



COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE
FOR ABORIGINAL & TROPICAL HEALTH

Links Monograph Series: 2
2002

Indigenous Research Reform Agenda

Rethinking research methodologies

John Henry, Terry Dunbar, Allan Arnott,
Margaret Scrimgeour, Sally Matthews,
Lorna Murakami-Gold, Allison Chamberlain

ISBN 1 876831 19 7 (SET)
ISBN 1 876831 31 6 (no 2.)







Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Indigenous research methodologies	3
2.1 Cross-disciplinary research	5
2.2 Collaborative and participatory research methodologies	7
2.3 The development of reflexive research practice	11
3. Conclusions	13
4. Bibliography	15





1. Introduction

The question we want to explore in this paper is:

'what is the potential of the research methodologies that are most often put forward as being closely compatible with the expectations and aspirations of advocates of the Indigenous Research Reform Agenda (IRRA) to deliver on the key elements of this Agenda?'

In summary, the key elements of the IRRA are:

- involvement of Aboriginal communities in the design, execution and evaluation of research;
- defining a co-ordinating role for Aboriginal community controlled organizations associated with the research;
- consultation and negotiation with Indigenous organizations as ongoing throughout the life of a research project;
- mechanisms for ongoing surveillance of research projects by Indigenous partner organisations;
- ownership and control of research findings by participating Aboriginal community controlled organizations;
- processes to determine research priorities and benefit to the Indigenous communities involved;
- transformation of research practices from 'investigator-driven' to an adoption of a needs- based approach to research;
- determination of ethical processes for the conduct of research;
- linkage between research and community development and social change;
- the training of Indigenous researchers; and
- the adoption of effective mechanisms for the dissemination and transfer of research findings.

Research is ultimately a practical activity. To be involved in research, as a researcher, means taking action that will, hopefully, generate evidence upon which new knowledge about the world can be developed. We recognise that these two very general statements about research by which we have commenced the paper are, of themselves, cultural artifacts developed over several hundred years in the tradition of 'scientific' research within Western cultures. *We also acknowledge that there are well-respected positions adopted by academics and others working in the discipline of Philosophy of Science who would take issue with this general statement that quality research within the knowledge disciplines of Western cultures is, as a matter of course, always action-oriented and evidence-based.* However, for the purposes of this paper on research methodologies and possible compatibilities with the Indigenous Research Reform Agenda as being advanced through the research activity of the CRCATH, we accept that we are conceptualizing research as a deliberate and focused intervention into some aspect of the physical and/or

social world. Research, so conceptualized, has the intention of firstly, generating information new to the researchers and, secondly, of developing new understandings about the phenomena being studied from insights gained by an interpretation of the information.

When discussing research methodologies we are taking a broad definition of methodology, one framed to include the world views of stakeholders in research endeavours. Methodology in research refers to the “reasoning that informs particular ways of doing research, or the principles underlying the organisation of research” (Gale, 1998, p. 2). The system of principles upon which a researcher’s preferred methodology is based is neither a value-free nor culturally pure abstraction somehow floating above the ideological terrain of human activity. These principles are interactive with our life experiences and with the ways in which we have come to understand the world; that is, with our world view.

Consequently, in research we see a ‘personalisation of methodology’ that alerts us to two significant aspects of research as a field of knowledge-generating activity. Firstly, as world views differ we should not be surprised that there is not one methodology. There are many, and the list is growing. Secondly, the personalization of methodology helps to explain the animated and passionate adherence individual researchers have for particular research positions. Gale (1998) urges researchers to recognize their methodological personalities, “the researcher you are is the person you are. By reflecting on what guides your actions it is possible to determine what methodology will most likely guide your research activity” (p. 3). We would want to extend this observation to communities of researchers drawn from different cultural and discipline backgrounds. This then leads to a consideration of methodologies as central components of differing research paradigms (Kuhn 1970) or generalized patterns of research.

The research methodologies and orientations to research that are commented upon in this paper are cross-disciplinary research, collaborative research and action research in its various guises - participatory action research [PAR] or activist research, and reflexive research practices. Given this selective focus, the initial question to be explored becomes:

‘what is the potential of particular research methodologies, developed according to world views and ideological imperatives in other cultural contexts, to deliver on the key elements of the IRRA?’

But, by way of introducing this discussion of potential compatibilities, we begin by acknowledging the emerging theoretical work being undertaken by Indigenous academics and researchers on the question of ‘what could Indigenous research methodology(ies) look like?’



2. Indigenous research methodologies

Historically, tensions between Indigenous peoples and the broader research community have related to issues of power and control of the research process, and to control over the outputs of research. Research methodology has been significantly implicated in the playing out of these tensions. The work of Tuhiwai Smith has contributed importantly to the elevation of research methodology as an important site of struggle between the interests of researchers and the interests of Indigenous community members. In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*, she advocated for the identification of methodologies that have the potential to ensure that research with Indigenous peoples can be 'more respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful' (1999, p. 9).

According to Tuhiwai Smith, the challenge by Maori to the research community that they 'keep out' of researching Maori people and Maori issues has forced academics to proceed with far more caution when they enter the domain of Maori concerns. While Tuhiwai Smith does not support the notion of a moratorium over non-Indigenous involvement in research involving Maori issues, she does argue that the relationship between researchers and Maori communities must be framed very differently in the future. Central to her position is that culturally sensitive research methodologies must be adopted, but she also warns that methods which appear to be qualitative or ethnographic can also be problematic when they are underpinned by invalid assumptions and ideologies, and when research findings are incorrectly interpreted (1999, p. 177).

In Australia, methodological reform is also cited as a way of redressing the power imbalance between researchers and indigenous participants in research activity. The Deakin University Institute of Koorie Education, for example, argued that Indigenous research must move from "a positivistic positioning of Koories as objects of others' enquiries to research paradigms which attempt to redress the oppressed, marginalised 'border' reality of Koorie nations in contemporary Australian society and within this society's academic institutions" (Deakin University, 1994, p. 4).

The concept of Indigenous research methodologies is currently being theorised and promoted by Indigenous representatives from within Higher Education institutions and elsewhere as a guide to the future direction of research involving Indigenous peoples in Australia. Rigney (1999), an Indigenous lecturer at Flinders University in the Yunggorendi First Nations Centre, in an article entitled *Internationalisation of an Indigenous anticolonial cultural critique of research methodologies*, adopted the position that the historical application of 'colonial' research methodologies has significantly contributed to the marginalization of Indigenous community interests. Rigney encouraged Indigenous researchers to view prevailing mainstream research practices as an extension of the overall project of colonial domination. He argued strongly for the development of Indigenous research methodologies to ensure the achievement of Indigenous intellectual sovereignty within research projects involving Indigenous people and their interests and concerns.

"Indigenous Peoples must look to new anticolonial epistemologies and methodologies to construct, rediscover, and/or reaffirm their knowledges and cultures. Such epistemologies must ... carry within them the potential to strengthen the struggle for emancipation and the liberation from oppression. If we understand this, we understand the need to seek other examples of liberatory epistemologies" (Rigney, 1999, p. 114).

With reference to the literature from within the feminist movement, Rigney identified similarities between the feminist contestation of knowledge and the "Indigenous Australian struggle against orthodox forms of epistemology in research" (1999, p. 115). After first naming the Research Reform Agenda 'Indigenist Research', Rigney offered three fundamental and interrelated principles by which this form of research was informed. These principles are:

1. Resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research
2. Political integrity in Indigenist research
3. Privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenous research (Rigney 1999, 116).

Since this article was published there have been three significant Indigenous research forums that have extended the boundaries of the discussion surrounding the Indigenous research project. The *Umulliko forum on Indigenous research* at the University of Newcastle (1999) was the inaugural forum which brought together Indigenous researchers from around Australia to share their visions for the re-formulation of Indigenous research practices. The second forum was hosted by the Aboriginal Research Institute at the University of South Australia in 2000. More recently, the forum hosted by the University of Melbourne in 2001 canvassed a proposal for the development of an Australian Association of Indigenous Researchers.

Indigenous research reform proponents are not necessarily advocating for the development of new research methods, but instead for the re-positioning of Indigenous peoples within the construction of research. Methodological approaches are included on the basis that they represent a capacity for achieving this aim. For example, Winch and Hayward (1999) identified some methods of qualitative data collection that they claim are preferred by Aboriginal people in Australia. These methods include oral history, ethnography, participant observation, community study and collaborative inquiry (p. 25).

The extent to which the application of newly defined Indigenous research methodologies are being supported within mainstream academic and research institutions in Australia remains undisclosed. The existence of postgraduate courses dedicated to the development of research capacity within Indigenous research contexts, however, provides some indication that progress toward the achievement of methodological reform within mainstream higher education institutions may be substantial, and is likely to be sustained. The Curtin University Centre for Indigenous Research, for example, offers postgraduate courses designed to "prepare people to formulate and implement modes of inquiry specifically relevant to the social and cultural needs of Aboriginal and other Indigenous peoples ... These courses were specifically formulated on the basis of approaches to research that accept Aboriginal systems of knowledge as central to processes of inquiry and investigation" (Abdullah and Stringer 1997, p. 3).

The development of research capacity within the Indigenous community is proposed as central to the achievement of methodological reform within Indigenous research. For example, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) observed that when Indigenous peoples become researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed in the following ways:

- questions are framed differently;
- priorities are ranked differently;
- problems are defined differently; and
- people participate on different terms. (Tuhiwai Smith 1999 p. 193).

This is the stuff of reform.

We now turn to consider the claims of compatibility of established qualitative research methodologies with the aspirations of Indigenist research.

2.1 Cross-disciplinary research

Traditionally, tension has existed between advocates of biomedical and social science research approaches in the public health and Indigenous health research fields. Some commentators argue that bio-medical research methodologies have taken insufficient account of local Indigenous community knowledge and values, and the political, physical and social constraints in evidence at the local community level (Maddocks, 1992, Dodson, 2000).

In a report on the state of health and medical research in Australia, White (1985) identified the dominance of bio-medical research as one of ten problematic issues.

“The perceived dominance of the reductionist, mechanistic, so-called ‘medical’ model of health and disease...contrasted with the probabilistic, ‘psycho-biological’ model which recognises the existence of networks of causal factors in the genesis of healthy and unhealthy states” (White 1985 cited in NPHP 1998a p. 4).

Baum (1998) identified four main applications of qualitative research methods to public health:

- to study and explain the economic, political, social and cultural factors that influence health and disease;
- to understand how people interpret health and disease and make sense of their health experiences;
- to elaborate causal hypotheses emerging from epidemiological and clinical research; and
- to provide contextual data to improve the validity and cultural specificity of quantitative survey instruments. (p. 149)

Ezzy (2001a) described the tension between social science and medical research approaches as being related to fundamental differences between 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' research methods. He suggested that qualitative methodology was often misunderstood by researchers with backgrounds in science and positivist methodology. Positivist methodologies attempt to avoid the influence of subjective interpretation whereas qualitative methods focus on interpretation. Ezzy also suggested that the current health research literature demonstrated that the 'unhappy marriage' between qualitative methods and natural science epistemology was becoming increasingly problematic. (2001a). Chapman (2001) responded to Ezzy by arguing that his concerns were a 'storm in a qualitative teacup' and Ezzy (2001b) in turn argued that "It is precisely this sort of dismissive attitude which leads to the sort of misunderstandings I describe" (p. 470).

Similar tensions are evident when the relative merits of biomedical or ethno-medical approaches to health care service delivery in Indigenous community contexts are discussed. An ethno-medical approach to health and medicine includes a holistic perception of health that incorporates family and community well being, the maintenance of relationships and social responsibilities, and behaving appropriately (O'Donoghue 1995 cited in Ivanitz 2000, p. 54). According to Ivanitz (2000), biomedical definitions of health take into account "only the physical manifestations of illness" (p. 53). In a discussion of the most appropriate approach to adopt within Indigenous health service delivery settings, Ivanitz (2000) suggested that "given that both approaches are valid and that the cultural meanings attached to illness impact directly on both the effectiveness of biomedicine and the utility of ethno-medicine, it is necessary to develop an interface between the two culturally based models" (p. 55).

Recent emphasis on the issue of health inequalities and the associated attempts to identify the social determinants of health has given rise to increased interest in identifying the most effective research approaches to explore these issues. Wilkinson (2000) maintained that, "rather than trying to understand the social determinants of health from the very partial viewpoint of an individual discipline, it is necessary to follow the issues across interdisciplinary boundaries, wherever they lead" (p. 581). In commenting on the health research situation in the United Kingdom, Oliver and Cookson (2000) point out that although multidisciplinary collaboration in health research has occasionally been undertaken, successful collaborations of this kind remain the exception rather than the rule (p. 565).

Within the area of Indigenous health research in Australia, progress toward the development of an 'interface' between bio-medical and social science research is ongoing. While accepting that some health issues such as renal disease and ear health do call for 'disease-oriented' research approaches, Houston and Legge (1992) argued that:

"The main barriers to improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not deficiencies in the understanding of bio-medical mechanisms and therapeutics. The main barriers are in the application of existing biomedical and public health knowledge in contexts which also recognise Aboriginal aspirations and the wealth of existing Aboriginal community knowledge." (Houston and Legge, p. 115).

The National Public Health Partnership (NPHP) (1998b) advanced a similar argument when it identified the adoption of a disease-based framework in public health research as problematic.

“Public health research that develops our understanding of effective public health interventions requires a broader focus and framework than that provided by focusing on disease as the starting point. Instead there is need for better integration of the health problem, the knowledge needed for action and the fields of productive research.” (p. 10).

The NPHP (1998b) suggested that the fundamental question to be asked in relation to resource allocation for health and medical research was:

“Where will the greatest health gain be made? Is continuing to allocate large amounts of funding to curative and basic medical research achieving value for money compared to spending limited funds on public health research and its outcomes?” (NPHP, 1998b, p. 8).

The adoption of research approaches that involve a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies is proposed as a positive way forward in the area of Indigenous health research. In an overview of the approach adopted by the Menzies School of Health Research, Mathews (1998) suggested that the success of this institution can in part be attributed to its capacity to encourage cooperation between diverse disciplines (p. 626).

The struggles to bring into place cross-disciplinary research teams attests to the personalised nature of research methodologies for researchers and the difficulties inherent in attempting to bridge paradigms through practical eclecticism but without careful preparation for a new methodological synthesis. The cross-cultural reconciliation literature may have relevance to the cross-paradigmatic reconciliation required in order to have effectively functioning multi-discipline research teams. It would seem to us that cross-disciplinary research does address the importance of having a plurality of approaches and voices involved in the research activity, but, the additional pressure of privileging Indigenous voices in these research projects could well get lost in the struggles for paradigm supremacy. A more positive view of cross-disciplinary research is that research teams so constituted may contain personalities that are open to change and, having loosened their tight allegiance to one methodology, may be open to the additional methodological demands of the IRRA.

2.2 Collaborative and participatory research methodologies

Collaborative and participatory research methodologies are generally identified as being compatible with the goals of the emerging agenda for reform of research involving Indigenous peoples in Australia and internationally. Stillitoe (1998), in an analysis of research approaches in developing countries, argued that the increasing focus on bottom-up participatory approaches to development in many countries has stemmed from the failure of centralized or top-down approaches to deliver sustainable improvement to the lives of people who have been the subjects of research. He also stated that:

"It is now generally agreed that understanding the incorporation of indigenous knowledge and practices central to local ecological and social systems is essential if we are to achieve sustainable development.The shortfall in achieving the goals of many thousands of government, non-government, and donor-funded projects aiming at poverty alleviation and agricultural development has been ascribed to the lack of participation of the target populations or beneficiary stakeholders" (p. 22).

In other situations, including public health research activity in Indigenous community contexts, there is increasing recognition that the historical marginalisation of local Indigenous knowledge and perspectives has met with similar lack of progress toward sustainable community development.

Anne George *et. al.*(1998) suggested that the growing acceptance of collaborative approaches to research may be related to the impatience of communities, non-academic organisations and lay groups who seek to use research to achieve their action agendas and who feel that most university-based research has not been sufficiently responsive to their needs" (p. 182). The following evidence presented by Johnny Liddle (Chairperson of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress) in 2000 to a House of Representatives Standing Committee Inquiry into Indigenous Health, illustrates this positioning;

"...what we are trying to do, what I am trying to do, is to get health research focused and make it useful research, which are the words that I usually use. I consider that a lot of research has been airy-fairy type research and it is basically for the individual researcher and sometimes it is of little use to communities" (HoRSC, 2000, p. 125).

Participatory research methodologies are promoted for application within Indigenous community contexts because these methodologies "emphasize respect for the individual and a commitment to social change" (St. Dennis, 1992.p. 51). Participatory action research (PAR) is described by Henry and McTaggart (1996) as "... an alternative philosophy of social research (and social life) often associated with social transformation in the Two-thirds World" (p. 6). They outlined three common PAR attributes as:

- shared ownership of research projects;
- community-based analysis of social problems; and
- an orientation towards community action.

Action research remains a diverse and still evolving field (Henry and McTaggart,1998) and the variations on participatory research methods and techniques used to gather and share information are considerable (Williams 1996). Williams also pointed out that "the goal of participatory research is to make every effort to ensure that methods complement rather than supplant local forms of expression, communication, discussion and decision-making" (p. 1).

Associated with this action-oriented research is activist research. Activist research refers to:

"...a family of approaches and methods which use dialogue and participatory research to enhance people's awareness and confidence, and to empower their action. Activist participatory research in this sense owes much to the work and inspiration of Paulo Freire... and to the practice and experience of conscientization in Latin America" (Chambers 1992, p. 2).

The potential for combining research, education and social action through PAR is regularly emphasized in the literature on research and social change. PAR is also cited as being well suited to the philosophies and theories underpinning community-based health education and health promotion (Anne George *et.al.* 1998, Daniel & Greene 1999).

A problem with the application of PAR approaches in actual projects has been identified by some researchers. Anne George *et.al.* (1999) noted as a concern "the lack of uniformity between (and sometimes within) projects that identify as applying Action Research principles" (p. 182). These authors suggested that the lack of a shared language to describe processes and approaches within projects made it difficult for proponents of PAR to argue their case for support from funding agencies and auspicing organisations. To address this problem they produced 26 guidelines under five categories for classifying participatory research protocols in health promotion. Anne George *et.al.* (1999) claimed that "researchers, community members and funding agencies found the guidelines to be useful as a checklist for components of the (PAR) process, or to understand expectations of the collaborative process, or to review grant proposals" (p. 194.)

In addition, Baum (1998) pointed out that "the process of negotiation in participatory action research makes it a long and complicated process which often conflicts with the needs of funding bodies. It is not easy to reconcile these conflicting demands" (1998 p. 172).

Further to these more 'technical' problems with the implementation of action research, extensive debate has emerged about the realities of the claim that action research approaches are important to the achievement of a balance between the interests of researchers and the interests of minority or disadvantaged groups. For example, in a consideration of action research as an empowering research strategy with South Asian women, Bowes (1996) pointed out that commentators now question the extent to which action research methodologies can create new kinds of power relationships. He cites Silverman (1985) who is critical of the "many extravagant claims to moral rectitude made by some proponents of action research", and Opie (1992), who questioned the tendency of some feminist writers to "impose their own view of the world on their respondents, silencing those who depart from such a view." (p. 13). Bowes (1996) concluded by suggesting that "action research over-emphasizes experience, and should be required to discuss the nature of its research element more reflexively and in relation to the maintenance of a sociological analysis" (p. 15).

Brady (1990) identified problems her research team encountered when applying an action research approach to an investigation of youth alienation and substance abuse within an isolated Aboriginal community in Australia. According to Brady, the 'community' did not represent a homogeneous group, there was no shared concern about the 'problems' identified by the researchers as requiring action and there was no shared perspective on the possible 'solutions'. She concluded, "the rhetoric of community empowerment and action research in Australia could perhaps be more critically examined than it has been up to now..." (1990, p. 20).

From his analysis of action research projects in educational contexts, Henry (1990) concluded that the emancipatory or liberating potential claimed by some proponents as integral to action research was, for many projects, most likely to be thwarted at the outset of the projects.

"The emancipatory 'problem' of education action research can ... be seen as an outcome of the practice of educational researchers attempting to promote a shift towards communitarian forms of educational practice in others while being in the contradictory position of having their research projects, in their most essential elements, defined by the individualistic paradigm" (Henry, 1990, p. 278).

In her critical analysis of the assumptions embedded in the action research methodology Brady (2000) also identified the disjunctions between the positioning of the researchers and that of the Aboriginal community members on key issues associated with the research project. The adoption of collaborative action research approaches to research may not provide sufficient guarantee that 'empowering' consequences will flow to marginalised or minority communities. Once again Henry's (1990) analysis of educational action research supports this observation. He claimed that "if the occupational group involved in action research is ... an oppressed group, then interventions by researchers as facilitators to the others' action research praxis will inevitably be fictive and duplicitous" (p. 277).

Collaborative and participatory research methodologies have the clear potential of exposing the contradictory power positions of institution-based researchers over other participants, including community stakeholders. This potentiality creates the circumstances for internal critique and contestation through which Rigney's (1999) principles for informing Indigenous research can come to bear on the unfolding of the research work. People dissatisfied with the research in progress can *resist*. The *political integrity* of the research can be progressively reviewed, revised and reinstated from an Indigenous stakeholder(s) perspective. Researchers can be incorporated into these collaborative research projects by undertaking action research praxis of their own facilitated by Indigenous co-researchers, thereby becoming full participants in the action research moments of these projects and not simply 'outsider' facilitators of others' action research praxis. This potential for reciprocity within the life of research projects strengthens the likelihood that Indigenous voices will be heard and *privileged*.

2.3 The development of reflexive research practice

Troyna (1994) suggested that it is only in the last couple of decades that 'being reflexive' has figured in the research literature in Britain and that even now it is most commonly found in feminist accounts of research. Although he argued that the term was inadequately defined by researchers, Troyna still argued that reflexive research approaches and reflexive accounts of research are useful because they "question the hegemonic status of technicist and prescriptive approaches to the social sciences" and that these approaches ensure that the technicalities of research are no longer "artificially detached from the political, ethical and social arena." (p.6). Troyna did however express doubts about the usefulness of reflexive accounts of research, when this form of reporting is imposed on researchers as an essential aspect of practice by arguing that the end result might be 'sanitised' public versions of the research experience. This might be particularly so for inexperienced and contract researchers who may feel compromised by the need for openness about problematic aspects uncovered by their research and experienced within their research project.

Humphery (2001) reported that non-Indigenous people engaged in Indigenous health research in Australia did not begin to publicly ask serious questions about the process and use of that research until the early 1980's (p. 11). He also commented that the 'ethos of reflection' in Aboriginal Health research mirrored the rise of a similar movement toward reflecting on research practice within other disciplines. In the Education field, for example, particular attention has been given to the importance of maintaining a critical approach to pedagogies and research practices designed with the purpose of 'empowering' minority or marginalised groups within society. For example, in an analysis of attempts by teachers and administrators to institute 'critical pedagogy' within schools, Ellsworth (1989) questions the assumption that a commitment to minimising the oppression of students is sufficient to ensure that the oppressive and marginalising influences of education are reduced. She argued that "...the literature offers no sustained attempt to problematize this stance and confront the likelihood that the professor brings to social movements (including critical pedagogy) interests of his own race, class, ethnicity, gender and other positions. S/he does not play the role of disinterested mediator on the side of the oppressed group" (p. 309). Ellsworth concluded by suggesting that "critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change"(p. 310).

The incorporation of reflection on practice, however, is seen as an important way of ensuring that research approaches designed with the aim of 'empowering' communities and individuals do not ignore the powerful and potentially marginalising influence of 'researcher interests'. The application of what Ellsworth (1989) describes as a 'persistent critique' may contribute toward increasing recognition of the countervailing and contradictory impact of 'researcher interests' and ongoing monitoring of the influence these 'interests' may have on the conduct and outcomes from research.

Baum (1998) pointed out that within the public health research field the incorporation of new methods and methodologies has brought with it a greater emphasis on reflection in research practice and a greater emphasis on involving people more actively in research endeavors. In particular, the increasing incorporation of PAR approaches by public health researchers has brought with it increased attention to the fundamental importance of ongoing critical reflection on practice, while modifying practice in response to newly acquired ways of thinking about the research in question.

An example of 'critical reflection on practice' within the context of research involving Indigenous peoples in Australia was provided by Wilkins (1992). Wilkins conducted linguistic field research in Central Australia and his account of the research experience highlighted some of the complexities he encountered in doing research under the control of an Aboriginal organisation. In writing this account Wilkins detailed particular issues he confronted and methodological adjustments he made in response to the concerns raised by Aboriginal community representatives. In addition, he outlines a draft 'Research Policy for Central Australia' (1982) which was developed in consultation with the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs. Both parts of this document provide useful insights for other researchers working under the direction of Indigenous peoples.

Reflexivity (Should this be 'Reflection' or 'The ability to reflect'?) is an essential process in reshaping research methodologies to address the elements of the IRRA and the informing principles of Rigney's (1999) construction of Indigenist Research. The application of research methodologies by institutionalized career researchers (or by those aspiring to become such) without reflexive rigour referenced according to IRRA-based criteria negotiated with Indigenous stakeholders will inevitably privilege, in the first instance, the interests of the researchers in the conduct of research and through its outcomes. What then flows to Indigenous stakeholders will be secondary, and may or may not be significant in meeting their needs.



3. Conclusions

This discussion of cross-disciplinary research and reflexive research methodologies, including participatory action research, has brought us to an interesting conclusion re the utility of these methodologies to Indigenist research. These forms of research methodology are always activated within institutional contexts with their attendant political and ideological underpinnings. Without a critical awareness of the framing of 'research-in-practice' by the deep messages emanating from the institutional context of the research projects, the liberating potential of the adopted research methodologies may be diminished as the 'research-in-practice' defaults to the desires of the most powerful.

This insight returns us to the three principles enunciated by Rigney (1999) as fundamental to Indigenist research. Resistance, political integrity and privileging Indigenous voices in research management and practice become particularly meaningful in the context of the liberatory claims of the research methodologies commented upon in this paper. These methodologies implemented in isolation from the principle of resistance as an emancipatory imperative present as high-risk options for Indigenous communities. Similarly, these same methodologies applied without clarity on the principle of political integrity for Indigenous community interests and without a privileging of Indigenous voices through-out the 'research-in-practice', have considerably lowered prospects for delivering on their promises of meeting the criteria set out in the Indigenous Research Reform Agenda; that is, satisfying the fundamentals of Indigenist research.





4. Bibliography

- Abdullah J. and Stringer E. (1997) *Indigenous Learning, Indigenous Research*. Curtin Indigenous Research Centre. Curtin University, Perth.
- Anne George, M, Daniel, M. & Green L. (1998) 'Appraising and funding participatory research in health promotion' *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, Vol 18(2) (pp. 181- 197)
- Baum, F. (1998) *The New Public Health: An Australian Perspective*. Oxford University Press. Melbourne.
- Boughton, B. (2001) 'Popular Education, Capacity-building and Action research. Increasing Aboriginal Community Control over Education and Health Research.' *CRCATH Occasional Paper Series*. No. 5. Darwin.
- Bowes, A.M. (1996) 'Evaluating and Empowering research Strategy: Reflections on Action-Research with South Asian Women. *Sociological Research Online*, vol 1. No. 1. <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/1/1/1.html>
- Brady, M (1990) 'The problem with problematising research' *Australian Aboriginal Studies* No. 1 (pp. 18-20)
- Chambers, R. (1992) *Rural appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory*. Discussion Paper. 311. Oct. Institute of Development Studies.
- Chapman, S. (2001) (Letter to the Editor) 'Storm in a qualitative teacup'. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 25 no. 5. (p. 470)
- Daniel, M., & Green, L. W. (1999). Community-Based Prevention and Chronic Disease Self-Management Programmes. *Disease Management & Health Outcomes*, 6 (4), 185-192.
- Deakin University Institute of Koorie Education (1994) ' Koorie Research Program. Ethics, Protocols and Methodologies. Discussion Paper. Atkinson, M., Brabham, W., Henry.J.and James.D. December. Deakin University. Geelong. Victoria.
- Dodson, M (2000) ' Human genetics: control of research and sharing of benefits.' *Australian Aboriginal Studies* Spring-Fall, 2000 (pp 56-71)
- Ellsworth, E (1989) 'Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy' *Harvard Educational Review* Vol. 59 No. 3 August.
- Ezzy, D. (2001a) 'Are qualitative methods misunderstood?' *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. vol. 25, no. 4. (pp 294-297)
- Ezzy, D. (2001b)) (Letter to the Editor) 'Storm in a qualitative teacup; A reply'. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 25 no. 5. (p. 470)
- Ezzy, D. (2001c) 'Interpretative research'. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. Vol.25 no. 5. (p. 471-472)

- Henry, J.A. (1990), A Critical Analysis of Action Research-Based In-service Teacher Education: Four Case Histories, Vol 1. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Deakin University, Geelong Victoria, Australia.
- Henry, C. and McTaggart, R. (1996) 'Action research' *Changing Education. A Journal for Teachers and Administrators* Vol. 3 No 2. June 1996.
- Henry, C. and McTaggart, R. (1998) *The Action research Reader*. 4th Edition. Deakin University Geelong. Victoria
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs (HoRSC) (2000) Health is Life. Report on the Inquiry into Indigenous Health'. Commonwealth of Australia. Canberra. (<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fca/indhea/reportfinal.pdf> accessed online 10/10/01)
- Houston, S. and Legge, D. (1992) Editorial. 'Aboriginal health research and the National Aboriginal Health Strategy' *Australian Journal of Public Health* vol. 16, no. 2. (p114-115)
- Humphery, K. (2000) 'Indigenous Health and Western Research' Vic Health Koori Health Research & Community development Unit. Discussion Paper No. 2. Dec.
- Ivanitz, M. (2000) 'Achieving improved health outcomes for Urban Aboriginal people: Biomedical and ethnomedical Models of Health' *Australian Journal of Public Administration* , vol. 59. Sept. (pp. 49-59)
- Maddocks, I. (1992) ' Ethics in Aboriginal research; A model for minorities or for all?' *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 157. (p. 553-555)
- Mathews, J. (1998a) 'The Menzies School of Health Research offers a new paradigm of cooperative research' *Medical Journal of Australia*. Vol.169. (pp. 625-9)
- Mathews, J. (1998b) *MSHR 1998-199 Annual Report*. Darwin.
- National Public Health Partnership (NPHP)(1998a) *National Directions for Research and Development in Public Health. Discussion paper*. February. (<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/nphp/research.htm> accessed online 24/11/01)
- National Public Health Partnership (NPHP) (1998b) *Background paper to the health and medical research strategic review*. June. (<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/nphp/wills.htm> accessed online 21/10/01)
- O'Donoghue, L. (1995) 'Aboriginal Health: An ATSIC Perspective. Research Discussion Paper. AIATSIS. Canberra.
- Oliver, A. and Cookson, R. (2000) 'Towards multidisciplinary research into health inequalities' *Health Economics* Vol. 9 (pp 565-566)
- Opie, A.(1992) 'Qualitative research appropriation of the "other" and empowerment'. *Feminist Review*, vol. 40, pp 52-69
- Rigney, L. (1999) 'Internalization of an Indigenous Anticolonialist Cultural Critique of Research Methodologies: A guide to Indigenist Research Methodology and its principles.' *Wicazo Sa Review* Fall v.14 i12 (pp 109-113)

- Silverman, D. (1985) *Qualitative Methodology and Sociology*. Aldershot: Gower.
- Stillitoe, P. (1998) 'The development of indigenous knowledge: a new applied anthropology' *Current Anthropology* April v. 39 no. 2 (pp 223-30) (http://web2.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/192/803/16387219w2/purl=rel_EIM.. accessed online 4/10/2001)
- St. Denis, V. (1992) 'Community-Based Participatory Research: Aspects of the Concept Relevant for Practice' *Native Studies Review* 8, no. 2. (pp 51-74)
- Tuhiwai Smith, L. (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books Ltd. London & New York.
- Troyna, B. (1994) 'Reforms, Research and Being Reflexive about Being Reflective' in Troyna, B and Halpin, D (1994)
- Troyna, B. and Halpin, D. (1994) *Researching educational policy: ethical and methodological issues*. Falmer Press. London. Washington.
- Thomas, D. (2001) 'The beginnings of Health Research in Australia' Vic Health Koori Health Research & Community Development Unit. Discussion paper no. 3
- Tsey, K. (2001) 'Making Research More Relevant to the Needs and Aspirations of Indigenous Australians: the importance of Research Capacity Development' *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal* Vol.5 No.1
- Umuliko Indigenous researchers forum (1999) The University of Newcastle. (4-7 March (http://www.ion.unisa.edu.au/conf/virtualconfumulliko_umullinko_forum.html accessed online 10/12/01)
- University of Melbourne (2001) Indigenous researchers forum. (26-28 September) (<http://www.indigenous.unimelb.edu.au/confprogam.htm> accessed online 11/12/01)
- White, K.L (1986) *Independent Review of Research and Educational Requirements for Public Health and Tropical Health in Australia*. Presented to the Commonwealth Minister for health, 1986.
- Wilkins, D. (1992) 'Linguistic Research under Aboriginal control: A personal account of fieldwork in Central Australia. *Australian Journal of Linguistics* (vol. 12) (pp. 171-200)
- Wilkinson, R.G. (2000) 'The need for an interdisciplinary perspective on the social determinants of health' *Health Economics*. Vol. 9 (pp. 581-583)
- Williams, L. (1996) *Annotated Bibliography for Participatory and Collaborative Field Research Methods*. Community Partnership Center. University of Tennessee.
- Winch, J. and Hayward, K. (1999) 'Doing it our way: Can Cultural Traditions Survive in Universities?' *New Doctor*, Summer





