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Indigenous research methodologies



Research

Different ways of knowing, being and doing

- A body of knowledge differs when it is viewed from different perspectives (Marie Battiste 2008: 504-5).

- **Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing**

- Indigenous philosophy is holistic rather than a compartmentalised approach that has been passed down through Law and the Dreaming for generations supported and taught by Elders. It is informed through Indigenous epistemologies (Knowledge and its application), ontologies (being as informed through Law, Dreaming, and relationships), and axiologies (Cultural protocols and ethics informed through law and the Dreaming) that have developed directly through living, observation, experimentation and working with the natural world and its ecosystems to sustain and maintain balance (Sherwood 2010: 17).

Research, ethics and worldviews

- Ethics are bound by culture, and this means that Indigenous ethics requires an Indigenous way of knowing, being, and doing to ensure that we “do no harm” in the undertaking of research projects.
- Worldviews are paradigmatic, which is to say that they guide and determine an entire mode of living for cultural beings. Worldviews or how one views the world are related to how one makes sense of the world through their respective systems of knowledge or knowing related to their peoples, environment, cultures, and experiences (Sherwood 2010: 22).

Paradigms

- Paradigms are the aggregate of a person or researcher's ways of knowing, being and doing frameworks. Their values, beliefs and worldviews that inform this philosophical premise (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). An Indigenous interpreted framework or paradigm similarly is informed through an Indigenous way of knowing (epistemology), Indigenous way of being (ontology) and an Indigenous way of doing (methodological).

Paradigms
incorporate
four key
concepts



: ethics (axiology) – how do I act as a moral person?



epistemology – how do I know the world?



ontology – what are the authentic and fundamental elements of my world?



methodology – what is the best way for me to learn about the world? (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:18).



Whose knowledge counts?

- Paradigmatic controversies exist over the concepts of validity (Guba and Lincoln 2005:191). Qualitative paradigm moments have shifted mainly towards a non-positivist approach, supporting a premise that ‘Inquiry methodology can no longer be treated as a set of universally applicable rules or abstractions’ (Guba and Lincoln 2005:191). This shift led to the moments of ‘the modernist or golden age’ and ‘blurred genres’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:3).
 - Simultaneously, a number of innovative analytic methodologies arose, including ‘hermeneutics, structuralism, semiotics, phenomenology, cultural studies, and feminism’ (Denzin and Lincoln
 - 2005:3). Critical theory surfaced, supporting a new approach towards ‘researching and analysing the construction of individuals’ (Kincheloe 2000:304). The critical researcher is one who uses their work to critique the social, cultural and political environment. This approach is mediated by a standpoint claiming:
 - [m]ainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression (Kincheloe 2000:304).
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Decolonising research

•The decolonisation framework is inclusive of ‘deconstruction’, the ‘taking apart of the story, revealing underlying texts, and giving voice to things that are often known’ (Smith 1999:3) by Indigenous peoples as a means to redress the constructs used by academics and governments. Countering problematic constructs involves a deeper appreciation of how and why we were defined in this manner and recognising how this method holds power within the mainstream community. It also requires that we view ourselves in a different light from that of ‘passive victims’ (Smith 2005:87) of research. Instead we must recognise our worth through the recovery of ‘our own stories of the past’ (Smith 1999:39) and present and become activists ‘engaging in a counterhegemonic struggle over research’ (Smith 2005:87). This struggle is entwined with our recovery of well-being through our self-determining of ‘what is really important about the past with what is important about the present’ (Smith 1999:39). Utilising these knowledges and praxis as methodologies in research about ourselves can present a counterhegemonic argument against the populist dominant paradigms of problematic constructs and more importantly articulate the changes necessary for ‘self-determination and liberation’ (Rigney 1997:109). These ideals are promoted and worked towards through critical theory research p.121.

Decolonising research

- [w]hen indigenous people become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, people participate on different terms (Smith 1999:193).
- Smith and many Indigenous academics argue that social justice, self-determination and decolonisation are spaces that we can take up as methods to change the maintenance of political and discursive colonisation (Smith 1999; Lui-Chivizhe and Sherwood 2000; NAHO. 2003; Smylie 2003; Porsanger 2004; Sinclair 2004). The Indigenous experience of living through colonialism and imperialism provides another dimension to the praxis of anti-postcolonial times (Smith 1999; Smith 2005). This experience is unique to critical theory and herein lays the claim for Indigenous critical theory.

Yarning and listening

- As an Aboriginal woman grounded in an Aboriginal worldview I believe Indigenous ethical considerations are critical to safe, relevant and beneficial research for Aboriginal communities. These considerations are: respect, reciprocity, balance, responsibility, and listening.
 - Our stories are powerful learning and teaching tools. It is in the listening to someone else's story as a human being that we can give honour to the journey someone else has travelled (Fredericks 2003:66).
 - As a researcher my role is to tell a story and provide a picture that relates to the socially constructed environment as the basis for knowledge development (Foltz and Griffin 1996). This is where I have co-generated data and this positioning has led also to self-discovery as was the expectation of the Elders (Foltz and Griffin 1996:303).

Are you really using
Yarning research? Mapping
Social and Family Yarning
to strengthen Yarning
research quality Petah
Atkinson¹, Marilyn Baird²
and Karen Adams¹ 2021

- Abstract Yarning as a research method has its grounding as an Aboriginal culturally specified process.
- Significant to the Research Yarn is relationality, however; this is a missing feature of published research findings. This article aims to address this. The research question was, what can an analysis of Social and Family Yarning tell us about relationality that underpins a Research Yarn. Participant recruitment occurred using convenience sampling, and data collection involved Yarning method. Five steps of data analysis occurred featuring Collaborative Yarning and Mapping. Commonality existed between researcher and participants through predominantly experiences of being a part of Aboriginal community, via Aboriginal organisations and Country. This suggests shared explicit and tacit knowledge and generation of thick data. Researchers should report on their experience with Yarning, the types of Yarning they are using, and the relationality generated from the Social, Family and Research Yarn. Keywords Aboriginal, Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous research methodologies, Indigenous research methods relationality

yarning

- My evocative narratives‘ (Ellis and Bochner 2000:744) have breached the conventional separation of researcher and subjects‘ (Ellis and Bochner 2000:744). This action was driven by Indigenous ethics of knowingly doing no harm to people, country and all living and non-living things (Weber-Pillwax 2004; Wilson 2008). It is also aligned to reflexive writing that has its emphasis on process, which Greenwood and Levin claim provides the generalisation necessary for validation (Greenwood and Levin 2000). It is assumed that if research methods are not able to be generalised for comparative approaches then validity is questionable. However Greenwood and Levin maintain it is essential to appreciate the conditions in which knowledge was generated which contextualizes the knowledge itself‘ (Greenwood and Levin 2000:98). Cora Weber-
- Pillwax substantiates this point stating any research that is carried out with people is carried out within the context of an existing community‘ (Weber-Pillwax 2004:80). Failing to appreciate this context places the data collected through the research questionable. The contexts of Indigenous communities‘ experiences are imperative to any research praxis and the development of meaningful and valid data. p132

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