for the attraction to Tupac Shakur:

Researcher: Why do you like Tupac?

aCa: Cause of his songs...Well he's got a bit of everything in his song...He doesn't sing about the same thing twice...In one of his songs, he swearing around about his family and the next he sings about how he loves his family...He's got like a split personality.

B2K: Yeah he was good...yeah. I don't know the media and the news and stuff, they like make out like he's alive and stuff...Like people don't get it, like, he like, I think he recorded most of his stuff like before he died. That's why he's releasing stuff every year. That's why people get ideas and thinks he's still alive. How can someone who's dead like make a song...but I reckon he wrote like, lyrics and stuff at home and like...He had a lot of foresight. He knew he was going to die young, he could tell.

J.J: Always different...I like him.

The range of concepts presented and appreciated here is impressive: recognised fandom; creativity and recognition of the difference between ‘the world’ and the world in rap; textual variety; ambiguity and contradiction in family life and responses to family; media representation; mortality; Nunga language and expression; the vocabulary of songmaking; and foresight connected to social reality of violence. In this brief exchange there is already a syllabus worth of relevant contemporary material. B2K, aCa and JJ have sound views on it all. And they can rap them.

His/stories

Appreciation and love are important to the lives of young Nunga males. Their stories about them are important to education. If rap is to be valuable and a valued methodological tool, then it needs to be historicized and analysed by teachers for students and by students. Rap and hip hop culture derived out of a need for expression and voice in the streets of ghetto improvised America, the suburbs of unemployed young African Americans in the shadow of disco, happy times music of the 1970s and following from the 1960s when soul music was performed with the emotions and against the backdrop of the civil rights movement. The emergence of rapping provided the opportunity to respond to ‘white’ appropriation of 70s and 60s black forums and agencies for collective participation of black communities to reaffirm their blackness and to give new voice to the issues of poverty, racism, unemployment, police brutality, high suicide and imprisonment rates and a sense of inequality and social justice (Szwed 1990; Kitwana 2002; Dyson 1996, 2003) as well as social dysfunction. These are some of the issues which attract young Nunga males to the genre.

Rap and counter-discourse

Rap’s opportunism presents students, teachers and communities with problems as well as advantages. The influence and impact of rap and hip hop culture on the lives of young Australians have raised questions about the often violent and derogatory lyrics in rap that not only Indigenous, but also non-Indigenous youths have taken to on a grand scale. Lyrics that speak about death and violent behavior towards each other, the naming of girls as ‘bitches’, ‘hos’ and ‘dogs’ and the competitive nature of trying to make money by any means necessary, have led to

many politicians and parents questioning the impact on young Australian teenagers' lives.

African American writer Tricia Rose's critique of rap music and hip hop culture in *Black Noise* (1994) states that when researching rap music and hip hop culture, she 'couldn't believe that this music that seemed so local, so particular could capture the attention of so many people around the country' (xii). bell hooks (1994) suggests that, 'the white-dominated mass media controversy over gangsta rap makes great spectacle, and the sensationalism of gangsta rap continues to demonize young black men' (p115), and according to Ayanna, (2005) sexism and misogyny is part of the learned mainstream culture, its roots are within the culture we live. But she states that rap and hip hop can be explored and used as valuable tools in examining gender relations, bringing to the surface many issues that young people face I agree with her. Each of these facets was experienced in the Nunga room through the talking circle and the use of rappin as a tool to engage the participants in the investigation. What is interesting is that the raps changed over time – from mimicry to genuine attempts to find a personal voice within a common genre. This hints at the potential of rap as a teaching tool and the students' ability to learn and adapt.

Researcher: Do you think rap can be used as a teaching tool? If a teacher made some lessons around it...do you think you guys or kids would like that?

aCa: Yep.

Researcher: Why because (*phone rings*)...

JJ: We liked it.

aCa: Yep.

I firmly believe that giving some of the decision making process about the popular culture of rap to young people in the classroom can prompt a deeper appreciation of what learning and teaching can do to empower young people in further decisions in life. One way of getting results is to shift the locus of the imagination to make the global local. It is a reality in contemporary Australian society that the phenomena of rap music and hip hop culture have been appropriated, adopted and adapted (Mitchell, 2003) in this country.

Australian rap bands like Hilltop Hoods (SA), Downsize (WA), Native Rhyme(QLD) and rappers Wire MC, MC Trey and Koolism (NSW) to name a few, have made use of the genre of rap to relate their ideas, opinions, thoughts and dreams. The evolution of rap music is such that experimenting with the genre is a drawcard for many of today's youth. Its flexibility in musical structures and codes and its accessibility of form enable its creators to generate a discourse that opens up many possibilities for any young people to feel competent and comfortable in accessing and using and enjoying such a powerful tool. This is already outlined by the production of B2K's raps and statement above. Rap is useful for sorting things out in one's mind and voicing them as process and outcome.

This is what popular culture, at its best, can do. In the talking circle the young Nunga males were optimistic and positive throughout my investigation of their approaches to rap, and I highlight certain significant aspects of rap and hip hop that inspire and contribute to young Nungas positive sense of 'self' despite playing with apparently 'anti-social' lyrics and concepts. Young Nunga males share in the public space of technology, television, films and consumer culture as do most youth. They participate in viewing the television programs of musical hits and films that represent young African American youths' trials and tribulations of/in their lives. Douglas Kellner (1994) asserts that these images portrayed by television and films are used to 'demonize' and 'stigmatize' young Black youths. The point that Kellner makes here, I believe, is the same for young Nunga males: the demonizing and stigmatizing occurs through lack of dialectical debate over public and private space, and public and hidden transcripts, in the contemporary urban locale and within the schooling context and the homogenized way young Nunga males are perceived in both environments.

The juxtaposition of young Nunga males' appropriation of the image, fashion, language and behaviors of certain rap artists is epitomized in the distinctive features of the many young African American rappers idolized and perceived as coming from and escaping a background of suffering and oppression. It offers a solidarity emphasizing and empathizing with bodies being trapped, contained, and demobilized by social structures and governmental practices (Dyson 2003:268).

The racialisation of empathy when applied to gender and sexuality is something to be considered by all educators. Students show us that both are already contested and negotiated through the popular cultures of rap and hip hop (Hill-Collins 2006). When an overview is taken, the sequence of fandom, fascination, fantasy, identification, translation, expression, creativity, community and presence defines the embracing of the rhetoric of rapping. For this particular group of young Nunga males the idolization and hero worship of rap and certain rap artists connect to their complex interaction with and understanding of their own blackness/race, gender, age and class through the popularity of rap and gangsta rap music, as well as contributing to their own worldviews and judgments of desire and outcome.

Chapter 5: The 'Ghost Dance' and Gaze

Young Nunga males at play and playing up: the look.

i insist you see me, embody the space
embody the theory, sweat the difference
open up, how are the moments
which way brotha which way sista?

This chapter will continue to highlight themes from the research which come directly from conversation with young Nunga males to illustrate their use and understanding of 'playing up' and 'acting out' and their complex and contradictory responses to racialisation through the adaptation of Foucault's 'panoptical' view. I provide an analysis of the young Nunga males' understanding of their 'blackness' and the way their 'black' bodies are viewed in the schooling environment. I also consider their performance of agency and Nunganness to engage in a form of resistance to the dominant hegemonic rules of the institution. This occurs through and interrogates their negotiation and interaction with goonya students in the school as well as their 'racing' of other young people in contemporary society. Racialising others is a downside/defensive response to being racialised. These three components: understanding, performance and negotiation will shape and guide the chapter and give meaning to the ideas of 'ghosting' and 'playing up' in context and to 'visibility' and approaches to colour of skin.

So far I have considered space and voice as key components of agency and 'ownership' of identity, but there is also the necessity of 'looking the part'. This was touched on in the previous chapter but 'the look' has a number of meanings in theory and practice and is important to any understanding of power and representation. In this case, it means three things: the 'image' adopted to play out masculinity and blackness and Nunganness; the way mainstream agents exercise surveillance over Nunga students; and how 'the look' (or 'the gaze') as (feminists would have it), can be turned back on the powerful to expose their assumed and presumed authority.

This process of looking and being 'able to be seen' also contributes to Indigenist postcolonial discourses and is translated into symbolic forms of representation such as the concept of ghosting or 'ghost dancing'. The idea of resistance practice that is 'there and not there', translates to Nunga rap to the extent that observers of it are never sure what it is they are seeing. This is its appeal to youth. It also links with uses of the performative to deflect or parody the abuse of power – to play up and so to resist. To understand space, voice and gaze – in this context and in others discussed earlier - it is also necessary to understand race/racialisation as embodied and abused power relations and to connect each with the processes of re-remembering or putting and holding the body together. The most complex focus for this process falls on 'skin' and its encoded messages.

In recognition of this ambiguous reality, rap is an 'in your face' form of expression but it is a guerilla expression as well. Its impacts are like 'hit and run'. It is 'game' in its audacity and like a game between rappers and between rappers and the public. It connects 'styling up' and 'lookin deadly' with carnivalesque approaches to authority and order (Bakhtin, in Lechte 2008:11). In the process it offers solidarity to those who struggle against mainstream representation. Tats, hats, puff jackets and baggies, bling, polo shirts and willy hats skin and attitude, mark and mask the genre. Nunga rappers are saying 'look at us, if we fall you're implicated. You're a witness'.

The beat and the gestic inflections, the athleticism and the explosive use of microphones and scratching combine with chant to create an aggressive-erotic-demotic spectacle which deliberately offends middle-class, conservative, aesthetic white public sensibilities as it plays with hypocrisy, trades on the vulgar underpinnings of those sensibilities conspicuous wealth and consumerism, evasion of legal and moral responsibility, pornography and symbolic as well as state-sanctioned violence. The form works on many parodic and self-conscious levels. It is attention grabbing and popular in its most basic expression. It is also a poetic form in which the rapidity of delivery challenges the 'inwardness' of much of the western poetic tradition and the luxury of introspection. For Nunga/Black kids there is 'no time' just to sit and think. The politics of their raps require action. Fast talking and fast feet can mean the difference between survival and

defeat. They can also mean ‘trouble’ and this is the appeal and the danger of the form: lose the beat and the rhyme and the rap and the world might literally fall apart (Blanch & Worby npd).

On being seen and not seen

The idea of ‘ghost dance’ as an analogy in this chapter conveys aspects of the ‘seen and not seen’, the shadowy areas between what an education system promotes as equitable and just for its students and the subtle differentiation between the ‘haves and the have nots’ in reality (Feeney et al. 2002). The ghost dance came out of the need for Indigenous peoples in North America to fight the invasion of white people. It was performed by tribal groups to help to create a movement to restore the past, but instead became a sustained vision of how to resist colonization (Henderson 2000). Rap has some of the same historical and contemporary features. The ‘dance’, for young Nunga males in secondary schooling, involves masking themselves. They ‘dress’ for rap – in their expressions of masculinity and interaction with and resistance to the public ‘face’ of systematic racialisation as they perform their own identity as Nungas.

Playing up, or acting out or ‘styling up’ ruptures the stereotypes/labelling of young Nunga males. The concept of ‘playing up’ in some Indigenous communities can mean the individual or group instigating a performance whilst acknowledging surveillance, that is real but may or may not be visible. It resists enforced anonymity and allows another identity to engage, to challenge the dominant institutions. Performers of rap and hip hop – ‘strutter and move through the passages and beats to create a dialogue between the sounds and words, there is reinforcement, embellishment and performance that is always open to rupture and challenges’ (Rose 1994:39). Young Nunga males in the schooling context are to be found ‘at play’ in these ways, in response to ‘transition, metamorphosis, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames’ (Bakhtin in Lechte 2008:13). Playing up, using mockery and familiar nicknames is embodied resistance and rap permits and encourages this.

Understanding 'black' bodies under surveillance

The way the Nunga body is regulated in schools draws attention to the workings of power at the level of government that exercises control over individuals, and the techniques through which disciplinary systems of surveillance enact resistance and agency (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000; Pini 2004; Martino 2003). The emphasis on maintaining behaviors, control and management of students in the schooling environment both in the classroom and outside in the yard is a key part of a technique in maintaining discipline in education and the discipline of education. The way that race and discipline are explicitly and implicitly played out within institutions of power must be understood systematically. For these young Nunga males their understanding of their bodies as 'raced' and 'regulated' is highlighted and articulated by B2K:

B2K: You know sometimes they just treat the white kids...the white kids different from the black kids.

Researcher: How...in what way?

B2K: Like they [the black kids] get sent to like the withdrawal room or something...then they write more shit on the withdrawal slip.

In short, 'black' kids are 'overlooked and 'overwritten'. From a Foucauldian perspective as understood by Maria Pini (2004), the body is empty, vacant until named. It is only when the body is named that it is drawn into meaning and is classified, regulated and raced as 'black'. I would argue that for the past-three centuries we have always been named, and this naming is tied into the relationship between knowledge and power and the way knowledge is fixed according to Foucault in specific locations of history and culture (Pini 2004:160). Therefore, in this instance young 'Nunga/black' bodies are coded and become the 'objects' of discipline through and within specific discursive formations according to the rules of the educational institution. The institution does not divulge reasons 'why' some students occupy particular and different subject positions from others (Hall 1996). This would see institutionalisation caught in its own rhetorical contradictions. aCa perceptively points out his awareness of the students who hang with the Nunga students as 'tagged' with the same brush. He presents the idea that if you hang around with Nunga students then you 'must' be the same as them. If young Nunga males and non-Nunga males are coded into the

same position whilst at school, then the power that is applied through the wider system of classification, disciplines the student according to the way these bodies are ranked in comparison to a hierarchy of 'racial' classifications. In this case, skin is revealed as just a convenient marker of difference. Obedience and control are the real issues and 'deviance' legitimises authoritarianism. Bodies are then 'managed' according to the way they are subjectified (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2003). This has nothing to do with genetics. It is about power, resources, control and ideology. It is also related to fear: 'white' kids who hang out with 'black' kids will get into or create 'trouble': are trouble. Paradoxically the otherwise powerless are allocated the power to 'corrupt'. aCa 'sees' this:

aCa: And they...I notice too that sometimes they...even it's not only the black people they treat differently...they treat ahh...they treat the kids that hang around the black people different too...aye (*looks to B2K for confirmation*).

B2K: Yeah.

According to Foucault, the supposedly unseen observer is in the powerful position, in the operation of the 'panoptic' system of surveillance. Within the school yard the positioning of vigilant teachers on yard duty works to keep students under surveillance. Schools reinforce and rearrange techniques of surveillance and young Nunga male bodies are always under the 'gaze' or so they think. The strategic looking and surveying of bodies in the schoolyard can convey a feeling of being 'watched' even when there is no apparent watcher. This is the idea.

Subordinates are supposed to become obedient and self-regulating by internalizing the 'gaze'. Colonised/public space sends this message to Nungas. We understand ourselves to be viewed and we resist the implications. The 'gaze' as understood by feminist theory is tied up in the way that women are too often constructed as the 'object' of the male gaze in films, magazines and public spaces. They also understand public and hidden transcripts. The expectations according to the construct of male viewing, are for the woman to be 'desirable' and in being desired, valued, and considered as 'normal' according to the discourse of gender, race and sexuality (hooks 1981; Bulter 1994; Hill Collins 2006). Feminist politics criticise and argue against the male gaze and 'speak out' against the definitions by

men that misrepresent or do not represent women at all. For young Nunga males the gaze conveys a sense of being always looked at and this sends complex raced and gendered messages.

You see me, I see you,
You don't see me, hear, fear me
Gangs, collective brotherhood, together
Forever watch them, keep them in sight
Fright, fight, might, slight altercation

Public awareness, gather your weapons of
Destruction, construction, production
Know me, show me, slow, below me
I watch you, play, sway, slay, lay you out
Confuse, defuse, amuse, lose myself
Momentarily to rise, disguise, megasize
Slide back at ya,

The need for surveillance is further heightened in the 'system'. It assumes that rules are being encroached upon by students who are out of sight of the teacher on yard duty. It also assumes that transgression is visible to the conscious 'eye' of the Nunga students. It accepts that occupation of public space and even private space for young Nunga males bodies is always problematic. Nungas students say that others get away with things whilst 'they' are under scrutiny. This suggests a 'two rules' society and this duality is incorporated into an everyday experience of how their bodies appear to non-Indigenous teachers as inevitably 'other', hostile, rebellious and problematic. The significance of the body/skin as the visible site of difference (Mohanram 1999:28) has psychological implications in the formation of understanding of 'self'. The panoptical gaze is associated with power, knowledge and value as well as surface readings with deep social implications and emerges from a need to manage, contain and discipline bodies through time-space pathways in schools:

B2K: There's always a teacher there with the black kids, no kidding...like if you were at this school like for one day, you'll see them. They just be, like around there.

aCa: If you kept hanging around here in groups...like behind the sheds...behind the buildings and shit...they [*non-Indigenous students*] could

be bonging up and most of them do...but there is always at least one or two teachers around our group. That we hang around over there. [*points to the direction they hang*]

The 'fear' is that the Nunga kids know things that the teachers do not, on the one hand, and that they would 'do' un-approved things, if they were not watched on the other. The happenings and performances during lunch breaks are used to justify the rhetoric of appropriate and inappropriate behavior and responsible action in a school's supervision of students. The teachers are therefore caught in their own bind.

The established structural relation between teachers and students is set in place by the education system to maintain the distinction between one and the other. Knowledge forms promote the supposedly objective relations and social divisions which underlie our everyday lives. However, from Nunga kids' perspective the implementation and enactment of policies and practices based on flawed knowledge effects the reproduction of social inequality (Webb et al., 2002). The message read by the students is that the teachers have them under surveillance because of their blackness and maleness. This makes them feel that they are seen to represent 'others' – who should be (but are not) under scrutiny.

Researcher: You ever say anything to AEW or AET?

B2K: I just ignore it...like it's a waste of time

JJ: Yeah...there's no point.

By not discussing the issue of surveillance with the Aboriginal Education team, the boys are aware of the position they are in as students. As stated above there is resistance to the 'gaze', to the messages that are sent through the 'gaze'. There is also power, in the young Nungas' ability to ignore the gaze, to deflect the gaze of the teachers. In feminist terms, the power lies in the ability to 'look back'. This power turns passive acceptance or self-destructive behavior into tactical resistance. When the 'body' resists the particular classifications of an authoritative gaze, it is 'speaking out' in ways that challenge or upset the dominant culture. Young Nunga/black males are not passive they can appropriate their own power through creation of oppositional knowing and naming. They can oppose the teachers' gaze, they can regulate their bodies, and keep check on

self/selves whilst understanding that there are other students breaking the law and the rules of the school (Pini 2004:160-163). This is to say that they have the power to command attention even though the attention is unwanted. They also recognize that the system is brittle in its unfairness. Whilst they are being watched, others transgress and the system loses control. This gives them a kind of leverage and license to develop what Foucault calls ‘the technologies of the self’:

Technologies of the self...permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a number of operations on their bodies and souls, thought, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality. (Foucault in Pini 2004:161)

Looking back: negotiating agency and generating capital and credibility

Technologies of the self are employed by young Nunga male students in creative as well as self-deluding ways. I am, nevertheless, looking at ‘rap’ as a ‘way of being’ and as a transformative, beneficial practice; a highly visible intervention which turns ‘playing up’ into ‘play’ and after that, into a decisive ‘subjective’ set of cultural negotiations and exchanges, action and agency. The desirability and complexity of this practice can be seen in the interactions between Nunga and goonya students.

The relationship that these young Nunga males have with goonya students is important in their understanding of their Nunganness/blackness and masculinity in the schooling arena. One interesting factor involves the way goonya make attempts to include themselves into the collective group or ‘brotherhood’ through the appropriation of Nunga words and Nunga ways to participate in mateship with young Nunga males and to add to their own sense of ‘cool’. My curiosity in the ways young Nunga males invite goonya participation opens up this area of investigation, because my own experiences in teaching show that a sense of acceptance is evoked through the mutual, overlapping negotiation of identity and

difference that is performed through discourses and ‘dances’ of playful masculinity.

My interest began this way. In my early experiences of working with Nunga students at an Aboriginal school I was tried and tested by a Nunga male student’s sense of humour. He said to me ‘you are a real (a Nunga word) teacher’. I replied by saying, ‘Oh thanks, that’s good’. The Nunga student started laughing and then told a couple of other Nungas and they all started laughing at me. I then realised that I was being subjected to an initiation process to see how I would react to this ‘playful’ teasing. Later the student told me that he had said that I was a teacher who had diarrhea a lot. He then said to me ‘Nah you are a ‘deadly’ teacher’. It is this experience that made me want to examine how these young Nunga males identify and trust others (in this case goonya male students) as mates and how they get along with them in the school setting. Understanding how students ‘get along’ is as important as understanding how and why they differ. Ritual enactments of masculinity are important in each case. Talking with Ant gives an insight into how he relates to his goonya classmates:

Researcher: You got any goonya mate?

Ant: Yeah.

Researcher: And what are they like?

Ant: Some are annoying, but some are alright.

Researcher: Do they try and act Nunga?

Ant: Not really.

Researcher: Do you know of any that ever tried to act Nunga?

Ant: Oh yea um...yea one of my mates.

Researcher: How does he do it...what’s some of the action, some of the stuff he says or how does he behave that makes you think...‘oh he tryin to be like us’?

Ant: Nah, he just...I talk to them other Nunga fellas there in Nunga language and he would try and talk it.

Researcher: Can you give me an example?

Ant: Yeah...at study I was talking to someone and he started saying stuff...he’s like, ‘what does this mean’ and then he was like ‘I knew that’.

Fanon names the desire and want to be 'black' (like a 'Nunga', for example) as a 'fear and desire couplet'. Intrinsic desire forms the antithesis to the systemic 'fear' I spoke about earlier by adding a secondary couplet 'fear of/fear for' (Worby and Blanch npd). I would argue that, since invasion goonya men have attempted to control the uses of Aboriginal languages and behaviors to reinforce their dominance over the land and its people. It is not therefore surprising that the legacy continues within the context of friendships as well as enmities at school. Goonya males deem themselves privileged to take and use Nunga words to emphasise or encourage a partnership in as well as access to difference. Teachers also do it regularly when attempting to build a relationship with Nunga students in regard to maintaining some sort of control over students and schooling achievements. The adoption of black cultural ways is described by Mercer (in Back 2004) as whites' sense of right/privilege to appropriate, adopt and adapt parts of black culture that feel safe. This can be characterized as a 'ghost dance of white ethnicity' but it can also be seen as a way of 'outing' whiteness as a site of desire and desire as a site of negotiation, rather than appropriation. It can be seen as a way of 'shifting' a discourse.

Performing Nunganness, positioning 'whiteness'

The romanticizing of the 'Nunga other' is an aberration in what Hall (1998) otherwise sees as an invulnerable, 'hard' and 'bad' black masculinity. What is 'it' that goonya males and females find attractive? Is it the resistance to school authority, the collective brotherhood and the apparently easy way young Nungas hang together? Is it the perception of being 'cool', 'funny' and 'easygoing' that makes the desire for wanting to be like a 'Nunga'? Is it the way young Nunga males position their bodies, the way they move, and the way they perform 'blackness' under surveillance that makes them 'attractive'? Can it be as Mohanram (1999) suggests, (using Fanon's understanding of his own 'blackness' as composed through anecdotes), that Nunganness is itself a metaphor for the blackness that remains a secret, and is inarticulate in the corporeal fabric of the black body (p27) but is, nevertheless, somehow visible to whites prepared to transgress? Back suggests:

Black young men are prestigious figures in particular adolescent communities. Their status often relates to their position as cultural innovators through their association with prestigious youth styles. Yet at the same time young black men could be characterized as undesirable, dangerous and aggressive. (2004:32)

The social creation of a racialised image of black masculinity has been assembled from fragments of goonya experiences and a range of discourses, which allows them to feel as if they can identify with the 'qualities' possessed by the other. This image of blackness is a 'white artifact' (Back 2004:34). It is a very different idea of blackness than the one identified by hooks, Anzaluda, Moreton-Robinson and other black feminists. Students are therefore faced with a blackness contradiction that needs to be resolved. I am reminded of the young goonya boxer who said he wanted to be 'Nunga' because Nunga males knew how to fight. In his desire to be a 'Nunga' this meant for him access to certain Nunga life experiences which could/would harden him and toughen him up to be a better boxer. This is an example of how the 'desire and fear' couplet lends itself to romanticized racism and, as Back states, 'this kind of iconography [or identification] is of little relevance to wider refutation of racism' (Back, p34).

Ant: Nah...I was talking to Farr and um I said... 'Nukun...little Korne over there' ... And he goes 'Oh what', and then he tries to start saying it...He was trying to say it to C or someone... (*We start to laugh*).

Researcher: What did you say?

Ant: I just sit there laughing because of the way he was saying it.

Researcher: So did you try and make him say it better...like teach him how to say the words.

Ant: No.

Ant and his Nunga mates were able to be involved in the 'comedy play' of 'winding' up their goonya classmates. This, following an earlier line of argument offered by Foucault, can be read as a kind of 'acting out'. The private language of Nunga students is seductively used to 'mask' their enjoyment with mates and to control the level of relationship as well. But it also reflects tolerance of certain kinds of mimicry and desire. It can be seen as a process of initiation to ascertain whether or not the goonya student is worthy of their company, their group, their

Nunganess. How the goonya student handles the laughter and comedy of being made a 'fool of' will indicate his acceptance by the Nunga students in the school. Difference is always highlighted in these situations and the goonya student's presence is contingent on Nunga approval. Ant isn't bothered about his goonya classmate and his need to appropriate Nunga words. Ant does not need to teach his goonya classmate how to say the words right. He is able to keep part of his Nunganess back from truly being taken and used. He disposes. He resists. As Back illustrates:

White boys adopt 'black masks'...white boys appropriate images they feel they identify with...and adopt [them] as part of their own selfhood (2004:37).

Researcher: Does it worry you...when white boys, your friends...try and talk like you fellas? Does it bother you or anything like that?

Ant: Not really.

The ongoing maintenance of the Nunga vernacular, their voice and the look that goes with it, is kept alive through the young Nunga males' strength in their identity and cultural background. Each recognises and allows alternative epistemologies and different ways of thinking and knowing to co-exist, ensuring that Nunga vernacular isn't lost in the dialogue and production of the dominant culture that apparently denies its/their presence in the schooling context (hooks 1994:171). Times change:

AEW: That's what's interesting about mainstream...you know when I was a young fella, doing an apprenticeship we use to hang with white fellas...we would tell them something...how to say it, but it had a different meaning. We would say how you going (Nunga word)...but it would mean something else.

The AEW gives a different view of how it is now. He is much older and he feels that maybe it can be a 'coming together' a process to gaining a friendship with goonyas. He states that maybe it can be a sign of respect for Nunga culture and ways of doing things. His willingness to see this side of the appropriation of Nunga words can have conciliatory effects on both Nungas and goonyas. A process of reconciliation for the Nunga community involves the understanding by

goonyas, of the 'ways' of Indigenous Australians, and the embracing of Nunga culture is a start to understanding the way that racism that continues to be oppressive for Nunga people is expressed as either desire or fear, played out in our society.

Performing gender and difference

In further discussion with the participants what was a surprising discovery was the way a couple of the young Nungas raced other young people outside of the schooling terrain. In this instance, the racing of young Asians and the confrontation with young Asians in another suburb involved conflict.

aCa: That's what they do...for white people, can't stand them. But I like S, because...except for the Asians.

Researcher: Why don't you like the Asians?

aCa: Asians and the blacks are having a war at the moment

Researcher: Are they, at S...What for?

aCa: They are always fighting.

The naming and racing of young Asian people outside of school revealed the racism that is internalized by aCa and F: the feeling of it being okay to call other young people 'raced' names to identify them as the 'other' in a process of self-differentiation. Differences are clearly identified by the boys, yet what aren't revealed are the similarities between the two groups in relation to dominant or mainstream society, and the way that masculinity is performed through confrontation as part of that sameness. The acceptance that meeting up with young Asian people will lead to conflict appears to be a real issue for aCa and his Nunga mates. Name calling signifies their attitude towards young Asian people. Here is a smaller group than theirs, that they assume the right to 'name':

F: Slopeheads...

aCa Or gooks...

F: Fishheads (laughs)

Researcher: So what that shows me though is...that Nungas are racist too

aCa: No, the Asians are hell freakin.

Researcher: No but the Nungas are racist too...when we say things like that...when we call them names like that.

What I found even more interesting is that straight after this particular session, aCa was invited to participate in showing a group of young Japanese male students around the school. He initiated a game of basketball and showed them how to play the game. This boggled me because of his performance in the talking circle. Was it just a ritual performance of masculinity rather than race in a struggle for space and place and is it a performance when he is with his Nunga friends in another suburb away from his own territorial boundary? Is racism embodied, contextual, residual, endemic, learned, culturally endorsed or all of the above? How does it 'look'? Lapeyronnie (1999) cited in Macdonald suggests that 'urban violence occurs in a context where the individual can only exist as part of a group that imposes its power on a specific urban space' (2003:71). Turf wars may be the trigger but the problem is more complex and multifaceted than that. In aCa's case at least, he seems to be able to accept or adopt the school, in this instance, as either his territory or neutral territory and deal with the visitors in a respectful manner. In a way the presence of Asian others allow him to perform his 'right to be there' in full view of the school. It could be seen as his 'welcome to country'. I pursued the point:

Researcher: So how come there's this thing going on between Asians and Nungas? What causes it do you think?

aCa: Asians.

Researcher: Do you reckon?

aCa: Like when I went down there...I don't know, like they just think they're hell hard. Because I don't know they must watch too many Bruce Lee movies or something and they think they can all fight like that.

AKa places the blame for the conflict between the two groups with the Asian young people: 'they think they can fight' refers to an 'imagined' relationship between 'Oriental' men and martial arts based on popular cultural consumption. This is another kind of 'desire/fear couplet'. What occurs is a dualism between the articulation of gender and racism which rises to the surface of consciousness when speaking about the racialisation of territorial boundaries in youth subculture and cultures of difference. In removing the responsibility for the conflict to the 'other', aCa shifts the surveying, classifying and coding from his own body to the bodies of the Asian youths. Hall's

(1996) interpretation of the body as coded is especially relevant in an attempt to distinguish black body from the white body or in this case, Asian body (see also Mohanram 1999). These racist practices are justified through the positioning of how the 'raced, gendered and abled' body is named to create meaning (Pini 2004:161), in this case Nunga male meaning.

Relationships are important to young Nunga males. The relationships they have with each other as well as others within and outside the school community contribute to their identity as young, Nunga and males. Their interests outside of the school give each another 'world' that needs to be negotiated and travelled sometimes. The experience means they travel from their territorial boundaries and comfort zone into another area, where they know other young Nungas and where the possibility of challenges by another group of young people may be chanced upon. They need to learn and understand the way localism and racial chauvinism interact with the politics of masculinity, blackness and culture in everyday life (Back 2004:39).

Michael Eric Dyson (2003) goes further and asserts that the liberal and conservative policies of multiculturalism involve a competing scheme of explanation in which a creation of hierarchy of difference in difference itself is played out in society. There is the underlying assumption that within multiculturalism there is equality but as is shown through the experiences of aCa and F, what emerges is the availability of options under 'Otherness' that can be selected to position and 'marginalise' the other other. This idea of hierarchy can be transferred to ideas of 'blackness' at work in the various constructions of young Nunga males' lives. Just as these young men have to sort out 'racist' attitudes to themselves, so they must rationalize even as they realize their 'blackness'. Rap can contribute to as well as confuse the rational process and any encouragement and employment of the genre must recognize this and deal with it.

Visibility/invisibility of skin colour

In the positioning and performance of Nunganess and who has the power to look and name, 'skin' plays a crucial role. In this context it can be both a signifier of race and synonym (within community) for kinships, country, language, obligation

and authority. Identity for young Nunga males is problematic because of the historical details of cross-cultural relations of this country. The challenge for young Nunga males is dealing with how they are perceived and coded by the wider community as well as their own. Are they 'too fair', 'half-fair', 'full-blood'? And what of the eugenicist process of blood definitions that in government policy has determined who is and who isn't Aboriginal/Nunga? Heiss asserts that blood definitions in this country about Aboriginality were used to justify the process of integration into mainstream society and underpinned the assimilation policy (2003:20). What is interesting for young Nunga males is their clarity in how they interpret the position of visible/invisible skin colour and the relationship that is maintained regardless of the visible/invisible skin colour of their family members, their 'kin' and their mates. JJ is one Nunga male whose relationship with the others is based on their knowledge of his family connections and the history of the contact of his elder brother, not on the way he 'looks'. aCa articulates this and his recent disbelief of his Nunganness:

aCa: I didn't believe he was black,

Researcher: Why not?

aCa: When I first met him. Aw not really didn't believe, but didn't really, didn't assume that he was...until I found out he was, JF was his brother...I know JF.

Researcher: So is that because we base Nungalism or Aboriginality on the colour of one's skin...or blackness on the colour of one's skin?

aCa: Not really.

Researcher: No, what would we then? You tell me.

aCa: I know a lotta...what would you call it...white blackfellas, if you know what I mean.

For aCa to be able to accept JJ as a Nunga, he needed to be able to call on his relationship with JJ's older brother which was already established. His acceptance depends on being comfortable with the idea of 'white blackfella' because aCa knows a lot of them. For him this is a life 'fact'. There may have been some doubt but because aCa had an established friendship with his older brother the initial doubt disappears. The dimensions of identification for JJ aren't clearly articulated by aCa because they are embedded in the still- powerful

discourse of blood quantum. The concept of 'white-blackfellas', half-caste, quarter-caste enable the labeling but it transcend that discourse as well:

JJ: Like me.

Researcher: So do you think, when people, when people go up to JJ and say... 'Ah you not Aboriginal'... Are they purely basing it on the colour of one's skin?

JJ, aCa, B2K: (all boys answer) Yeah, yea.

B2K: Cause they like, like might...you know like everyone don't look the same and stuff (*trails off*).

The colour of one's skin plays a huge role in whether one is seen as Nunga. In the classroom a Nunga student can be ignored or appear invisible. They are denied their Nunganness because they are not 'different enough'. Teachers may remark on their own lack of knowledge and understanding regarding a Nunga student who claims Nunga/Indigenous connections but looks 'white'. If they 'look' black they can be equally ignored as 'too different'. In my experience as a teacher I have found that often teachers have a sense of disbelief when a fair-skinned, blonde-haired, blue-eyed student claims their Nunganness. Hall (1996) writes of identity being constructed in discourses that emerge within specific modalities of power which are the product of the marking of difference and exclusion (p17). This reveals to me the factors and dangers associated with not teaching the continuing history of race relations in Australia. Defining and accepting Nunganness in mainstream schooling bears out Hall's analysis. Failure to engage with the discourse continues to deny and ignore the impact this may have on the Nunga student (or the Asian student) in the classroom and it perpetuates the convenient truth of fairness, openness and goodwill which underpins public policy.

In this chapter the issues of race, gender and culture have been examined through the complexities and experiences of blackness, masculinity, surveillance, skin and relationships for young Nunga males in the context of school. The connections between rap, race, 'blackness' as a white construct and 'blackness' as the core of politicized and self-actualised Nunganness and masculinity are often played out in

education and especially schooling via the 'desire/fear' binary. This binary affects young Nungas but in a racialised society it is also a part of their affect. We need to get past the desire/fear couplet because it is problematic for black kids, white kids, and Asian kids in the schooling system in general. Why? Its racialised basis is 'safe' for a white construction of blackness from anecdote and not evidence. It is too easily appropriated and it denies agency. The idea that rap and a rap curriculum might challenge the couplet and lead to a teasing out of race, blackness, and masculinity components is appealing because it offers the opportunity for performance of Nunga male youth identity.

'Play' and 'playing up' are Nunga ways of understanding performance and negotiation, whilst under surveillance and its effects on identity and identity politics. The display of rapping bodies in action deflects and returns the 'gaze' of the watching regime. Being Nunga, being Black and performing Nunganess and Blackness give benefits to 'togetherness' and preserve ambiguity at the same time. This subtlety is a source of pride. It is an achievement, a dance written across time and space and a chance for change.

Chapter 6: Educational Context: towards a pedagogy of care and relevance

hey have some fun
keep a balance
Perkins, Mabo and Faith
did it before, started my
journey. Follow their story
pass it on, read it like I write it
in black and white written, spoken
words to get ya right, tight all nite
articulate, highlight clarify, rescue
ratify reinscribe our stories
appreciate, appropriate, cultivate

Live for now but the past is in us
the future too can you see. My
awareness of cultural expression
leaves me yearning for impression,
(aggression), selection to see the light
on the horizon, see beyond
the point of no return slide to the
motion, be kind, mindful of others
find the time to confine ourselves to
carry on our dreams.

I start the theoretical discussion in this chapter with the words of Ira Shor in an interview with Paulo Freire.

You speak about our political ‘dream’. But, the dialogical method emphasizes critical thinking, historical knowledge, and social inquiry. I’d like to speak now about imagination in terms of taking our ‘dream’ of transformation to reality in our action. (Shor and Freire, 1987:185)

Shor identifies the importance of dialogical method, critical thinking, historical knowledge and social inquiry as aspects in curriculum and teacher- student relationship and enactment of a process of transformation. The ‘dream’, as emphasized by Shor and Freire, is in creating space for voice in the classroom and through voice to challenge the official curriculum that normalizes epistemology

through a discourse of values and beliefs that positions itself as the accepted and 'right' way to be a member of society.

The colonial discourse that names the world through its systems of values, suppositions, geography and history has become grounded in policies that shape the official curriculum that young Nunga males contact within schools. Asking questions about whose reality and whose knowledge is taught in schools opens up possibilities of incorporating innovation to transform dreams into action (Shor 1996; Apple 1996; Ashcroft 1995), but this has to be done with care.

The importance of turning dreams into reality involves inclusion of teachers in Nunga education, who are radical, critical and caring in their approach. The recognition of rights of all students to gain the best education possible with the best teachers possible is an important prerequisite to ensuring a critical and just pedagogy. This means that transformation, emancipation, empowerment and liberation will begin to have a growing place in the everyday discourse of Indigenous education. As Shor and Freire point out:

the dominant culture possesses many tools to shape our thinking and our imagination. We need to rescue our imagination, we need to create new ways of thinking and a pedagogy of liberation can give space for stimulating alternative thinking and a new reality (1987:185).

This approach also connects to technologies of the self in the Foucauldian sense of self having agency to determine how the body and its actions are read. So for young Nunga males this allows the individual to regulate their own thoughts and conduct to enable a process of transformation (in Webb et al. 2000).

Implementing a rap curriculum that gives the opportunity for young Nunga males to be engaged as democratic participants in the classroom and schooling environment and to be critical learners and thinkers that transform their realities into action, can be achieved. In my view, and in the context of this thesis, this means connecting, at every opportunity, ideas on space, voice and visibility in schools to larger educational and social discourses on race, racism and

reconciliation and positioning all of them in relation to care pedagogy. This approach connects students, teachers, government policies and communities to ideas of pedagogy of liberation.

Dialogical method and critical thinking: policy and pedagogy

In this process of connection we have to go back to basics. Our education system is underpinned by the theories of Bloom's 'taxonomy' and Gardner's 'multiple intelligences'. The structure of Bloom's taxonomy consists of an outline of competent abilities that students can achieve. Gardner deals with multiple intelligences based on ideas of weakness and strength in learning for some students. Both of these theories give teachers a process for accountability. Essential elements of these theories work for students, including to some degree Indigenous students. What is not adequately recognized when accessing 'competencies' and 'intelligences' are the cultural backgrounds of Indigenous students and the impacts of colonization on their lives, and what that means for them when they are in the schooling environment. The implementation of anti-racist education and countering racism policies have responded to some degree to this lack of recognition and selectivity in educational planning and this has contributed to the education of Indigenous students but it needs to be taken further.

Apple's positing of 'selective tradition' and what determines curriculum in schools - what is taught and why - is worth highlighting:

The educational institutions are usually the main agencies of transmission of an effective dominant culture and this is now a major economic as well as cultural activity, indeed it is both in the same moment...Moreover, there is a process which I call the selective tradition: that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as 'the traditions', the 'significant past'. But always the selectivity is the point, the way in which, from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings, and practices are neglected and excluded. Even more crucially some of these meanings are reinterpreted, diluted or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective domain. (Apple 1996:6)

The ideology behind curriculum proposes that all students have access to and are being taught the same kinds of things, but that outcomes are a matter of individual achievement. This is a 'level playing field' approach which means that all students should be able to gain their best results. If equivalence is not achieved, then outcomes are supposedly based on levels of academic capability, not delivery. Rigney qualifies these expectations by highlighting the way racism is manifested in schools through the ignorance of differences and the expectation that all can achieve equally through the 'same' curriculum (1997). Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998) state that there is a sense of comfort for some teachers who stick to an approach of teaching that suggests there is 'one correct' way to teach and 'one correct' body of subject matter that needs to be taught (p4). These approaches to 'sameness' have given rise to an awareness of young Nunga males' limited participation and interaction in lessons and their immersion in an epistemology that is not of their world (Berry 1998:43). Curriculum 'sameness' and social homogenization seem to reinforce each other.

I have argued that, gaining an insight into the world of young Nunga males and implementing a pedagogy that offers success involves listening to their voices and acting on what they have to say rather than uncritically perpetuating the 'we know what's good for you' approach. aCa, JJ and B2K indicate what they see as important and not important in the school curriculum:

JJ: We get useless assignments, makes no sense...like write an essay about a frog that you seen yesterday (*sniggers*)

JJ: Make you spend a weekend at Frankenstein house.

Researcher: What does that mean JJ?

JJ: That was one of the assignments.

B2K: Yeah, yeah.

Researcher: What...imagine you spent a weekend at Frankenstein house?

JJ: Yeah, in the vault.

Researcher: Okay, what does that mean for you then?

JJ: It's gay.

For these students the lesson is 'outside' of them. They cannot make sense of it because the assignment/task does not 'speak' to them. JJ indicates this when asked 'what does that mean for you?' His reply is that the lesson is 'gay'. Gay

here is code for being stupid, silly and making no sense. It may also connote lack of 'manliness' as peer and sub-cultural pressures construct it. aCa states that high school should be about doing lessons they are interested in and not in writing 'creative' stories about the weekend. The negotiation between the world of the Nunga students and school needs to be acknowledged, to enable an understanding of what and how they consume and create knowledge to shape their lives to become strong and independent young men, capable of seeing more than one set of possibilities:

aCa: It's stupid. It's like little kid stuff, we're in high school now...we should be doing stuff that we are interested in...instead they getting us to write creative stories about what we did on the weekend and that there.

And:

aCa: And most of the stuff you did on the weekend...you don't want to tell the teacher about that anyway.

aCa contests the expectations of the teacher and refuses to comply with the content of the curriculum. His resistance to writing creative stories about his weekend is complex but within that complexity is an understanding that, as a secondary student, there are greater and more interesting things to learn and that there may well be a mismatch between the 'safe' realities of schooling and the 'risky' realities of life beyond school. It is obviously not about any lack of creativity on his part. When I posited the question of change in the curriculum, B2K was quick to answer that 'nothin gonna change' and as aCa says: 'Nothing changed, not really'.

These simple comments may well indicate that the boys understand what is being taught in school (and maybe even why) but seek a place in the curriculum where they can be challenged, in their thinking and learning based on life experience to see the justification for schooling. For them the failure is systemic not personal. Berry points out those students who are not privileged by the status quo are robbed of their participatory consciousness and are limited in the production and creation and reading of knowledge (1998:45). As Shor (1996) emphasizes 'classrooms die as intellectual centers when they become delivery systems of lifeless bodies of knowledge' (p25). Therefore, we need - as Freire asserts - to 'become readers of the world, not just the word' (Shor, 1987:182). Young Nunga

males need to be readers of the world to enable the process of transformation to take place and to be living bodies of knowledge.

Teachers find it hard to change their ways of teaching. Too often the desire to be involved in other ways of teaching to generate success is a real issue for many teachers, and it's not different for the teachers I spoke with at this site. They hope for young Nunga males to get the best from their schooling experiences. Teachers acknowledge that it can be hard at times, particularly with the ongoing dissatisfaction with school and the drop out/leaving school early incidents that impact on young Nunga males' lives (Keefee 1992:147; National Review of DEET, Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Report 1995).

Daryle Rigney (2000) argues that the trends and patterns in contemporary school society are played out in the context of diverse classrooms needing the implementation of critical literacy to strengthen the connections between language, culture and literacy in regard to Indigenous education. He further challenges Federal and State governments to remember their commitment to reconciliation and their 'primary goals of reconciliation and a foundation for citizenship in this country' (p1). I agree with Rigney's analysis. Evidence of the need for implementing critical literacy awareness was revealed in the talking circle with this group of young Nunga males. Their interest in popular culture highlighted a need for deeper understanding and critical analysis of their lives and lived experiences. Engagement is a pre-condition of successful learning.

Care pedagogy

A pedagogy of care is essential to any contextual understanding of Indigenous education and Nunga views. A caring theory is built upon the relationship a student has with a teachers which is built on demonstrated 'care and trust'. That should involve a process of educational clarity and the students' understanding of their lived, acknowledged and recognized world. Rolon-Dow (2005) cites the works of Thompson (1998) and Noddings (1992) and stresses that 'care pedagogy' can be seen as teachers being engrossed with their students; engrossed, in this context means being receptive to hearing, seeing and feeling about students' perspectives (in Rolon-Dow, 2005 p86). When care, respect and trust

are established in the classroom then confidence in achieving successful learning outcomes is possible and the pedagogy of care can begin to cater to the needs of young Nunga males and their re-engagement with school. Teaching students to show care is a valid educational aim in itself: care for and care of completes and responds to the fear for and fear of binary noted above.

In considering the question of care and how to express it, I ask the boys how they define care. aCa defines care as ‘teachers listening and working with him without making him feel ‘stupid’. This is a very important aspect to building a positive and caring relationship with young Nunga males, I asked the students:

Researcher: What about this school, do you like this school?

F: It’s alright, they help you out a lot here.

Researcher: School...do you think people like AEW, AET, Principal, Ms M look after you guys...Care for you guys?

aCa: Yeah (speaking in a quieter tone).

Researcher: How would you define care?

aCa: Some teachers alright...because they listen to what you got to say and, they make you don’t be stupid and that there and try and make, you know. They know how to deal with kids and some of them other teachers are just stupid.

Researcher: But how do you see ‘care’?

aCa: I don’t know... if they take the time to listen to you and that there...and like help you out and work with you and they just try and do it all their way.

aCa’s interpretation of care is situated in ‘time’ and its pathways and the way some teachers make him feel like things are going well. A big part of that is in the art of listening and taking the time to work *with* him. In a way the use of ‘stupid’ here echoes ‘gay’ earlier. Both are responses to feelings of exclusion and mis-understanding. He sees care as *not* being made to feel ‘stupid’. That is as an elimination of a negative as well as a positive. It is a set of practices that ‘make up for’ as well as ‘give rise to’. So a successful education system for him involves understanding lack of esteem and bolstering self-esteem. The student raps in the next chapter will exhibit these dual messages. Expressing Nunganess through rap may be at the centre of the process of caring for and caring about. A Rap

curriculum therefore can help to take the ‘stupid’ out of the equation by discussing the ideas around the feeling of being cared for and cared about and work for student and teacher (Blanch and Worby npd).

While the issue of care is important in the schooling terrain, what often happens is that the ethics of care in the educational institution is based on western concepts of care that too often do not take into consideration that the ethics of care for Aboriginal people may be different. Ethics of care for us is about individuals and communities but it is also framed by the appropriative discourse of race, and it is grounded in the moral, cultural, historical and political experiences of Indigenous Australians (Thompson 1998). If the Nunga child can’t find a ‘safe space’ with or without government intervention then how can they see schools as safe places and trust them? Schools may not be safe space, walking along the street is not safe in the way these students think of the care and safety combination; public space is colonised and maintained because their expectations of public space is policed space. It is assumed in the framework of law and order that these places are made safe for everybody but it is privileged ignorance that determines this view (Thompson 1998:524). Caring in the community for Indigenous peoples is about saving and caring for the next generation by making them aware of a danger that mainstream society choses to ignore or fails to comprehend. As Thompson states, ‘in a hostile, racist society black families cannot risk having their children caught unaware of racism’ (p535).

Examination of the way antiracist education impacts on young Nunga males reveals the way various theories of education diverge within the context of schooling. Conservative and liberal approaches highlight deficit and trait theories with different emphases. Young Nunga males are blamed for their lack of achievement, and their parents’ lack of knowing the ‘culture’ of the school is presumed to be why young Nunga males are not succeeding in schools. Programs that react to the discourses of ‘disadvantage’ contribute to the theories of deficit and trait and see the implementation of units of work that further alienate Nunga students. Proactive units are needed instead, which give them the opportunity to be involved in their own learning and a process of empowerment through participation in the decision making process.

I acknowledge that there are teachers that are addressing racism in the educational system through pedagogy of reconciliation. These teachers are finding a way to address non-Aboriginal people's relationship with Aboriginal people and recognizing the need for Indigenous Australians participation in society on equal footing in every area: economically, politically, socially and educationally. They need to be supported through curriculum innovation. Activism from the grassroots up to the top, enables the possibilities of changes for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and can go towards an understanding of the narratives of Indigenous Australians, to challenge the mindset and perspective of non-Indigenous peoples towards the first peoples and vice versa.

Curriculum innovation in context: dialogical, critical, historical, social

The tensions between ideas of care, relevance, safety and educational liberation contribute to 'hidden dialogues' in the schooling system in general as well as in specific classrooms. They reflect the different frameworks of lived experiences and worldviews and the diversity of students in the classroom. Once identified teachers can point to pathways for resolving tensions by developing and implementing curriculum reform. Taking on board the lived experiences and worldviews of the students, teachers can begin to change their own ways of teaching to incorporate these lived experiences.

A real care pedagogy committed to reconciliation in education can only be such if all students - regardless of gender, race, age, class and able-bodiedness - are involved in a just classroom. That is a journey of transformation and empowerment that enables true citizenship for all and offers a view of a safer future. The next chapter gives some idea of what that world might look like to them.

If rap is to be useful as a practice and a vehicle for expressing attitudes and explaining perception and conceptions of self and society, masculinity and race, a rap curriculum will need to facilitate understanding, encourage performance and strategize negotiation. The next chapter will indicate what such a curriculum

might look like and how the 'rap' intervention might transform the 'ghost dance' into a more public communication and interaction between Nunga male students and their partners, and mentors and the 'system' in education.

Chapter 7: Writing Us Home: a rap curriculum

A project undertaken with the Kurruru Indigenous Performing Arts initiated by Diat Alferink and Sasha Zahra and many talented support staff, tutors and artists, in 2005 produced this rap. It is my cue to consider curriculum.

Me an My Money (Lefevre High Boyz)

(Chorus)

Just me an my money, my boys an my beats
We rollin, we runnin, we runnin the streets
Just me an my money, my boys an my beats
We rollin, we runnin, we runnin the streets

(verse one)

AK's my name and I play my own game
And when I'm in the club I do my own thing
Step up in the place, the girls see my face
And they be wishin they can come to my place
But I act cool, don't go with them tools
That's how pimps do it, cause I ain't no fool
And that's cool as high school
But what you gotta do, is do the right thing
Follow the right path and see what it brings.

(verse two)

I got my polo shirt and my blue willy hat
My rhymes are as phat as the fat cat
The name is Frodo and this is my solo
And if you can't hear me, I'll rhyme in slow mo
I'll cut to the chase, how bad does a cigarette taste
Drugs and liquor are a waste
Peelin a sticker is better than playin
With a trigger, you could get hurt
You don't want that, so peel that sticker
Stick it on your bike, go for a ride, just enjoy life
I'm 14yrs of age, I'm engaged with my rhyming
Like a bird busy flyin in the sky, I don't care
What anyone says about me, can't you see
I'm free as a fish in the sea, just live life free, please
I wanna be clean, not mean, you be bitchin when you
Hear my rap, it's soft tap

(AK)

Violence in society, educational tyrant
An breakin into houses, just go to school
And start rhyming, you're headin the wrong way
Those drugs will make you sick, and so will grog
So give it the flick, you don't even have a clue
What it's doin to you
Listen to your parents and they'll guide you

Through, set your mind on football or some
Other sport, I hope you take the heed to the
Lesson I talk.

(chorus)

Just me an my money, my boys an my beats
We rollin, we runnin, we runnin the streets
Just me an my money, my boys an my beats
We rollin, we runnin, we runnin the streets

(verse three)

Grade 8, at Lefevre Brenton Wanganeen
13, drug free and clean, ride my bike,
Play B, watch DVD's, go to the movies
When I got the money, pen in hand
I'm doin damage and wanna learn a lot
Of things even Spanish, Science and Maths
Drama and English, got good teachers around
Me, help me do this stuff, wanna finish school
And get a job, try not to get in trouble
I'll help my Mum, be strong and stand up and
Be positive, stay strong, so I can live

(verse four)

Malaci's the name I'm ahead of the game
Look at the range man, gotta a whole new
Game plan, education, a career and a smart
Life, I want a Ferrari and Bently for my wife
But it take guts to do this and you can't get
Guts without schooling
You must be insane, if you think that school
Won't help your brain, said it once
I won't say it again
Your brain is like central station
It's the place where it absorb information
Learn everything you can, put it in
Take it out, this is the truth
Now that I said it, I'm out.

(chorus)

Just me an my money, my boys an my beats
We rollin, we runnin, we runnin the streets
Just me an my money, my boys an my beats
We rollin, we runnin, we runnin the streets
Just me an my money, my boys an my beats
We rollin, we runnin, we runnin the streets
Just me an my money, my boys an my beats
We rollin, we runnin, we runnin the streets

The CD is a collection of original recordings showcasing young Indigenous talent from across South Australia. 'Blak Traks 05' is a culmination of workshops regional trips and inspirations from young Indigenous mob from 8 years old through to fullas out there doing their things as independent artists. It is a

celebration of our future generations. It is a celebration of creativity and culture. It is Strong, Proud and Deadly! Enjoy (excerpt taken from the 'Blak Trak 05' CD).

A Rap: writing themselves 'home'

The young Nunga males make their way across the school yard to the Nunga room. There are six of them and they wander across talking and laughing. They are animated and as I watch them I am surprised at the joy I feel in their performance of friendship, brotherhood and acceptance of each other. As they come towards me a couple smile and say hello, while others appear shy and unsure of what is going to happen. They know the meeting has something to do with rap but as yet they are still unsure. They know they will find out soon and I sense some excitement. A letter has been sent home seeking consent and I have their parents'/guardians' permission. They know that they will be with me during their pastoral care time for one day a week for two hours. This is a chance for both me and the boys to share in discussions about rap and their interaction and experiences with the genre, through the talking circle approach used throughout the project.

I tell this story because I want to situate myself in the position of teacher and community member as well as researcher. By doing so, I want to explore what a 'rap curriculum' may look like and building on Black Traks 05 and how a rap curriculum can contribute to engaging young Nunga males in school. Teachers and community members need to have a say in such innovations. In the course of engaging students in the curriculum, I am interested in ways to disrupt and reshape the dominant curriculum to transform the way Nunga kids interact in school with their peers, teachers, and family members. Disruption and reshaping are intended to allow Nunga students to find 'space' and voice in curriculum as they find 'space' in the Nunga room: to look and talk back to the prevailing education process. This is not intended to happen at the 'expense' of others. I am looking for ways to help students to gather themselves up and proceed beyond the circle of the school, into the wider community where they control and maintain the decisions that can guarantee access to the 'good' things in life. I am looking for ways to reshape and relocate Nunga space in school and beyond. I want to get

them home. To do this I will return to and move on from critical pedagogy to reconciliation pedagogy as progressive practice.

As I watch the boys cross the yard, and remembering the stories of TJ Hickey and aCa and drawing on a body of works by Giroux, Dyson, Shor, hooks and the scholarship of academics who have used rap methodology with students successfully, I am compelled to seek another 'better' way of ensuring young Nunga male students are engaged with education. The way to get a 'better' engagement is to take them on a painful, joyful, sad and exciting ride. I want to get them home and true. Making rap, 'rapping', is hard work and it stems from a range of memories as well as a range of skills. Yet, their choice of rap subject matter and rap language signifies the choices they make more broadly, through their journey in the schooling system and their sense of 'somebodyness' (Dyson 2003). It is embodied in the journey homewards – however and whenever they may define 'home'.

The concept of a rap curriculum which involves rapping the curriculum is tied up with the idea of enjoyment or happiness. My approach begins with bodies performing in space and time, rather than with ideas about education, and proceeds from there. My research experience of this group of young Nunga males and general teaching experience tell me that the popular cultures of rap and hip hop are embodied in these young Nunga males, in a way that mainstream schooling curriculum is not. Rap speaks for them and to them. Rap is a world they are confident of and connect to. It is a world in which the catch phrase 'keepin it real' holds significance for them. Acknowledging and understanding this through curriculum design and implementation involves enactment of a curriculum that highlights their experiences with this form of popular culture.

Ten questions

If rap is to be seen as part of a curriculum innovation – as an aid to reconceptualisation, rather than just a 'practice' - then a number of basic questions must be asked by innovators. For example:

- What is a curriculum?

- What is a rap curriculum?
- In what contexts can rap and curriculum be put together – why/how do they fit?
- What are the theoretical underpinnings of the ideas used on curriculum and rap?
- What might go in a rap curriculum and what does this content connect with beyond curriculum and school?
- Why should there be a curriculum within a curriculum?
- Is a rap curriculum just for Nunga male students?
- What is the relationship between rap curriculum and the mainstream curriculum: do they conflict with or complement each other?
- How does a rap curriculum allow the mainstream curriculum to be rapped/challenged/engaged with in new ways/reinvented for staff and students?
- What are some of the politics of rap curriculum (positive and negative)?

All of these questions arise from discussions within the talking circle as well as with colleagues and each allows for a testing and actualizing of theoretical ideas and principles outlined in the thesis. To establish a curriculum-based approach to this chapter I will outline and review approaches to curriculum design and construction. Then I will define a ‘rap curriculum’ and establish its relationship with mainstream curriculum using ideas of interrogation, interruption and reconciliation as means of analysis and engagement. In this sense reconciliation is important because it leads to a discussion of reconciliation pedagogy as an advance on current approaches to Indigenous education policy and practice.

What is a curriculum?

The South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA) notes curriculum as a process in which educators can build on the ‘foundations areas of learning’ and as a process that provides flexibility through the developing years to the senior years of schooling (2001:9). Curriculum is an epistemological framework by which knowledge is transferred and learning put into practice, ‘emphasis is on the transfer and acquisition of knowledge and skills’ (Dall’Alba and Barnacle 2007).

Professor Alan Reid’s DEST report *Rethinking National Curriculum: Towards an Australian Curriculum* (2005:12), posits curriculum as ‘preactive and interactive’: preactive (what is planned to happen) in national/state district schools and

classrooms; and interactive (what actually happens) in content, pedagogy, assessment, evaluation, organisation, process and structures. The Australian Curriculum Studies Association (2005) sees curriculum as ‘the product of social, historical, political and economic forces involving interpretation, representation and assessment of culturally based knowledge, skills and values’ (p3).

Mainstream schooling curriculum is based on normalised power and knowledge constructs and the transfer of knowledge is conducted in particular ways in dominant culture that privilege the norms and values of dominant culture. Thomson (2002) highlights Bourdieu’s thinking of curriculum as ‘cultural capital’ in stressing the knowledges that are valued. She further argues that curriculum and assessment regimes are the means of creating a hierarchy of cultural capital acquired through a process of education (p4).

If curricula reflect the norms and values of dominant society, then a rap curriculum reflect the norms and values of sub-sections of society: in this case, young Nunga males. To be effective it must have its own framework, its own epistemological foundations, and its own exchange capacities and skills transfers, its own position on normalisation as well as a strong and politically dynamic understanding of its ‘capital’ value, transfer and exchange value and its place in the broader education system. If Nunga space is mobile space then a rap curriculum also needs mobility. The area of curriculum is a contested site and through its content often reveals the neglect of ‘other’ views of cultures, for example Indigenous Australian views (Blanch & Worby npd; Reid & Thomson 2003). A rap curriculum design must be concerned with a two-way approach towards knowledge acquisition to bring young Nunga students into the center of learning in a way that they understand, and that allows them to engage in a reciprocal learning/teaching relationship.

All of these statements give us some indication of how curriculum is viewed, implemented and progressed. Therefore, the comparison of rap curriculum and mainstream curriculum will itself involve a process of ‘rapping’ – a combination of promotion, challenge, disruption, assertion, reshaping and display. In this way the methodology identified in this thesis will be tested at least in ‘theory’. This

approach draws on the following concepts introduced in previous chapters: time-space pathways, blackness, masculinity, voice, sexuality, performance, care, identity, center and margin, positioning, knowledge and power, and representation.

Rapping curriculum

If curricula in schools generally reflect the norms and values of the dominant culture, the theoretical underpinning of curriculum areas is to teach life skills, both physical and psychological, to assist students' understanding of the world and self, according to those norms. Although the aim of curriculum is to offer all students the chance to achieve success, some Indigenous students continue to have trouble in attaining successful outcomes according to the principles set in curriculum as well as the social context of curriculum planning and development.

The ways that power and knowledge emerge within pedagogy influence the conditions to learning that impact on the many diverse students in the classroom. Discussion about schooling must address the political, economic and social realities that shape the knowledge that students bring to the classroom to ensure successful outcomes. Such discussions increase the need for curriculum to address individual students in the classroom (Giroux 2005; Kalantzis et al 2003; Ladson-Billings 2000) on the one hand and emphasise similarities and consistency on the other. The tensions between sameness and difference, equality and equity, majorities and minorities, wholeness and fragmentation, collective status and individual achievement are constant. The challenge for a Rap curriculum is to get past 'special pleading' and into an area of curriculum development with multi-faceted appeal and effect. To put it another way, there is one curriculum pathway which uses rap as a conceptual and practical process for individuals and an approach to mainstream curriculum via rap which opens the mainstream to debate and 'other' possibilities.

A rap curriculum

A rap curriculum as defined so far is open to critical pedagogy and critical pedagogy can be seen as:

A form of opposition scholarship that challenges the universality of white experiences/judgement as the authoritative standard that binds people of color and normatively measures, directs, controls and regulates the terms of proper thought, expression, behaviour and presentation. (Ladson-Billings, 2000:258)

From this perspective a rap curriculum is concerned with generating ‘forms of knowledge and expanding the boundaries of knowledge’ and rap is part of a ‘border pedagogy of resistance’ (Giroux 2005: 69, 98) and regeneration. Rap as border pedagogy recognises the framework in which the process of learning and knowledge production occurs and a rap curriculum can assist in generating units of work within mainstream curriculum or in parallel stream or branch curriculum to generate engagement in learning in the broader sense. A rap curriculum, as conceived here, consists of examining a popular cultural force that impact, influences and produces text: one that inspires and crosses boundaries of race, gender and class by challenging essentialist entrenched (covert) constructions of race, class and gender. It crosses borders through encouraging students to tell their stories in their time and space. Rap provides an opportunity for educators to ‘hear’ the voices and the ‘beats’ of the students who have been silenced (Giroux 2005; Berry 1998) and breaks down the negative and limiting construction of identity that have been consistently structurally imposed on young Nunga males. In this way a rap curriculum provides a democratic political voice and the look of difference and moves teachers themselves towards border-crossing as a desirable pedagogical practice (Giroux, 2005), in an educational setting that is safe and also explorative: rap curriculum acts on mainstream curriculum, like the Nunga room impinges on school space. In one sense this follows an established tradition of curriculum re-animation and change. In another sense- and in relation to a specific group, young Nunga males – it is potentially transformative.

In what contexts can rap and curriculum be put together – why/how do they fit?

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century states that the modes of study in mainstream curriculum are: English, Mathematics, Science Studies, Social and Environment, Health and Physical

Education, Arts and Design and Technology (MCEETYA 1999). These are broken into a number of categories: literacy and communication; dance and drama; music, art and film; maths applications; issues in society and youth; health and legal issues; physical education and body movement; technology in (producing a CD for example). Each of these is open to a rapping of the curriculum or to enjoyment via a rap curriculum.

In the context of a critical pedagogy, rap and curriculum can be put together through the space of the Nunga room/classroom. A rap curriculum can ensure that young Nunga males attain skills of numeracy and literacy in rapping. They participate in production, design and performance of movement and art. They collaborate and communicate new ideas to others as they rap, analysing and making responsible ethical judgments and decisions to ensure the safety of others. A rap curriculum if it is used wisely, builds self-confidence and self-esteem through voice, look and space to help Nunga students make informed decisions regarding their own life. A rap curriculum opens up an area for understanding and debating political governmental systems and can assist young Nunga males to become active, informed and vocal citizens. A rap curriculum gives them the chance to understand their own environment and the global environment through the use of technology. All of these goals make it very possible for young Nunga males 'to have equitable access and opportunities in schooling to have improved outcomes in learning to match the level of other students' (MCEETYA, 1999) and to do these things their way.

The Blak Traks 05 rap at the beginning of this chapter provides evidence to support the approach argued so far. It addresses school and out-of-school life, health issues, gender relationships, areas and disciplines of learning, social choices, family dynamics and relationships, and demonstrates literacy ability and rhythmic patterning and co-ordination. This synthesis of skills speaks in favor of process, application and outcome. Young Nunga male students can obviously perform aspects of rap that have beneficial results in their learning. 'Me and my Money' is one clear example. Such examples of rap, dance and human movement can be included in physical education, drama, dance and the arts. Rap's poetic invention and challenges to conventional ideas of literacy can impact on the oral

and written work of young Nunga male students. They know that the processes of production and innovation in the genre involve multi-skilling: from cognitive engagement to physical expression.

The Goals that are set down in the Preamble to the Adelaide Declaration state that schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of the students. When students leave school, they should be equipped with the skills to analyse and problems solve, communicate ideas and collaborate with others. Students should have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, commitment to personal excellence, be able to exercise judgment and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice and to make sense of their world. They should be active and informed citizens with an understanding of the political system, creative and productive with new technologies and knowledge of environmental issues and the skills to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle (DEEWR, 1999). As these are also the major goals of the National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century, then young Nunga males must have access to teachers who will ensure that these goals are met. Rap and mainstream curriculum can fit and assist each other to meet these goals. The dominant curriculum is divided into categories but it also allows for opportunities to cross borders between categories. Rap offers opportunities to contribute to those categories. But in (keeping with the ‘dynamism’ of radical curriculum intervention) it also transforms as it contributes. This is progressive not disruptive interaction. It is a multi-skilling practice, or can be.

Why a rap curriculum and what can a rap curriculum do for young Nunga males in the context of schooling to go beyond into the wider world?

Rap pedagogy, rap of resistance, historical perspective and critical thinking, bring to the ‘centre’ issues of ‘race’ and ‘difference’. They dispose students to the critical analytical skills needed to question and reposition the knowledge they receive from teachers and the schooling systems. The knowledge students possess and show is connected intimately to their worldview and life experience. The knowledge taught in schools lies in the framework of western epistemology and connects to the dominant culture. The two things are inevitably connected and struggle for priority. Schooling should assist students to prioritise by choice

rather than by prescription and ‘rap’ is a medium and process that is open to debate and choice as well as assertion and insistence.

During the course of this research the impact that knowledge taught in school has upon the lives of young Nunga males was evident in the talking circle, especially the way that knowledge shapes their own understanding of how schools work for or against them. The rap at the beginning of this chapter tells us something of that story as well. What is evident is the need for a process which allows them to consider what ‘decolonisation of the mind’ (Wa Thiongo 1994; Tuhiwai Smith 2000) might mean, to allow them to ‘occupy’ educational space another way, Nunga way, and to challenge the dominant worldview to gain what they see as successful educational outcomes as well as opportunities. From a curriculum perspective:

A cultural/critical pedagogy invites students to ask questions that challenge, resist and oppose knowledge, representations and values to generate and create new ideologies that locate equality in the curriculum. (Berry 2000)

A rap curriculum should contribute to this ‘critical’ process to allow roles for conversation, narratives and popular cultural literacy. It should give space for students’ voices, thinking and articulation of life situations and experiences, interpreting, interrogating and applying particular aspects of the popular culture itself. For students struggling to engage positively with the education system in other ways, a rap curriculum has the potential to contribute to language development, meaning making, critical analysis, research and the creation of a knowledge bank that improves decision making and responsibility to learning and succeeding within the schooling environment. A rap curriculum should open up a dialogue between student and teacher to engage worldviews and a creation of new discourses (Giroux 1997; 2006; Kun 1994; hooks 1996; Dyson 1994, 2003). This is how a rap curriculum and rap as border pedagogy can be employed by and challenge teachers to engage and re-engage young Nunga male students in schools.

What are the theoretical underpinnings of the ideas used on curriculum and rap?

The theoretical approaches used in this thesis to support a rap curriculum rely on critical thinking, dialogical method, social inquiry and anti-colonial history (see Shor 1987 and others). These concepts intersect on various levels and the 'dialogic, performative epistemology' (Dyson 2000) of rap and hip hop connects young Nunga male students to their lived worldview. This happens self-consciously, which in turn engages mainstream curriculum through performance of maleness, blackness and Nunganness, sexuality, care, identity, knowledge and power through time-space pathways. Each, enhances their interaction with a rap curriculum. The process is cyclic as it gives teachers a source of ideas as well.

What does this content connect with beyond curriculum and school?

The National Goals for Schooling policy/blueprint identified the following of curriculum objectives:

- Communicate ideas and collaborate with others;
- Skills to analyse and problem solve;
- Self-confidence, optimism and personal excellence;
- Exercise moral and ethical judgement;
- Understand the political system, and
- Knowledge of technology.

Units of work using the concept of rap can be incorporated into mainstream curriculum to address each of these objectives and help students take outcomes beyond schooling into the wider world through access of the skills needed to have successful outcomes. For example, through the teaching area of English, rap can be incorporated to give young Nunga males understanding of the features and uses of language as I have demonstrated. Lyrics can be explored through imagery, assonance, alliteration and rhyme. Rap lyrics feature all of these categories which are important components of language development and understanding. This facility reinforces engagement in learning. The use of computers to design a 'Myspace' or 'Facebook' site and to produce short films and CDs and use of the internet to research lend themselves to young Nunga males' interactive engagement with technology beyond school.

This kind of approach has already been undertaken with great success by MC Wire and Organics in their projects with youth in schools and communities (Message Stick ABC 2000). Rapping and breakdancing extend the realm of Physical Education human movement, strength, body building and fitness. In Mathematical concepts of angles, fractions time and volume can be rapped. If nothing else, the musical accents and stresses of rap beats grant mathematical precision in a form and content relationship. These are just a few examples of approaches to rap that extend and transcend the curriculum. There are many more and the SACSA Framework provides the 'essential areas' for implementation.

If these specific applications are added to the preoccupation of this thesis, agency and the exploration of race, gender and class through a rap curriculum, the boys should become aware of the opportunity to question their own place and practice in society and to see how they view others in the world. I refer again to the 'racing' of Asians students discussed in Chapter 4. This 'questioning' is a skill. It differs from defiance or obstruction and opens them to dialogic practice. By 'seeing' others they are able to instigate skills that contribute to dealing with teachers, students and mainstream society in a way that helps to empower and transform. Their connection to the wider world of Blackness, through performance of gender and race gives them the skills to represent themselves in context and to bring about pressure for change in and beyond the curriculum.

Why should there be a curriculum in a curriculum?

The desired heterogeneity of our national curriculum, according to Green (2003), is in 'selection and representation, inclusion and omission, difference and identity' and is expressed in the national imaginary of that public schooling curriculum (p22). I have argued that this national imaginary, in its presentation, is selectively inclusive of Indigenous Australians and the diversity of other cultural groups is still not fully recognized. Therefore, a call for a new nation-building and imagining needs to occur for true representation of citizenship for all Australians. Green's thinking of 're-tooling schooling' and 're-schooling' can mean curriculum conceptualisation within other contexts and practices (p23). Thus, a 'curriculum within curriculum' based on imagination and creativity can contribute to successful engagement with schools for young Nunga males.

The politics of education interferes, converges with and impacts on the lives of students and teachers, units by units, experiences by experiences. Understanding the way that politics and power intersect should be part of the process of learning in the classroom. After all, this intersection is very much at the forefront of young Nunga males' lives. Giving students the 'know' of politics and power positions them as not only receivers but also givers of and participants in learning, because they are able to work out the relationship between empowerment and education in their own lives (Apple 1994; Shor 1993) especially by bringing skill to the process. In that sense rapping is a valuable social practice as well as a popular cultural phenomenon, especially for young Nungas who might avoid direct question and answer practices for cultural, political as well as personal reasons. For these reasons, an emergence of a rap curriculum within and parallel to mainstream curriculum can be justified. Through the various subject areas in school the relationship between mainstream curriculum and rap curriculum can form their own dialectic to enable inclusivity and diversity to enrich and complement each other.

Is a rap curriculum just for Nunga students?

Berry argues that 'students asking questions of their own learning can start to write themselves into the texts' (1998). Rap offers a prime example of a practice of writing the self into textual being and then into context. Feminist and cultural theorists argue that writing against the grain brings into focus other sections of the community who are oppressed, marginalised and denied visibility in texts (Lorde 1984; hook 1994; Bhabha 1994). It also requires a recognition of 'the grain' if it is to be successful. Thus, rap as expressive technique and curriculum component can be a site of learning for any student to 'transform silence into action' (Lorde 1984) and 'dreams into reality' (Freire and Shor 1993).

How does a rap curriculum allow mainstream curriculum to be rapped/challenged/engaged with in new ways/reinvented for staff and students?

If my experience is any guide, teachers' engagement in critical pedagogy is challenged, displaced, overturned and re-positioned by rap. From the position of

traditional figure of authority and holder of specific knowledge, the teacher 'shifts' to opening up the classroom as a space in which he/she is both learner and teacher. Shor argues that a 'problem-posing' teacher is not mute, value-free or permissive. This approach is a small but significant act of liberation – though many would see and fear it as a loss of control, discipline and standards. Problem-posing teachers go beyond the educational institution into critiquing the system at the root of social conditions of schooling (1993:31).

A critical pedagogy enables the teacher to have 'double consciousness' (Du Bois as cited by Ladson-Billings 2000). The notion of 'double consciousness' is reading the world of students to understand the positions of inclusive and exclusive, self and other, margins and mainstream practice (p260). A rap - inclusive curriculum has the capacity to highlight the importance of listening to the voices of the students to implement strategic process that keep young Nunga male students in school and on the way to positive practices in community and broader society. The creation of new knowledge means challenging the construction of subjects and topics. To take the example of race again, a rap curriculum can focus on the social construction of race, to position how racism affects those who are 'raced'. This is not something that needs to be 'established'. It is already recognised in popular culture and policy. This gives the idea of a rap curriculum currency and weight.

Critical thinking, critical literacy and reading are important components in ensuring teachers challenge their own position in racialisation and work towards emancipation for all students. Emancipation means freeing oneself from the conditions forced on one. Emancipation for student and teacher means deconstructing the mystifications of each other and the dominant social order and interrogating the conditions of their own oppression or privilege in schooling. It means being shapers of their own history and their mutual histories (Giroux 2005; McLaren 1998). This is a systematic and personal, political as well as pedagogical challenge – open to its own tools and strategies of deconstruction, aware of ideological interference and static. The challenge for 'critical' teachers involves translating critical awareness into creative practice.

What are some of the politics of rap curriculum?

In general terms, the politics of rap involve: addressing the rights of the individual as well as the collective; the conceptualizations of experimental and transformative educational space for performing contemporary issues; affirming historical and communal narratives, and allowing for the social formation of collective power and cultural resistance. There is both pleasure and desire in the politics of rap. They give ear to hidden voices and there is power re-distribution through performance of representation and identity. Thus, rap enables a dialogue of new discourses as well as a space for black discourses to preside, and it challenges the dominant cultural perception of the marginalised in society and their ability to find voice (Rose 1994).

In specific Nunga terms, the politics of a rap curriculum involves considering a process by which young males can remain in school through the creation of 'room' for them in a safe, caring environment. The teacher who believes in the right of all children to get the best out of their learning is one who acknowledges the cultural background and experiences of their students, the 'subject matter' of the curriculum and the intersection of child and curriculum in real time and space. Students have subjectivity here, not just a subordinate relationship to prescribed body of knowledge. It has already been established that knowing where young Nunga males come from and their community can contribute greatly to learning in the classroom. Rights-based negotiation respects the student and vice versa. Understanding and discovering the words, ideas, conditions and habits central to the lived experiences of young Nunga males' world is a starting point to the transformation process in education (Shor 1993). Learning how and when to use this understanding extends the 'teachers rap' from standard pedagogy to reciprocal mutually embodied learning.

A rap curriculum – one which makes rapping relevant to learning - permits students to see themselves in the curriculum and the curriculum in them. They can then begin to see their place in the world and they become leaders in negotiating their own pathways through school and beyond school. Paulo Freire calls this 'epistemological relationship to reality' (1993), where students become critical

examiners of their lives rather than passive bystanders or fugitives. They challenge their own understanding of social enquiry about their immediate world and the world at large. This sets them on the path to becoming organic intellectuals as defined by Gramsci: critical, conscientious participants empowered to take action. If this overstates the case, then (on the evidence) they at least become engaged in the beginnings of organic intellectual practice.

Keeping it real: knowing when it works and for whom

I support and draw on Shor and Freire's description of critical consciousness and Giroux's pedagogy of hope for conceptualizing and then implementing a rap curriculum for students who need it. Freire highlights four qualities of critical consciousness:

- the awareness of power – understanding the way power is played out in society, who exercises power and how we can change that power;
- critical literacy – looking beyond the rose coloured glasses view of the words, to identify ideas behind the message to understand the context of the message;
- desocialization – recognising and challenging the myths and language of the dominant culture that operate to continue racism and sexism and other oppressive factors and practices;
- self organisation/self education - initiating change to transform school and society to bring about a socially just society for all to enjoy (Shor 1993:32-33).

These very important theoretical underpinnings fit with dialogical method, critical thinking, historical knowledge and social enquiry. Young Nunga males are very much aware of how education shapes a purpose in life, whether engaging with or rejecting it. They are already agents in their lived world and can take ownership of their education, if given the chance. They can 'do' or 'make' education. Many of them simply have to, as the rap featured at the start of this chapter shows:

Grade 8, Brenton Wanganen
13, drug free and clean, ride my bike,
When I got the money, pen in hand
I'm doin damage and wanna learn a lot
Of things even Spanish, Science and Maths
Drama and English, got good teachers around
Me, help me do this stuff, wanna finish school
And get a job, try not to get in trouble
I'll help my Mum, be strong and stand up and
Be positive, stay strong, so I can live.

I would argue that what Brenton is doing is challenging the school. He is saying: 'I want to do damage with pen in hand, I am willing to learn, and if I learn then I can be safe'. Past experiences that schools have with young Nunga males 'doing damage' is when there are behaviour problems or the adverse circumstances from home are brought to school. Brenton adopts and inverts the language. Underneath his words is the promise of 'keeping out of trouble, staying strong and keeping real'. There is so much being said in the subtext here, and a teacher who knows and understands his lived experiences and worldview, as well as critical analyses, will be able to read the lines and between the lines. The teacher can then begin to explore a critical consciousness strategy to help Brenton fulfil his wishes and aspirations to 'help his Mum, stay strong and live', for example. Rap curriculum - as a creative alternative to 'time-out' in supposedly 'neutral space' - might be offered as an anchor for many students who feel completely dis-placed at school. It is solid ground, 'real' in the way students use the term.

Choice for young Nunga males represents autonomy, power and agency and reconfigures the traditional student/teacher relationship of power and control. Choice mobilises Nunga males. It is not the choice of the teacher but of the students to be mobilised. Transformation occurs from negotiation between teacher and student and the relationship of hierarchical power and control changes to one of mutual respect and a shared appreciation of care and autonomy. A rap curriculum acknowledges diversity in the classroom and respects the differences and the similarities of students. It gives the chance of reaching that 'third space' that Bhabha talks about, where the experiences of dominant culture do not shadow/mute the voices of the students: where all humans have the right to learn. A theory and practice of rap and rap curriculum proposes 'pedagogy of hope' (Giroux 2000) which invites students into learning and keeps them engaged. A rap curriculum engages students to re-image and revolutionise the constraints of identity historically placed on them or reinforced by the values and mores of school.

What is interesting in 'Me and my Money' is the didactic concentration of information and issues: life planning, material appropriation, the implicit debate

about the value of education, physical and mental health, well being, advantage or 'edge'. It is eloquent but not necessarily expansive or discursive. It also uses the 'in/out' convention of contribution to a whole. Both approaches are academically and socially sound and pedagogically useful, to teachers and other students. This study acknowledges that rap can be misogynistic, violent and degrading in form but it doesn't have to be. It is an 'ideal' teaching tool and a 'real' teaching tool as well as open to unconventional manipulation, subject to contradictions and useful for reconciliation potential.

Theory in practice: practice in theory

Even these year 9-10 raps offer a language that involves multiple readings of the lives of young Nunga fellas through the articulation of desires, aspirations, hopes, dreams and positions. As such, rap is a likely site of intervention in the production, governance, regulation, consumption and identity construction of young Nunga males. Rap performance requires students to hold forth to help create new ideological discourses, in this case in the popular literary forms of songs and folklore (Lucentre 1997). Ideology is thus construed here as being an object of interpretation and understanding rather than of denigration or misinformation or false consciousness. As Gramsci highlights 'the philosophy of praxis' is to explain both the roots and the ramifications of the historical development of currently operative ideologies, to see that literature/rapping are both individual and communal acts of social expression and a struggle for and against hegemony (Lucentre 1997:5). A rap curriculum therefore, invites the taking up of a 'war of position' rather than 'war of movement' and can be seen as countering existing hegemonies and establishing new ones, in behaviour, language, fashion and lifestyle, thus becoming as Gramsci states 'revolutionary' contributions of 'organic collective' in all human endeavours (in Lucentre 1997:6).

Implementing a rap curriculum does not need to be different from mainstream, it can build on mainstream curriculum. Both can use similar structures. But rap curriculum should involve a process where transformation occurs that 'unlocks' and 'unsettles' the dominant norms and values of schooling to make room for Nunga kids. Curriculum needs to operate *outside* as well as within the frames of

the modernist schooling paradigm (Green 2003:23). A rap curriculum or the curriculum within the curriculum does this as it reflects the norms and values of particular sub-sections of our community: young, Nunga males. Rap and mainstream curriculum fit together dialogically to the extent that they both recognise the organising features and structures of curriculum as identified above. They impact each other where each exposes the political, social and cultural assumptions and foundations of the other. This is a dialectical relationship.

This chapter has put forward the proposition that students should be given space to be heard and seen and that their perceptions should influence curriculum innovation. A close analysis of 'Me and My Money' gives some idea of what this might mean. The rap tells the story of collective brotherhood, masculinity, blackness, health, sexuality and education. It speaks about togetherness, individuality, style, discipline, desire, and freedom. The rap highlights choice, parental expectations, targets/aims/aspirations, skilling, diversity, strength and weakness, the future and culture - all very important factors in young Nunga lives. The focus on school and home, application and adventure adds to how the rap relates the above issues to lived experiences and formative worldviews of young Nunga males. When put together it is possible to see where radical and traditional (rap and mainstream) ideas overlap and where contradictions occur. This provides a launching pad for a theory and practice of rap curriculum that can be extended on in further studies and the use of the art of rapping as a model for creative thinking in many (if not all) fields – as a way of getting 'home'.

Chapter 8: Mapping as Dream, Theory, and Action

Mapping is an important concept in curriculum development in schools and one that enables teachers to see how the curriculum outcomes are located, implemented and achieved. This chapter will use the concept of mapping to draw together the necessary approaches I think need to be undertaken to make rap, as an ideal and real teaching tool, useful to curriculum development and change. Maps are ideological in the sense that they carry with them encoded views and values on space, time and value. Reilly (2005) states:

mapping has been an important part of creating and sustaining the myth of an empty land...the juxtaposition of mapping holds two stories and allows space to be rendered geometrically...Aboriginal people have used maps in creative ways to locate themselves, their stories and sacred sites in the landscape. (p263)

Taking advantage of the way Indigenous peoples have used their maps and western maps, I want to discuss how young Nunga males locate themselves in secondary schooling, to tell their stories and enact space and place through creative agency. As identified, maps are ideological and they are also highly symbolic and require certain specialised knowledge and 'world views' to decode them. This map is no different and the thesis has introduced some of its specialised scholarships already. Like all maps it is a layered, interlocked and overlapped construct of ideas, values, judgments, intuitions, beliefs, ideologies, discourses and disciplines. It marks pathways for students, teachers, curriculum designers, parents and scholars, if they understand (or are prepared to learn how to read) the actual and potential relationship between popular youth cultures, Nunga youth culture in particular and Indigenous success in education.

What follows brings together the range of ideas explored so far in the thesis as I work towards a rap 'proto-theory'. For the purpose of this argument I have brought map and theory together. Theories are maps or blueprints of ideas waiting for interpretation and application. They show ways to get started, to stay on

course and to get where you want to go, 'home', for example. This is what Nunga kids need and teachers want for them.

A theory of rap as curriculum practice: pathways to agency

I have been arguing that rap and agency are connected. This has led to a theoretical proposition that: rap as popular culture acts as a pathway and expression of agency for young Nunga males through embodiment, strategic performance and intervention at particular time-space meeting points in particular educational contexts. This proposition interacts with other theoretical approaches outlined so far in the thesis – race, gender, governance, surveillance and so on – to suggest a model for curriculum innovation which will help to achieve a key educational and social objective called getting home. The struggle with ideas and the pressing realities of young Nunga lives, as I see and experience them, lead to the following nine-stage theorisation or mapping of rap in curriculum. By rapping home and self, they begin to tell stories that privilege Nunga experiences. By rapping public and hidden discourses in curriculum, they are able to encourage counter-racist praxis to perform transformation to gain effective cultural intervention to enable a process of getting 'home'. So young Nunga males can rap:

- 1 Identifying home and self.
- 2 Telling Nunga stories.
- 3 Strategically privileging Nunga experience, language and power.
- 4 Disclosing and decoding public and hidden curriculum.
- 5 Recognising and encouraging intersection of time-space pathways through life and education.
- 6 Encouraging counter-racist praxis.
- 7 Performing transformation.
- 8 Effecting strategic cultural intervention.
- 9 Getting home.

I propose these nine approaches as the core of a rap-in-curriculum theory because they describe a process of realization, growth, change, creativity and achievement. They are comprehensible to all players, translatable into the real world of day-to-day education practice, consistent with many aspects of education policy and they are socially progressive and adaptable. Each of the nine stages is briefly summarised and connected below, drawing on and adding to discussions surrounding them already dealt with in earlier chapters.

Identifying home and self

Identifying home is important because it recognises the space/place where young Nunga males can begin to perform agency and insert their own meaning and values of self. The concept of home in this thesis is bigger than a simple definition of the word. Home for the benefit of this thesis means a space for young Nunga males to call their own, a space that is safe so they gain confidence and access community. Home is where one can be 'temporarily segregated' (Dyson 2003) by choice, to build strength, to reassess, to revitalise oneself to continue the journey. Home is both a space and a place where there is respect and trust to ensure safety. Home needs to be understood in the context of embodiment and transportability. Having home can mean cultural and political transformation for individuals, families and communities: and this is what this thesis shows.

Telling Nunga stories

Telling Nunga stories is important because Nunga stories contextualise the lived worldviews of the Nunga community, revealing perceptions of Indigenous/Nunga history, language, practices and norms of Nunga ways. Young Nunga fellas need the opportunity to share their narratives of lived experiences through the genre of rap and hip hop culture to give voice to how they assess subjectivity, reverse the discourses of dominant educational paradigms and interrogate the epistemology of representation/ knowledge as constructed in the schooling context. I have argued that, to enable Nunga voices to be heard, access to space gives liberation to voice and regulates gaze.

Privileging Nunga experience, language and power

Privileging Nunga experience, language and power is important because each is interconnected to understanding contemporary Nunga males' social and cultural practices. Profiled and under surveillance in the schooling environment, young Nunga males too often experience their understanding of themselves by the way their bodies are negatively classified, managed and disciplined and regulated. Privilege here signifies recognition of the cultural capital they bring to the classroom and schooling environment to neutralize/negate that classification.

Disclosing and decoding public and hidden curriculum

Disclosing and decoding public and hidden curriculum, as Rose (1994) uses the terms, is important because mainstream curriculum professes to be inclusive of equitable practices yet inequities are evident in the construction of dominant curriculum frameworks such as the South Australian Curriculum Standards Accountability (SACSA) statement and certain outcomes and competency-based structures specifying what is to be achieved (Sanderson and Thomson 2003:10).

I have proposed that maps are layered documents and that they require specialized knowledges that permit them to be encoded and decoded. Another way to describe the layering is to see it as 'public' or 'hidden'. If curriculum documents in general are seen as maps of institutionalised privilege and normalised, as described so far, and if their messages are both public and hidden, then rap as a decoding and re-encoding practice has the capacity to lay open the hidden and define it in a 'new' language and set of time-space relationships. Its power is in exposure and disclosure, in its mobility, in its discipline and in the necessary and pleasurable embodiment of its responses.

What is viewed as public curriculum in education is, to many young Nungas, the hegemonic dominant knowledge that holds sway over the economic and cultural factors at work in their lives. There is a belief that public curriculum is debated 'openly' in the public arena but what is not seen is another agenda that neo-liberalism and competitive economic rationalism employ and impose on curriculum. Many young Nungas live the downside of this reality. Hattam and Howard (2003) argue that this encoded imposition is a form of 'symbolic violence' that relies on a restricted conversation and denies co-operation, that emphasises a Social Darwinist approach to 'survival of the fittest' (see also Apple 1996; Bourdieu 1998) and that foregrounds a so-called 'commonsense' construction of what young people in schools must learn in order to 'participate' in society.

The advocating of a neo-liberal version of managing the local community and school impacts on the way schools manage their students and the competitive

nature of how curriculum development incorporates this agenda. Sanderson and Thomson (2003) argue that knowledge in schools is narrowed and defined – especially in the increasing emphasis on schools as preparation for employment. This is seen as the first schooling objective and thus Indigenous students are perceived to be in need of ‘training’, even ‘disciplining’ to ‘fix’ their dissatisfaction with schooling (p105) to enhance their employability. They also argue that the institution of schooling does not cater for Indigenous family responsibilities and values and this also alienates young Nunga males, who are seen as ‘problematic’ and their families as marginal influences.

Keeping up with or defying the public curriculum distracts students from questioning mainstream curriculum values and this impacts on young Nunga male students in ways that keep them searching for more or different outcomes, often on the ‘hidden’ margins of knowledge production. The hidden curriculum as defined in chapter four needs to be uncovered so that curriculum destabilization of hegemonic discourses takes precedence at crucial times in the progress of young Nungas through the system. This is where the rap map can help. Any approach to curriculum that falls for the seductiveness of ‘commonsense’ and takes it for ‘granted’ is open to critical resistance and re-routing from rap theory and practice.

Recognising and encouraging intersection of time-space pathways through life and education

Recognising and encouraging intersection of time-space pathways through life and education is important because it allows a passage through which young Nunga males can connect, within a social setting, to unlock the codes of education. It allows them to act out or perform Blackness, Nunganness and maleness and to interact with and express the overall social and political issues of race and gender.

To emphasise the importance of power relations inherent in mapping rap and rapping curriculum, rap might be considered as a quasi-discourse, not just a sub-cultural practice. This means that rap invokes a matrix of texts, and specialized languages and networks of power relations (Sim, 254). To contextualize and

specify the discourse further, Nunga rap needs to take notice of other discourses.

Thus:

Rap's contestations are part of a polyvocal black cultural discourse engaged in discursive "wars of position" within and against dominant discourse, these wars of positions are not staged debate team dialogues; they are crucial battles in the retention, establishment, or legitimation of real social power (Rose 1994:102).

Encouraging counter-racist praxis

Racialisation affects us through the political system that legislates policies and laws that work against us by maintaining the status quo through 'normalisation'. Racialisation affects our consciousness through the attitudes and stereotypes laid upon us, through the behaviours that perpetrate violent racist acts against us in the interest of the majority and stability, and the culture of nationalism that condemns us as original 'others' who are not perceived as 'normal Australians'.

Racialisation is in the language and discourses that regulate what it means to be an Australian. Our education system is a powerful site of racialised, regulated production and reproduction of values, attitudes and policies (Moore 1994).

Justice is what love sounds like in public Dyson,
There's a war going on out there.
Strategic positions need maneuver
Battles between good and evil
Powerful and powerless, strengthen the
Lines maintain the call protest the
Public and desire the hidden right
For human kindness and discard
The placard of rationalization
Domination and glorification.
Time to politicise the demonized. if
Life's a bitch does someone have to live it?
If the world's an oyster does someone have to
Get it?
Take up the banner stand up for
The cause there's a war going on
Out here, Dyson. Fear no man.
This world is your world this world is
Mine. From the mountains to the sea
From the desert to the valleys
This world belongs to you and me?

Understanding the gaze of authority and discipline embedded in racialised social frameworks can enable young Nunga males to acquire the skills for strategic resistance and to contest or negotiate spaces otherwise denied to their bodies and minds. Understanding racialisation opens up the curriculum to other discussions of multiculturalism, racial tolerance, racial identity and race intersection with contemporary versions of class and underclass (Dyson 2003:127). Rap as an idea for intervention in curriculum can assist this large objective by ‘playing out’ and thereby questioning the constructs of race and classification. Who am I? What do I want? And how am I going to get it? How do I see myself and how do I respond to the ways I am seen? What do I have to say and who cares? These are deceptively simple questions but they are questions, again, that explore fundamental areas and themes of race, class, gender and sexuality. All of them intersect in a racialised society. Rap’s creative interpretation of ‘normalised’ curriculum allows for constructive intersection.

Performing transformation and effecting strategic cultural intervention

Key features of rap theory are performance, political and social knowledge, lived experiences and voice. Each feature works together. Young Nunga males’ lived experiences are incorporated into an understanding of political circumstances that are at play in the social context of their lives and giving voice is one way of enabling the performance of agency. Rap challenges the forces that are oppressive though both public and hidden transcripts/performance: in the Australian context it challenges the colonial influences that are historically embedded in the curriculum and ruptures curriculum to redefine those influences.

The ontology of young Nunga males in this site must have space to grow and develop and rap as a map shows how young Nunga males might begin to conceptualise a way into and through overlapping territories to get ‘home’. Young Nunga males already read and make use of rap to act out their resistance to dominant ideologies as they see them. The construction of a rap theory through performance of rappin involves ideas of agency which can enable young Nunga males’ identity to be asserted both on the sub-cultural margins as well as at the centre of Nunga life and in the mainstream. It identifies a space that helps to

create young Nunga males' forceful but responsible articulation and enactment of their social and political experiences (Bhabha 1996:195) – not as anti-social practice but as rightful claim to opportunity and just and well-earned reward.

Getting home

Effective strategic cultural intervention is important because taking opportunities to articulate social and political experiences means empowerment; especially via the power of making meaning. Young Nunga males can, as Hall and du Gay (1997) highlight, use the language of rap to enter the 'circuit of culture' or the 'cultural economy', in this case in the schooling environment (p3-4). Hall and du Gay (p5) state that gaining a measure of control over signifying practices exerts pressure on regulation and reproduction of knowledge and encourages entry into discourses of personal, cultural and even national belongingness. Belongingness is another word for getting home.

Making rap curriculum work

We, teachers, can make these nine components of rap theory work for us, to generate successful learning in our classrooms. They give us agency as well. The overlapping theories of race, space, gender, age, history, culture and education connect at various points and if we don't acknowledge these points and teach according to the ways these theories map process and progress then we can impede young Nunga males' access to and mobility in the system and interfere with their chances of success. Loss of the opportunity to connect simply 'passes the buck' to the next institutionalizing process. The map of rap theory allows an unlocking of other codes to assist passage through education. It translates otherwise 'subjugated knowledges' into concrete action (Dyson 2003: 129; Danaher et al. 2000). If rap is read as a performative text that enables the playing out and self-conscious positioning of politics, race, gender and sexuality, I would question why rap is not used more widely in curriculum.

In the western intellectual tradition, theorization is one part of a three-part process that also includes praxis/practice and technical implementation. To produce this prototype theory of rap in curriculum, there has been some recourse to practice and technique. Fieldwork for example, provides a limited and 'safe' test site for

the articulation and enactment of ideas, and professional teaching experience delivers opportunities to acquire and refine techniques of communication and the structuring of teacher-learner relationships and outcomes. To this extent the pursuit of the theory I have outlined has been balanced by and based on experience and practice. The next step – beyond the scope of this work – is to give serious attention to testing the ideas and their robustness by implementing some of the specific curriculum suggestions made earlier in this thesis in selected schools with willing participants (teachers and Nunga students) to road test a rap curriculum.

What can be said with conviction about the potential for transformative practice is that rapping as a way of ordering and synthesizing material, of struggling with ideas and voicing realities and impacts, has played a vital part in the production of this work. The raps that introduce and interrupt the chapters represent the struggle – my struggle - to come to grips with complex intellectual material, historical processes, personal emotions, political concepts and the pleasures of engagement, expression and the feeling of success. If it works here it can be made to work with and for Nunga kids. If it is possible to rap a thesis it should be possible to a rap curriculum.

This thesis has drawn from a range of theoretical frameworks (maps in their own ways) – educational, critical and cultural studies, youth and gender. Each of these theoretical frameworks contains ways of relating to and positioning the four different real-life stories in the Preface and informs the world of young Nunga males. If the map and the system in which it is to operate are to be taken seriously they have to recognize the realities of Thomas J Hickey, who lived on the margins, in the shadows of society, in the danger zone. They must recognize aCa, in charge of his own decisions as much as he possibly can be. aCa wants society to see him. He understands, like TJ, how he is positioned. His resistance and reconciliation can be seen and understood with the help of critical and cultural studies and within youth and gender frameworks. They must also respond to the third story about grieving for the death of a brother and friend, in this case, a successful student with a bright future. They must inspire teachers like they fired my imagination. All too often young Nunga males need space to

simply grieve for a range of losses, to have time out to search for answers, to ask questions of why and to understand how vulnerable they are. This must be acknowledged in a care pedagogy that supports young Indigenous Australians through the grieving process which is as much a part of their educational experience as it is a part of their lives outside of education.

Conclusion: Rappin 'Home'

In this thesis I have argued that young Nunga males have an investment in mainstream education. To ensure this investment gives them the desired outcomes, schools must implement ideas that contribute to young Nunga males seeing and hearing themselves in the curriculum and thus make their investment worthwhile. As Bourdieu observes 'cultural capital acts as a social relation with a system of exchange and is extended through the goods, material and symbolic cultural fields' (Webb, 2002:22). Within the cultural field of education, the skills young Nunga males learn and are equipped with through schooling constitute part of their cultural capital in the wider world beyond school. If state or national curriculums do not include the narratives and discourses of Indigenous history and culture as understood by Nungas as well as contemporary cultural practice and reality then learning leaves young Nunga males in the cold. Their 'turn off' is clearly revealed in their words and actions.

A rap approach to education

To ensure that the view of Australia as a 'nation consumed by amnesia' (Green 2003:21) does not prevail, changes to curriculum need to occur. These changes can happen through the presence of a rap curriculum, so that young Nungas are able to put themselves at the forefront of national consciousness. I give a clear indication of the concept of a rap curriculum and how rap can be implemented into various learning areas to give voice and visibility and encourage change for young Nunga males. I believe that by not including the narratives of young Nunga males and their lived worldview is not only to disadvantage students but also teachers. Green cites Seddon's argument 'that curriculum development workers do not know their own past thus, the relationship between past, present and future is taken for granted and does not give sufficient analyses' (p21). Taking this on board I suggest that including the discourses of Indigenous histories and lived experiences in classrooms through rap can serve as a passage through mainstream curriculum to find space and time to work towards re-analyzing the past, in the present to project a better future for

all students. I go a step further and outline the features of a theory of rap curriculum to map the pathways and perhaps even locate the 'rites of passage'.

I argue that effective strategies for the new ways/theories to be implemented are the answer to re-engaging and engaging young Nunga males in schooling. Teaching isn't as straightforward as we think. Classrooms are contradictory places and sites of complex social and cultural production and enactment. They should be spatially and conceptually involved in a transformative process. The knowledge of the student, and in this case the Nunga student, should be included in the discussion (Shor 1994; Friere 1994; Green 2003) – and sometimes shape that discussion as a matter of choice and priority. To assist this process, gaining access to space and identifying with that space as safe is of the utmost importance and -as I postulate - the actual and symbolic presence of the Nunga room in schools gives the opportunity to conceptualise and shape the process. In rapping the process of learning, young Nunga males begin to embody it and turn their 'dreams into action' (Shor 1994). They can start to take ownership of learning and produce their own discourses as well as critique dominant discourses, of teaching and learning. As Hattam and Howard (2003) suggest:

a curriculum that engages students in intellectual challenges and connects to the world of young people (their students) can conjure up a sense of curiosity, a curiosity that informs curriculum development. (p75)

This implies both a reciprocal and dialogic process. Therefore, I have argued that understanding the way cultural capital informs students' habitus and agency in school will contribute to how young Nunga males interact and become involved in learning and understanding what education can do for them and what they must do for themselves in and beyond schooling.

The theory of rap in this thesis can be perceived as a map of ideas waiting to be implemented and applied through the conceptual framework of curriculum. The representation of rap performance/language in this thesis shows how this collective of young Nunga males makes its meanings. The mapping of rap, as intervention in curriculum, reveals a place/space where young Nunga males and

their teachers in secondary schooling can develop skills to implement change, define content, reinforce relationships, and negotiate practices and outcomes. When this happens it is possible to mobilize and motivate oneself to get home.

Home

This thesis emerged from knowledge of and has response to a background in which brutality, violence, protest and disenfranchisement are too often a reality for Nunga youth in and out of school. It has identified strategies that can be used by students, teachers and schools to find a way to ensure young Nunga males engage in and benefit from schooling and stay in school. If young Nunga males in education need space to build relationships through performance of agency through rap to get home then they should have it. The ontology – that vital understanding of self and ways of being and doing in context - of young Nunga males then becomes their way to citizenship, regardless of where they travel, work, study or who they meet along the journey. Their bodies are home and they are at home in their bodies, to perform the way they want. This is true agency. aCa asserts 'I won't apologise'. This thesis rap has gone some way to understanding and explaining why, but it also offers a way to avoid the long wait for young Nunga fullas 'outside the door' and on the edge.

Home carries me away to places
Spaces that won't confine me
Deny me, bound or confound me
But saves me, plays with me and
Contains me.

Power's in the knowing
Showing the way to move and groove
Me to cement pleasure, desire and
Informed consent, where pride side steps
The fall and calls to others
Take note that I am in the house.

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