# VOICE, REPRESENTATION AND DIRTY THEORY

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**ABSTRACT** Australian Educational theory has drawn largely from the authoritative metropole described by Connell in *Southern Theory* (2007). In this article, the perilous nature of global north/south power relations that are embedded in research work is given consideration. Through a collaborative process, the researchers create an assemblage of poems that embody a range of voices from their respective research fields. Drawing from contexts in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, these examples of southern theory fieldwork are used to problematise the notion that it is possible to simply bring the south to the centre. The geospatial politics inherent in Connell's attempt to categorise knowledge production is critiqued. The complexity of 'doing southern theory' is considered as one of many approaches to working with voices from the south.

**Key Words:** Southern Theory, dirty theory, higher education, indigenous education

## Introduction
In a counterpolitics to the influential metropole advocated by Raewyn Connell (2007) in her book *Southern Theory*, we three women academics, "sink roots into the mud of [our] particular landscapes" to engage with "dirty theory" (p. 206). Dirty theory is embedded in the perspectives and geopolitical interests of the postcolonial Global South, rather than those of the North (Reed, 2013). It has been argued that knowledge hierarchies in social science are hegemonic; the geopolitical pattern of knowledge prioritising the theories generated from a constructed metropole power base or North (Nye, Amazan & Charteris,

2017). Centring the Global South, we contribute to debates on how southern theory can influence education and unsettle knowledge hierarchies. Counterpolitics explore the "everyday struggles and resistances enacted by students, teachers or others in the practices of their daily lives" (Youdell, 2011, p. 15). Furthermore, we resist the current and ongoing pervasiveness of cultural enthnology as a (neo)liberal form of multiculturalism. It represents a modern form of symbolic violence where dominant cultures try to subsume different cultures by imposing Northern standards over ethnic communities (Despagne, 2013). This can be seen in methodologies that homogenise and sanitise social and cultural differences from the research settings.

Although we centralise "dirty theory" as a theoretical framework, we recognise that we are never far from the metropole and the northern theory that has shaped our academies. In a recent publication of *Postcolonial Directions in Education*, Takayama, Heimans, Amazan and Maniam (2016) propose a set of dynamics that describe researcher engagements with southern theory. They argue that 'Doing southern theory' involves "identifying and contesting" academic knowledge production processes, "bearing witness" to the influence of the global north's "epistemic indifference", curating and/or translating neglected southern intellectual work to foreground "discredited/disenfranchised knowledges"; and "mobilizing southern experiences and knowledges as legitimate intellectual resources" (Takayama, Heimans, Amazan & Maniam, 2016, p. 11).

Grappling with these dynamics, we proceed in this article to share three accounts from our fieldwork as an engagement with southern theories. These poetic narratives, as accounts of our engagement with voices in our specific research contexts, are drawn from our research in a secondary school, higher education and in a rural community. The data poems included are constructed to provide an account of voices through poetic transcription. Rather than an uncomplicated representation of life, we see poetry as a political act in that it can never be read detached from the socio historical and political context of the field. After the accounts we explore literature on southern theory, voice, representational politics and the use of poetry as data and share how southern theory has influenced our work. The first account provides an insight into an Aotearoa/ New Zealand perspective.

**Southern theory in Classroom research.**

Connell (2007) argues that "one of the mechanisms constituting Northern theory was the erasure of experience from the periphery. To undo this erasure is a primary task in reworking the relations between periphery and metropole, to make a shared learning process possible" (p. 214). It must also be acknowledged that some indigenous theories have appropriated northern theory to speak back to the metropole. Graham Smith (2012), inspired by Paulo Freire, argues the merits of Kaupapa Māori as an influential theory to address the social injustice experienced by New Zealand's indigenous people. Smith challenges researchers to connect Kaupapa Māori with its critical theory origins. In doing so, there is the capacity to articulate a criticality in order to "speak back to dominant theories in education" (p. 10). Failing to recognise this genealogy robs Kaupapa Māori of its radical potential. The first researcher story is from Aotearoa draws from Aotearoa/ New Zealand based research work.

I explore an aspect of Kaupapa Māori theory to trouble simplistic conceptions of student voice. I explore my positioning as a pakeha researcher, desiring to centre Kaupapa Māori as a southern theory. Drawing from classroom research, I explore how voice as poetry allows PJ's subjectivities to be revealed. Through poetry, I produce a non-essentialised representation of the problematic of voice. While it is deeply troubling to appropriate concepts from an indigenous epistemology, Kaupapa Māori practices and protocols can inform the work of pakeha researchers (Hill & May, 2013). I argue that it is important for non-indigenous researchers not to shy away from the field and to engage in collaborations to support indigenous scholarship and onto-epistemological projects. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, this involves working alongside Māori to address the ongoing project of erasure that Connell talks about. A Kaupapa Māori framework for research is based on the concept of self-determination (Smith, L. 1997; Bishop, 1997) and prioritises Māori practices, value systems and social relations as an underpinning basis for research in New Zealand indigenous contexts (Hill & May, 2013). Writing on the ethical implications of non-indigenous researchers working within indigenous communities, Hill and May argue that

non-indigenous researchers can implement successful and beneficial projects in indigenous contexts, but only within a framework, such as Kaupapa Māori research principles...Importantly, the establishment and maintenance of reciprocal relationships between researchers and participants contributes crucially to the success of research projects in indigenous settings (p. 48).

The wider research was conducted in 4 secondary classrooms within one school where I worked as a teacher professional development provider. During the research, I observed lessons and afterwards spoke with students and teachers to find out about how they enacted learner agency in their learning during Science and English lessons. While I engaged with the voices of students and teachers, I focused on the notion of reciprocity and self determination, considering how I could support a culturally responsive approach to learner agency. It has been well documented that gathering voices for schooling improvement can serve as a mechanism of governmentality and contribute little to the students themselves (Nelson, 2017). Researching in a school where there were indigenous students in the population, I saw the importance of Kaupapa Māori protocols and practices for my interview approach. I consulted with a colleague in her capacity as Kaitakawaenga Māori (cultural advisor) to ensure that my work was culturally responsive and appropriate. I took an opened-ended approach, to learn about the students' conception of classroom events and in particular to engage them in dialogue where we co-produced the direction of the conversation. I interviewed the students in the classroom and, although it was at times noisy and distracting, it reduced the researcher imposition of taking individuals out of their context.

The following section reveals how a 14 year old indigenous student, PJ (pseudonym), takes up subjectivities in his English classroom. Subjectivities are co-constituted in and through discourses and the material arrangements of settings, in this case the sociocultural context of a classroom. By placing his voice front and centre to explore his words, I look at the work that his language does to constitute the world. Rather than pinning down PJ's student identity as a rational, autonomous, choice-maker and his voice as essentialised and representational, I elect for a research approach where I ask him to tell his story of what happened when he gave a speech to his English class.

In this process I position PJ as an agent who can take up and act upon discourse as well as being constituted through it. During the lesson I recorded PJ's speech. This video footage was gathered in keeping with research ethics and had both PJ and his teacher's oral and written consent. The speech was not used in the research and PJ appeared happy to receive a CD of his speechmaking, despite his comment that he did not want to see himself speak. Ownership of the CD gave him a chance to view his speech if, where and with whom he wanted to. Rather than confining the voice of PJ the student to a cage of interpretation, PJ's voice is decentred through poetry. PJ's words juxtapose teen peer and research discourses and illustrate the discursive complexity of PJ's positioning with his peers.

> I wasn't shy because our class were acting all normal.
> [Acting] themselves.
> I usually go shy when other people talk and I don't want to get talked about.
> That puts me down.
>
> I was talking about 'Sonny Bill.'[1] I wasn't nervous or nothing.
> Just being myself. Just got up there with a lot of courage.
> My mates....They said "come on bro you are pretty cool."
>
> I haven't said a speech to the class. Cos sometimes I am too
> Shy to get up. Other people [made me get up]....
> I don't like seeing myself videoed. It's alright to video me
> But I just don't want to see it. I don't like the feeling. Shame.
> Cos I am not really like avoiding getting videoed.
> I don't mind being videoed but I don't want to see it.
> I wanted to [get up] because I can make the class laugh.
> [I liked] them laughing and listening.
>  (PJ)

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1 Sonny Bill Williams is a famous New Zealand rugby (league and union) player and heavy weight boxer.

There are a multiplicity of subjectivities in play at any one moment in this poem; speechmaker, research participant and one of the boys. This complexity underscores three particular discursive influences within the classroom at the time, English discipline discourse, teen peer discourse, and research discourse. Firstly, English discipline discourse frames the activity, which was speechmaking. PJ says that he has never stood before his peers to deliver a speech in class. Secondly, teen peer discourse is evident when he discusses the value of making his peers laugh, their influence on his shyness and the value of their encouragement. Thirdly, the camera is a discourse tool that reminds us all of the presence of research discourse and my position within our relationship as researcher. The camera footage provides an uncomfortable paradox, as something PJ does not want see, yet gives me permission to gather.

PJ's locatedness as 'one of the boys' speaks to the importance of peers, a notion that can be linked with whakawhānaungatanga (far–car-far-know-na-tounge-ah) which can be defined as the spirit of connection that comes with a sense of a family (whānau) and an understanding of the "ways by which people come into relationship with the world, with people, and with life" (Dyall et al., 2014, p. 62). As Metge (1990) points out the notion of whānau can be aligned with a series of rights, responsibilities, commitments, obligations and support networks that are fundamental to a community. Without peer support PJ may not have taken up English discipline discourse in this manner.

Manaakitanga, or an ethic of care (Macfarlane, 2010) was important to PJ in his position as one of the boys. This subjectivity was co-constituted in relation with his peers. PJ's spoke about being rejected by his peers and there was concern about his peers putting him down. He may have evoked peer disapproval and criticism if he pushed himself forward on his peers to make the speech, and he responded to their encouragement. "Come on bro…" Humour seemed to be a central element in this relationship if he was to gain acceptance as he could "make the class laugh".

There is danger in engaging in essentialising forms of research that assume truths about participants' worlds and perspectives and I see that voice work needs to be open to

plurality. As I have illustrated above, decentring voice enables us to see PJ's voice as complex, with multiple elements. Linda Smith (2005) draws our attention to the problematic of essentialism. In places like Aotearoa/New Zealand where "there is one indigenous group, known as Māori … [there is] one common language but multiple ways of defining themselves" (Smith, L., 2005, p. 114). Through engaging with Kaupapa Māori as a "dirty theory", the importance of establishing and maintaining "reciprocal relationships" (Hill & May, 2013, p. 48) is emphasised. Although I endeavour to think with Kaupapa Māori principles, I signal the complexity and peril of appropriating indigenous words as a New Zealander from a pakeha heritage. As a researcher, I strive to avoid essentialism, yet to foreground a spirit of indigenous self-determination in my work, I see a need to unravel the blanket approach to research that was my training. Non- indigenous researchers can take guidance from colleagues and engage purposefully with the growing body of "peripheral" scholarship as a contribution to the voices who speak back to the metropole.

## Historical Evidence in the Academy and Indigenous Women's Life Histories

This second story relays of the experiences of a 1990s history postgraduate; recalling her early lessons about the complexities of the history discipline and, in particular, writing about forms of evidence. Students of history are taught that historical evidence is always under contest. Northern theories would suggest understanding this is an important stage in the ontological processes of historical thinking (Rüsen, 2005, Nye et al. 2011). Southern Indigenous perspectives of Australian history might hold similar views but argue that contestation of historical evidence is more likely to be about resistance against colonialism and oppression (Kwaymullina & Kwaymullina, 2013, p. 8) and giving voice where they have been previously silenced or erased (Jackomos & Fowell, 1991, p. 5). Kuokkanen (2008) has suggested than a collective Indigenous view is that "everything is alive, everything is related and everything is participatory" (p.62).  In this section I reflect on a period of personal transformative learning more than two decades ago where these ideas found resonance. As a new postgraduate student, I first started questioning historical -thinking, education and practice in light of Australian History and indigenous women's texts. My goal was to move Indigenous

historical sources from the periphery in order to centre them at the core of history pedagogy.

To do this, I revisit the late 1980s and 1990s, a period of transition in the discipline of History. I was fascinated by the different ways of thinking about teaching history, notions of evidence and representations of indigenous Australians. At this time the scholars of the metropole were undergoing a transformation under the influence of interdisciplinary ways of thinking- in particular from sociology, the linguistic and cultural turns, critical theory and postmodernism. Crucial to the discipline narrative was the introduction of new fields of History such as social histories including Oral history, Women's History, 'History from Below', Indigenous and Postcolonial histories.

As sources of evidence for the discipline, a new (arguably southern) genre of literature was concurrently emerging. This included the indigenous life histories shared by women who told the story of their lives, their community and their land. These women were, as Zierott (2005) would acknowledge two decades later, pioneers in life history writing (p. 9). Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina (2013) cite a 'quiet revolution' in Aboriginal scholarship over fifty years (p. 1). In the texts the women positioned themselves as agentic authors through the projection of their stories as authentic lived experiences. Furthermore, they conveyed a sense of personal authority as purposeful keepers of history. Moreton-Robinson (2000) described them as representative of the 'collective memories of inter-generational relationships of Indigenous women … herstories' (p. 2).

The texts did not resemble typical historical resources of the time. They often included non-academic language and structure. The book *Just Lovely* for example "evolved from stories written without capitals or punctuation, on foolscap paper by a sixty year old woman who had never been to school" (Hamilton, 1989, p.6) Some books were self published (Woodrow, 1990; Hamilton, 1989), others published by new Aboriginal publishing houses such as Magabala Books (Ward, 1988) and Freemantle Arts Centre Press (Morgan, 1987; Nannup, 1992). There were small independent publishers; Mammoth (Mum Shirl, 1981) and the Alternative Publishing Cooperative (Clare, 1978) and occasionally texts were produced by larger publishing houses

such as Penguin (Langford, 1988). This period in publishing has been described as an "Aboriginal Renaissance" (Grossman, 2006, p.3).

As an emergent scholar, I was increasingly interested in the pedagogy of history education as well as historical thinking and practice. Yet I felt troubled by indigenous disempowerment and the legacy of colonialism and how it was represented in the history discipline. I was intrigued by these indigenous women's stories and the historical narratives so clearly embedded in them. They were compelling and different to any other texts on Australian indigenous history. In hindsight, these historical narratives are recognisably southern theory histories – firmly located on the periphery of the academy, publishing circles and writing conferences. They were autobiographical and drawn from lived experience and detailed the history of families, communities and government policies and practices. To appropriate Connell's notion of "linking theory to the ground to which the theorist/author's boots are firmly planted" (p206), these texts are located in communities and lands from which they were written.

These texts were personal, political and emancipatory. In 1985 Marnie Kennedy wrote:

This story was written with the hope that white people will know and understand the plight of my people. The terrible injustice and humiliation done over hundreds of years has taken its toll on my people and crushed them to pulp. (p.1)

Marjorie Woodrow aimed to publicise the reality of her experiences after she found that government files were filled with "terrible things I was supposed to have done" (1990, p.5). Exposing the truth of the oppressive past and how many people were forced to live was at the heart of many of these texts.

The following poem is an assemblage of voices that juxtapose the paternalistic words of the protectorate (italicised text) alongside the stories of the indigenous women. The legitimacy of the women's authorship is acknowledged in the following poem. Their voices are first.

They promised us lollies and socks and shoes
(Cummings, 1990, p.103)
I thought I'd only be gone a while
I could hear their wailing for miles and miles (Morgan,
1989, p.332)
She still had her apron on, and she must have run
the whole one and a half miles (Tucker, 1994, 92-94).

I tried to teach my language
I spoke it freely
I spoke it well
I was punished every time. (Woodrow, 1990, p. 21)

This story is true
It did happen and
I was part of it. (Kennedy, 1985, p.1)

*It may seem drastic*
*If those girls are to be rescued*
*From camp life*
*[It is] the rock upon which*
*[Their] lives are wrecked*  (Henderson, 1909, cited in
Fletcher, 1989, p. 111).

These powerful texts written by indigenous women deserved to be more than minor footnotes or afterthoughts of history education. It was imperative to interrogate why students of Australian history were not asked to query the hegemonic nature and imbalances of the discipline. As a form of resistance, I wrote a Master of Letters (M.Litt) research thesis to argue that women's life histories could contribute to the scholarship of Australian History (Anderson, 1996). The thesis sought to raise the profile of the indigenous women's stories to challenge the notion of what constitutes historical evidence. To demonstrate this I focused on the history of education and the removal of indigenous children from their families as described by the women authors. In particular, I explored how they storied policy development, education, acts of child removal and finally the impact of these on communities and individuals.

At the time this was not necessarily a new or original idea, rather it built on a growing voice on the periphery of academia (Gilbert, 1972, Shoemaker, 1989). The unrepresented, the

hidden, the silenced, the downtrodden and what we would refer now as the 'southern histories' were progressively becoming more visible in the academy. In other colonised societies and landscapes such as Latin America, Canada and the United States, a similar movement foregrounding Indigenous and other disempowered voices had begun and was gaining recognition (Quijano, 1998; Hayden, 1995; Walsh, 1987, Faderman and Bradshaw, 1969). I advocated for the privileging of Indigenous voice across the discipline. Certainly the teaching of Australian History and in particular, Indigenous history, now includes numerous major works by Indigenous authors, although much more could be promoted.

In retrospect, the notion of a northern and southern theory resonates with my early discomfort about the silencing and marginalisation of voices in that period. Connell (2007) alerts us to the importance of contesting a privileged minority's "control of the field of knowledge" (p. 231) and highlights the need for us as researchers to translate and disrupt the knowledge hierarchies in the academy. Just as Harraway (1988) desires a doctrine and practice of objectivity that privileges "contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connection and hope for transformation of systems" (p.585), there was a desire to upturn and reinterpret the situated knowledges and vision that have shaped practices in History pedagogy. The vision, Harraway reminds her readers, is "*always* a question of power" (1988, p. 585). Accordingly, the urgency to play a part in the rupturing of the embedded vision from the uncertain but passionate postgraduate position was heartfelt.

The outcome of my research thesis in 1996 however was far less dramatic as I realised I was writing myself out of this disciplinary field. There was no place for a privileged white woman to analyse or to tell these stories. There was perhaps space enough for a historiographical analysis of the readings and some pedagogical comment but the slow erasure of my own researcher position was increasingly evident to me. I had constructed a narrative that would, by its very nature, distance itself from my academic position and deconstruct my commentator voice.

In revisiting this story through a southern theory lens, I argue that it is imperative to always question representations of

evidence of voice in post-colonial spaces. Although I completed my thesis in the 1990s, representational politics remain complex, multilayered and problematic. The uncomfortable lessons learnt at that time now occupy a professional tool box today. In my most recent research on historical evidence and the history discipline, I am reminded of the need for enduring critical reflection on the the ontological, epistemological and theorietcial mutliplicities that inhabit, what historians consititute as, evidence.

## Community consent – permission giving

Reflecting on the process of making a historical documentary film, *My Grandmother's Country*, I raise questions about cultural protocols, ethics and the legal obligation for film production. These elements become problematic and ambiguous in regard to the representation of Aboriginal voices and images in film. I locate myself as a research with a multiplicity of positions . My subjectivities include positions as a Aboriginal filmmaker, academic and family/community person. These positions can be fraught as there are constant conflicts that surface through my associated decision-making.

As a PhD student researching my family and community history I sought after different ways of making my research data accessible to Aboriginal people. This meant changing how I conducted oral histories by first acknowledging that as Aboriginal people we are traditionally oral societies who have practiced oral history for millennia, but we often take oral history for granted because we live it every day, it is a part of who we are, where we come from, where it is that we belong and who we are related to. In essence oral history is living stories. I then experimented with different ways of representing Aboriginal people's voice, stories, memories and experiences in print form such as free verse poetry and 'what was particularly appealing about the use of free verse for my purpose was that it breaks with written grammar and it does not force oral speech patterns into written prose' (Barker, 2010, p.192). That is free verse permitted the use of Aboriginal English so that the written form looked and sounded like how Aboriginal people speak. I then began to explore filmmaking as another way of not only presenting my research but also a way of capturing the culture and history of my community. All three mediums: oral history, free verse poetry and filmmaking makes research data more

accessible to Aboriginal people because it is recorded in the mediums that they use and understand.

Since the 1980s there has been a significant contribution to the field of cultural protocols relating to research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (MacInolty and Duffy, 1987; Janke and Guivarra, 2006; Johnson, 2001). From this research corpus core values and principles have emerged that govern ethical research conducted in Aboriginal communities. My discussion focuses on three key principles and limitations experienced during the production of the short documentary film, *My Grandmother's Country.* These limitations also pertain to other filmmakers entering Aboriginal communities to capture Aboriginal content. The key principles of the cultural protocols include: benefit to the community, community permission sought, and involvement of the community at all stages of the filmmaking process (Rolls, 2003). However, as Frances Peters-Little (2003) points out, these stringent guidelines are problematic for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal filmmakers and their crews because "[d]efining *what* benefits a community is not straightforward ...' (Peters-Little, 2003, p.4). Equally, she notes it can be an issue to decide *who* is the community and *how* they should benefit.

Throughout the production and post-production of *My Grandmother's Country,* there was ambiguous support from organisations and individuals. By this I mean that I experienced mixed-messages when I sought verbal permission from Elders. In particular, I sometimes observed hesitation to provide written consent for the use of voices and images of family members. While some Aboriginal and mainstream organisations provided written support for the film, others failed to reply and there were those who questioned the credibility of my positioning as a filmmaker, academic and a young family/community member. They cautioned me to be culturally respectful and sensitive in the way in which I represented individual and collective images, voices and stories. One Elder thought to remind me that, "these are our old people, be careful and do the right thing."

As the writer/researcher of the documentary, *Tent Embassy* (1992), screened as part of the ABC True Story series, Frances Peters-Little (2002), recalls the myriad of difficulties she encountered during the pre-production,

especially when interviewing key players. She explains how a *Tent Embassy* representative was willing to be interviewed but was adamant that she "could record the interview sound only" and that he had requested that there was no reference to his name (Peters-Little, 2002, p. 50). Peters-Little also interviewed a high profile activist, pointing out how he became "the first in a long line of interviewees to warn me that I would need to get the story 'right'" (p. 51). More recently, filmmaker Rachel Perkins was questioned by an Elder, who was a key player and activist in the original Freedom Rides, alongside her late father, Charles Perkins. Perkins was questioned about whether she had invited key players and their descendants to be a part of the re-enactment of the Freedom Rides to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary in February 2015. Perkins was forced to make a public statement to clarify matters in a private conversation with the individual concerned and this was set out in writing to the First Nations Telegraph (Perkins, 2015). It would seem that community members are the first to question the integrity of a filmmaker or an event such as the re-enactment of the Freedom Rides, especially if there is a hint that Aboriginal filmmakers are being "too political or too different" (Peters-Little, p.44).

The following demonstrates my reflective process during the post-production stage of a film where I researched my grandmother's story of removal from country. As a historian, I collated documentary evidence, for instance letters, policy documents, archival photographs, audio sound recordings taken in the 1960s and 1970s that provide accounts of the dislocation and forced removal of the Wangkumara people.

The Northern Theory of filmmaking influenced my production process. This was evident in the film footage taken of family members and Elders in the grounds of the Old Brewarrina Mission, which reminds me of some of the haunting and expressionless photographs of Aboriginal peoples taken by Norman Tindale and other 1930s researchers and administrators (Norman B. Tindale Collection, 1938-39, SA Museum). This footage I have taken has the same framing as Tindale's work, but in this scene the individuals are active participants, or so I thought. Perhaps this was my way of convincing myself during the filmmshoot

that my participants were relaxed and looked more like a group of family members who were comfortable and willing participants in my film. Viewing this structured image on the screen and as part of the film makes me feel uneasy and uncomfortable that I allowed the staging and sterilising to happen again to Elders and family members. My decisions on the day were based on a prescriptive filmmaking process that sets up a scene to get specific answers. The production crew, particularly the Aboriginal cameraman and producer also influenced the construction of this image because of the time of day, available light and our production schedule.

As a documentary filmmaker I go in search of my preconceived answers. I reconstruct history. It is here that my other position, as family member and oral historian can come to the fore where I take control in calling the shots. I am mindful that the shot I set up will determine the stories I get from participants. More importantly, I need to prioritise what is appropriate for my family and community members. In the scene above the camera dictated what happened. However, from a 'southern' perspective that focuses on community filmmaking, the camera follows events and the stories, images and voices collected relate more closely to oral history methods and practices (L. Szabo, personal communication, 15 September, 2014). It imitates the way in which oral histories are shared from one generation to the next. This is an example of centring southern theory by taking aspects of metropolitan filmmaking processes and reconstructing them as a response to different situations and for different purposes.

There were tough editorial decisions to be made. In order to stay true to the stories and script and the time constraints of a short ten minute film documentary, footage containing historical content were selected and discarded on the cutting room floor. It was during the post-production stage that I began to feel uncomfortable, anxious and concerned about the representation and exclusion of three women Elders. I was mindful of how these decisions could impact on my relationship with participants and community/family members. The documentary release forms (informed consent) gave me as the director the power to edit the story. However, these release forms are "often not worth the paper they are written on" (Peters-Little, 2002, p.2). Peters-Little cautions that, once signed, they are a legally binding agreement

that can potentially cause conflicts and misunderstandings between the filmmaker and participants, especially if the "release forms give the [participants] the impression that they can control" the way in which their images, voices and stories are represented on film (p.3).

It was painstaking decision to risk breaking cultural tenets by removing footage of these Elders. I wrestled this decision over with the editor in an attempt to convince myself that it was in the best interest of the film and the story. I was grateful for the way that the women Elders took time out of their day to welcome the cast and crew of *My Grandmother's Country*. Without their presence and stories our experience at the Old Mission may have been different and spiritually unsettling. In saying that, however, I made no promises about who would be included in the film or unfortunately edited-out of the fine cut stage. A conflict of interest, as a filmmaker this was standard and appropriate practice.

Community politics and family indifference was the underlining reason that I thought it best to remove the footage of one of the Elders. As difficult as it was, the intention here was to protect the film from any potential embargoes now and in the future, and to prevent anyone from obtaining ultimate 'power' and decision making over the editing, promotion and release of the film. As an Aboriginal researcher/filmmaker, a family member and an insider to my community, I have to live with the possibility of offending this woman. I risk ostracism for not respecting the cultural protocols of reciprocity and respect. There is an unwritten understanding in the community that people who give up their time expect to be included in the final film. Including everyone's oral history and image is not only challenging but problematic (Smith, 1999, p. 137; Peters-Little, 2003, p. 4).

Oral histories evoke the protocol of wider involvement and I use poetry as an artform that is accessible to my community. It contextualises the stories and avoids unnecessary subtitles in community filmmaking. The following poem was generated from a telephone conversation and version of this poem also appears in Chapter 8 of my thesis (Barker, 2014 pp. 260-1). In it I explain how my grandmother, Amy Elwood learned to read and write by 'playing schools'.

I didn't learn anythin'
Tah tell yah the truth
Taught ourselves
Tah read an' write
Picked-up comics
Jam tins
Camp pie tins
Someone'd tell us the word
Then we'd repeat it
Over an'
Over again
Then we'd spell it
An' read it 'loud
The older ones
Would tell us how tah spell
Over an' over
'til we got it (Amy Elwood, pers.comm, 2010)

The poem reveals how as a result of the forced removal of her people my grandmother's education suffered. The free verse poetry captures how I hear someone speaking and it permits the use of Aboriginal English- trying to stay true to an indigenous voice and Indigenous oral history within the Global South. Although I see it as essential that filmmakers adhere to the cultural protocols of consulting with community, obtaining their support, and being inclusive, respectful and sensitive, the application of these tenets also have the extraordinary power to block the production of films. It would seem that the ethical guidelines for conducting research with Aboriginal communities are influenced by the metropole. Therefore, it is important to examine these same guidelines through a southern theory lens. One needs not simply adhere to them, but rather to engage and question the effectiveness of such principles (Rolls, 2003; Peters-Little, 2003). Metropolitan ethical processes, well meaning as they are, may paradoxically inhibit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research.

**Discussing the tensions**
A simplistic treatment of voice has long been contested (Orner, 1992; Mazzei & Jackson, 2012; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2014). The fullness of voice escapes "easy classification" (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009, p. 4) and as researchers we should "seek the messy, opaque, polyphonic; a voice that exceeds easy knowing

and quick understanding" (Mazzei, 2009, p. 50). Through demonstrating multiple ways of engaging in research settings, we trouble the notion of an uncomplicated representation of voices that seek this homogenisation. As Louis (2007), a Hawaiian researcher, points out

> [I]ndigenous knowledge systems are poly-rhetorical, contextually based, and rooted in a specific place and time. For Indigenous communities, their oral histories, narratives, and spiritual practices and rituals are important avenues for knowledge transmission. They contain numerous nuances that only certain community members are privileged to understand. Attempting to decipher this rich code and to represent it adequately requires that the researcher becomes an advocate of the Indigenous knowledge system and at the very least incorporates the 'Indigenous voice' in their work. (p. 134)

In a move to engage with a problematic conception of indigenous voices we recognise that any perspectives gathered through research can only ever be partial, fragmented and crystalline and do not necessarily present a 'true' picture when interpreted by the researcher or the reader (Wright, Lloyd, Suchet-Pearson, Burarrwanga, Tofa & Country, 2012). Although we take up Mazzei's (2009) call to give up on the "promise of voice" as "truth, fixity, knowledge, and authenticity" (p.47), we do not give up on voice work. In particular we highlight the importance of the 'politics of voice'. Through dirty theory we ensure that voice is not taken as representative and totalising /universalising. Voice work that homoginises groups of people can be seen as "epistemic ignorance" as the "academic practices and discourses that enable the continued exclusion of other than dominant Western epistemic and intellectual traditions" (Kuokkanen 2008, p. 60). Kuokkanen (2008) cautions us that any engagement with indigenous voices must seek to build an understanding of "ontologies, philosophies and presuppositions or conceptual frameworks through which one looks at and interprets the world" (p. 62).

Although we are advocates of "dirty theory," we recognise that our researcher positions are fraught as we engage with voices in the field. Each of us comes to this proposal from

individual perspectives as academics, an Indigenous woman, a white Australian, and white New Zealander (pakeha). Although we name our positionality we are conscious that our subjectivities reflect a multiplicity of voices. We theorise our research experiences in relation to southern theory as embodied anthropology (Esteban, 2001) where we look at our own learning. Connell (2007) conceptualises "dirty theory" as a localised response to important questions "[t]hat includes multiplying the local sources of our thinking…" (p. 207). "Dirty theory" furnishes a useful frame with which to foreground particular issues in our research contexts.

## Southern Theory

The western machine that is the academy perpetuates northern power structures and knowledge hierarchies and we, as participant academics, find that through our work practices, we are often complicit in the process. We are laden with professional tools that by their very nature are part of the northern research hierarchy. We ask therefore; how can we make authentic and empowered space in our higher education pedagogy, ontology and epistemology for representations of the south that are not engulfed or consumed by the north.

Connell (2007) constructs a typology of northern theory, citing four elements being:  the claim of universality; reading from the centre; gestures of exclusion; and grand erasure. While we do not explore these characteristics in depth in this article, we wonder about the claim that all northern theories have pretensions to universality. In her commentary on the northerness of general theory, Connell highlights that "there is as strong and repeated claim to universal relevance [where] the very idea of theory involves talking in universals. It is assumed that all societies are knowable, and that they are knowable in the same way and from the same point of view" (Connell, 2007, p. 44). Hence, while we acknowledge the important place that southern theory has, we are cautious not to assume universality for all northern theories.

Connell observes that Australians have contributed to "sociological theory, not as peripheral consumers of the metropole's output but as participants in metropolitan debates" (p. 84). In her tracking of social science as a discipline in Australia, Connell critiques the historical mix of north and

south theories where "[t]he result was a hybrid structure of knowledge in the new discipline, where Australian sociologists combined metropolitan theory and methodology with local data and audiences" (Connell, 2007, p. 82). In her discussion on the problematic hybridisation of southern and northern theories she argues that they purely serve the interests of the metropole as the dissemination of this work takes place in the metropole. Regardless of the locatedness of southern-based research as "dirty theory" (Connell, 2007, p. 206), the results are published in 'northern' journals replicating metropolitan norms and conventions. Therefore there is a sustained focus on metropolitan literature (Connell, 2007, p. 84). As a way forward Connell argues that the Australian context is a "spectrum of *possibilities* inherent in the geopolitical situation of a rich peripheral country and the history of settler colonialism" (Connell, 2007, p. 85).

Through the process of collaborative writing, we reoriented ourselves from the taken-for-granted northern metropolitan position to draw on southern perspectives. We have made a conscious effort to engage with southern scholarship, although this is an ongoing challenge with the weight of our northern baggage. The gathering and dissemination of voice in research, as we have alluded to above, should not be conducted without substantive engagement with the embedded power relations inherent in this act.

**Discussion- Weaving it together**

We acknowledge and admire the way that Connell (2007) brings to the fore theories and perspectives of the periphery. She describes erasure when the metropole refuses to contextualise itself and embark on any form of self reflective historicism. We trouble Connell's assertion that in rethinking the world of social science, we need to engage with a sense of "truthfulness" (p. 227) in order to achieve a "principle of unification" (p. 223). Although we also aspire to this social justice ontology, we are cautious about constructing false utopias.

We wonder about geospatial politics inherent in Connell's attempt to simplify knowledge production, in particular, that we can simply bring the south to the centre. In our thinking the historiography of the social sciences is not malleable in this way and theories are not cumulative, although they do respond

to and generate from each other. Connell's call to shift theories from periphery to legitimate them could inevitably conceal, reveal, or even create other fringe dwellers. Although this sounds like a Darwinian view of knowledge hierarchies, these power relations have been evident throughout history. Furthermore, Connell (2007) constructs a grand narrative of social science when she highlights the important role that research plays in theory building. She writes that the "permanent revolution in social science based on the empirical dimension in the collective learning process" is founded on a sense that "errors and distortions" can be mapped and credibility assigned to research based theories (Connell, 2007, p. 224). This empirical notion, that research outcomes can be legitimised and verified, is counterintuitive to a pluralistic understanding that knowledge is inherently contestable.

Connell articulates "dirty theory" as a located place-based research epistemology where the "theorist's boots are [firmly] planted (p. 206)... [and] [o]ur interest as researchers is to maximise the wealth of materials that are drawn into the analysis and explanation... [where we] multiply, rather than slim down, the theoretical ideas that we have to work with" (p. 207). We locate "dirty theory" outside of the metropolitan metanarrative of social science where there corrigibility and a focus on scientism as progress through mapping errors and distortions. With its origins in objectivism, this scientism prioritises "rationality, progress and the growth and accumulation of Knowledge" (Lather, 2005, p. 3). We conceive of "dirty theory," evidenced in our poetic representations, as a purposeful ontology that sits alongside others in an eclectic "proliferation" and a "wild profusion" (Lather, 2006, p. 35). This plethora can be seen in the multiplicity of voices within this text.

While we are not trying to assert a blanket model for indigenous contexts, we share our ways of working with voices. These voices are considered to be on the periphery due to their youth, their disconnection from the academy or their locatedness as perpetual subjects of the metropole-data-field, the researched. We present voice as 'data poems' that take power dynamics into consideration. These voices can be seen as unstable, multiple and nuanced by discursive positioning. Though presenting a range of voices: a student, PJ; a group of indigenous women authors; and those in a rural indigenous

community, we have sought to signal the multiple vibrations of stories, experience and memories. Rather than reduce complicated and conflicting voices to analytical "chunks" that can be interpreted free of context and circumstance", our poetic voice work takes up "dirty theory" to explore voices in our research contexts (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012, p. 745). Through this work we emphasise that researcher positioning can be inherently problematic.

## Conclusion

Through our consideration of southern theory in classroom research, indigenous women's life histories and the politics of working with community, we both support existing critiques of the ethnosociology of the metropole (Reed, 2013) and offer considerations for 'doing' southern theory work. The researcher is always located: as expert academic; novice researcher; student; indigenous; non indigenous; outsider and insider; authority; fraud; young person; or elder. This influences what we produce and how we work with voice data-changing and adapting our approaches to our circumstances and groups. We contribute to the debates on how southern theory can influence education and unsettle knowledge hierarchies in a sensitive and culturally responsive manner. Although we cannot escape our personal positions and institutional cultures we work in, we can make space for alternative voices. We highlight the importance of "peripheral" scholarship that seeks to engage with dirty theories to guide fieldwork and speak back to the metropole.

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