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We cannot begin to describe the dilemma which faces us in our practice without first recognising that we (Maori people) exist in institutions which are founded on the Collective denial of our existence as Maori and which not only actively continue to assimilate us, but more importantly perhaps actively compete with us and the world views we represent.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (cited in Brady 1992, p 107)

Introduction

Indigenous Australians, like First Nations Peoples around the globe, are arguably the most studied peoples of the world. The research enterprise as a vehicle for investigation has poked, prodded, measured, tested and compared data toward understanding Indigenous cultures and human nature. Explorers, medical practitioners, intellectuals, travellers and voyeurs who observed from a distance, have all played a role in the scientific scrutiny of Indigenous Peoples.

Indeed, it is the research by such peoples and their institutions that have been responsible for the extraction, storage and control over Indigenous knowledges. Moreover, 'it is the acquisition of Indigenous knowledges and the ensuing ownership of that knowledge which are the foundations upon which many academic qualifications and careers have been achieved' (Brady 1992, p 105) (see also Williams and Stewart 1992).

It is little wonder that the world's Indigenous communities are apprehensive and cautious toward research 'ontologies (assumptions about the nature of reality), epistemologies (the ways of knowing that reality) and axiologies (the disputational contours of right and wrong or morality and values)' (Scheurich and Young 1997, p6). This is not to say that Indigenous people reject outright, research and its various methodological practices. Indeed some research and their methodologies has benefited the emancipation of Indigenous communities. However, Indigenous people now want research and its designs to contribute to the self determination and liberation struggles as defined and controlled by their communities. To do this Indigenous peoples themselves must analyse and critique epistemologies that are common place in higher education.

I wish it were the case that we had a rich field of Indigenous Australian intellectual theorising of research epistemologies on which to draw. Unfortunately we do not. I have no intention to speculate why this is so, but to simply inform you of my journey in seeking liberation epistemologies and designing an Indigenist methodology.

My purpose is to promote continued discussion on Indigenist methodology, as a step toward assisting Indigenous theorists and practitioners to determine what might be an appropriate response to de-legitimate racist oppression in research and shift to a more empowering and self-determining outcome. Moreover, I am attempting to find ways to represent Indigenous Australian and First Nations Peoples interests through appropriate research epistemologies and methodology. Nothing here should be read as definitive methods or strategies. Rather it should be read as research in progress and a transmission of ideas to promote further debate.

Understanding Of Racism As A Rationale For Liberation Epistemologies

The issue of racially based research epistemologies and the call for emancipatory methodologies for people of colour is not new. In the United States, among others, Scheurich and Young (1997), in their article *Coloring Epistemologies* compellingly argues for researchers to address the works of those theorists that argue that epistemologies arise out of the social history of specific groups. Theorist Patricia Collins' *Black feminist Thought* (1991), outlines characteristics of Afrocentric feminist epistemology. Similarly, the writings of Molefi Kete Asante (eg. 1987, 1988, 1990, 1993) discusses in depth Afrocentricity which calls for Afrocentric emancipatory methodology at the hands of critiquing dominant forms epistemologies. According to Asante (1993), 'Afrocentricity is a perspective which allows Africans to be subjects of their own historical experiences rather than objects' (p 2).

To arrive at a rationale for liberation epistemologies and Indigenist methodology we must first understand the colonial history of Australia and its impact on its Indigenous peoples and their struggles to be free from colonialism. My particular interests here is in developing an anti-colonial cultural critique of Australian history in an attempt to arrive at appropriate strategies to de-colonise epistemologies and to create new ones. Therefore, I must give context to what I mean by anti-colonial cultural critique.

Such an approach has recently been adopted by well known Aboriginal theorist Marcia Langton (1993, p 7), to ask questions about the representations of Aboriginal peoples in the media via exploring and revisiting arguments to do with ways of knowing and the constructions of knowledge. By using such a model I want to place research epistemologies in the context of colonial racism for critique. More importantly, I want to gain an understanding of the role colonial history has played in constructing research epistemologies and if such constructions inform research practices today. Such critique and analysis enables further identification of factors within the methods of constructing new knowledge that maybe colonising or liberating for Indigenous Peoples.

Currently, racism is a topic on the political agenda beamed live into the living rooms of many Australians. Sadly, as an Indigenous Australian, I experience first hand the prejudice stereotyping, name calling and structural alienation which racism causes. The Fourth Report of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Social Justice Commissioner (Dodson 1996), the National Inquiry into Racist Violence in Australia (HREOC 1991) and the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Johnston 1991) concluded that Indigenous Australians face racism in almost every aspects of their lives. Such oppression has led to the continuing subordination of Indigenous Peoples from educational, social and political processes in Australian society (see Mattingley and Hampton 1988; Brock and Kartinyeri 1989; Wanganeen 1987). Indeed racism in all forms are deeply entrenched in Australian society.

Langton (1993) is correct when recognising that historically, Australian policies and education institutions have been marinated in cultural and racial social engineering theories. Such theories have continued to influence current policy, research, government debates and social perceptions in relation to Indigenous Australians.

However, if racism is so entrenched in society as the above reports conclude, how then does racism manifest itself in current research epistemologies and methodological practices when researchers in general are well meaning and are clearly not aggressive racists?

Racism has been studied with care by many scholars (see Montagu 1974, Banton 1975, 1977, 1979, 1988, Stepan 1982, Benedict 1983). My Indigenous understanding of colonial racism in Australia draws heavily on the works of Benedict (1983), Mattingley and Hampton (1988), Stepan (1982), Reynolds (1987), Moore (1994), Lippman (1994), McConnochie, Hollinsworth and Pettman (1988), and the Indigenous informants of my recent research (see Rigney 1997, pp 24-31).

The creation of racism most frequently mentioned, fall into three broad categories: the rapid growth of imperialism which includes the search for wealth and profits in the seventeenth and eighteenth century; the spiritual drive to promote the visions of God and the quest for power, mastery and collective glory. This is an extremely brief overview of a complex phenomena in which such factors all have histories too large to explore here, but it is these factors that have contributed to the construction of racism in Australia in varying degrees.

Racism was created from a social movement and not from a response to a particular situation. A world wide racist movement grew up around a series of political struggles and is informed by a number of emergent themes. Touraine (1985, 1992), argues that social movements can be viewed as both structured, organised political movements and or movements that are not structured but are based on a consciousness filled with beliefs and values leading to collective action (see Cohen, 1985). It is the latter that encapsulates my understanding of the racism movement.

Fundamental to the world wide racist movement is the construction of the construct of 'race' via the scientific theories of polygenism and social Darwinism (see Montagu 1974; Banton 1975, 1977, 1979, 1988; Stepan 1982; Benedict 1983; Moore 1994). Racist scientific theories dominated Australian history which supported the belief in 'races'. Certain groups differentiated in allegedly permanent biological differences which were placed in a hierarchy of inferiority and superiority (see McConnochie, Hollingsworth and Pettman 1988; Reynolds 1987; Moore 1994).

The construction of 'race' was not simply to differentiate between groups of human beings but to organise human groups into a series of hierarchies (Moore 1994; Montague 1974; Stepan 1982). 'Racing' Indigenous Australians as close to the developed non-human animal world and at the bottom of the hierarchy within the human species became the basic mechanism for targeting my people for systematic oppression and for legitimating that oppression.

My people were not racialised in order to satisfy scientific curiosity about our place in non-Indigenous classificatory system. Racialising discourses of difference, like all discourses of difference, are located at significant sites of power. We were racialised in order to exert power over us.

The historical process of oppression, 'grounded in the construction of the concept 'race' saw every facet of Australian society being radically racialised' (Moore 1994, p 14). Australia's colonial government, Judicial system, education and its knowledge construction factories were built on the graves of Indigenous Australian systems, on the assumption that the 'race' of Indigenous non-humans had no such systems in place prior to the invasion.

What did this mean for Indigenous Australians? The historical process of oppression with the construction of 'race' as its core ingredient saw Australian social systems, culture, institutions, attitudes and behaviours racialised. British social systems was now in place to secure control and power.

Such systematic and racialised social engineering has led to a continuing oppression and subordination of Indigenous Australians in every facet in Australian society to the point that there is no where that we can stand that is free of racism. From an Indigenous perspective, we continue to function in this new system by participating in the very social formations which had been instrumental in our own oppression. To participate in them means denying, at least to some extent, the value and authenticity of the Indigenous social formations which have been replaced and suppressed by the colonial formations (Moore 1995).

Indigenous Australians have struggled to gain a recognised place in such a racialised social system and still function at its margins. This would be the case even if there was not a single bigoted individual (Moore 1994).

So what is racism? Like Moore (1994) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) by racism, I mean it to be the construction and use of the concept 'race' to shape a whole society, its structures attitudes, values and behaviour in a particularly discriminatory way.

This means that our struggle against racism is not solely the fight against the racist lunatics on the fringe. The struggle against racism must also include the fight to de-racialise micro and macro social formations left to us by colonisation which continue to effect and shape the lives of my people.

So why am I going on about racism? It would be simply naive to think that colonial racist movement in Australia did not impact the research fraternity and its internal works.

As we have seen, racism concerns power and control. Scheurich and Young (1997), inform us that

when any group within a large, complex civilisation significantly dominates other groups for hundreds of years, the ways of the dominant group (its epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies), not only become the dominant ways of that civilisation, but also these ways become so deeply embedded that they typically are seen as "natural" or appropriate norms rather than as historically evolved social constructions. (p 7).

Research methodologies and the protocols in knowledge construction in my country is the way the colonisers constructed it and as a result racialised research industry still prevails in Australia. There is little evidence that research epistemologies and ways on knowing in Australia was modelled on any learning's from Indigenous population or that it was produced from presumed equals.

The cultural assumptions throughout dominant epistemologies in Australia are oblivious of Indigenous traditions and concerns. The research academy and its epistemologies have been constructed essentially for and by non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians have been excluded from all facets of research. The process of racialisation declared that my peoples minds, intellect, knowledges, histories and experiences were irrelevant.

Indigenous Peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in differing ways to non-Indigenous Peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures and values. However, it is the epistemologies themselves that reproduce and reaffirm the cultural assumptions of the "world" and the "real" by the dominate group.

Sadly, the legacy of racialisation and its ideology continue to re-shape knowledge construction of Indigenous Peoples via colonial research ontologies , epistemologies and axiologies which is so fundamentally subtle and 'common sense'. Aboriginal researchers who wish to construct, re-discover and/or re-affirm Indigenous knowledges must function in traditions of classical epistemological methods of physical and or the social human sciences.

In this current period of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, the Australian community now expects that educational institutions and authorities will develop policies and programs to eliminate racial harassment, prejudicial attitudes and behaviours of researchers. But many have left the racialised institutional, oppressive structures untouched. In particular, Indigenous people have the fundamental right to expect research and its epistemologies to address the issues and racialising practises which have been part and parcel of post-invasion history.

Racism will not be overcome by simply changing the attitudes and values of researchers, nor will it be overcome by simply adding Indigenous researchers to the academy of research and stirring. Indigenous Peoples must now be involved in defining controlling and owning epistemologies and ontologies that value and legitimates the Indigenous experience. Indigenous perspectives must infiltrate the whole research academy structures and methods.

Indigenous Peoples must look to new anti-colonial epistemologies and methodologies to construct, re-discover and/or re-affirm their knowledges and cultures. Such epistemologies must represent the aspirations of Indigenous Australians and carry within it the potential to strengthen the struggle for emancipation and liberation from oppression. If we understand this, we understand the need to seek other examples of liberatory epistemologies

Liberation Epistemologies

In seeking possible examples of liberatory epistemologies for the Indigenous movement one can draw on the experiences and writings from within the feminist movement.

The most vigorous debates amongst feminists concerns how knowledge is socially constructed and ideologically aligned. Indeed, feminist research has advanced their causes through the contestation of such knowledges in seeking enlightenment and emancipation from oppressive conditions (see Lather 1987, 1991, 1992; Mies 1983; Stanley and Wise 1983).

Waldby (1995) informs us that the feminist movement has entered the research academy on the basis that knowledge is not learned reflection of the world but rather shapes the world in particular ways, for particular interests (p15).

The construction of knowledges for Waldby is the site for social power relationships in its ownership and creation. All knowledge production is not value neutral and is filled with competing interests.

Claims of 'objectivity' and 'validity' are fundamental to feminist critiques of women's' social disadvantage (Waldby 1995, p 15). To this extent, the feminist movement contests such knowledges and shifts to construct knowledges which places the feminine experience at the centre of feminist research. Similarly, feminist scholars argue for openly ideological research to begin to shift from the concept of 'objectivity' valued by the research industry to the need for more critical and libratory approaches (Lather 1987, 1991, Weiler 1988, Ebert 1991).

If we understand that feminist research is the development of knowledge which are sympathetic to feminist interests and which engages with issues arising out of the long history of patriarchal oppression, we begin to understand the strategies of the feminist liberation struggle for recognition, self-determination and power for women. Waldby (1995) concludes:

Such elaboration gives feminism the means to contest not just the practice of everyday life which disadvantages women, but also the knowledges which inform these practices and which often work to make women's' disadvantage seem 'natural' and inevitable, even to women themselves. (p15)

Factors that seem to formulate libratory research for such feminist include:

- women as researchers
- women as the subjects
- the inclusion of women's experience
- women defining research for themselves
- the inclusion of women's knowledges/histories and epistemologies

How then can the feminist contestation of knowledges assist the Indigenous Australian struggle against the orthodox forms of epistemologies in research?

Indigenist Research

A common similarity found within Indigenous and feminist theorising is that of lived experiences. The struggle against oppression is a key factor for seeking and analysing societal structures to determine whether they are liberatory or colonising in orientation. Such lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples enable Indigenous researchers to speak on the basis of these experiences and are powerful instruments by which to measure equality and social justice of society. It is these experiences that enable Indigenous people to question the moral as well as the educational foundations of society. Therefore in theorising Indigenous epistemologies I call on the powerful life experiences and history of myself and my community.

It is here that I wish to outline what I call Indigenist Research. In identifying the theoretical foundations of my research as Indigenist, I need to clarify what I do mean and what I do not mean by this concept. It is not a term which I have come across elsewhere in the research literature, yet it is a particularly appropriate way of articulating my approach.

In constructing my research as Indigenist I have been indebted to some of the insights and principles of feminist research which involve emancipation and liberation strategies (see Lather 1987, 1991, 1992, Waldby 1995, Ebert 1991, Weiler 1988).

What is a critical feature of feminist research from an Indigenous perspective is that the feminist liberation movement adapts, borrows and modifies significant research to advance their struggle which need not originate from female researchers. If we begin to understand the need to borrow these strategies and adapting them to suit a feminist agenda, we then begin to understand liberation struggle and its complex tactics. It is these complex tactics that I wish to employ in my research for Indigenous liberation struggle.

To achieve this goal and to engage the research fraternity in the contestation of knowledge construction for Indigenous Australians, there is a need to examine the principles and rationale of what I have called and Indigenist research.

Principle And Rational Of Indigenist Research

I understand Indigenist research to be informed by three fundamental and inter-related principles:

- **resistance** as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research
- **political integrity** in Indigenous research
- **privileging Indigenous voices** in Indigenist research

Resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research

Indigenist research is research undertaken as part of the struggle of Indigenous Australians for recognition for self-determination. It is research which engages with the issues in and which have arisen out of the long history of oppression of Indigenous Australians, which began in earnest with the invasion of Australia in 1788. It is research which deals with the history of physical, cultural and emotional genocide. It is also research which engages with the story of the survival and the resistances of Indigenous Australians to racist oppression. It is research which seeks to uncover and protest the continuing forms of oppression which confront Indigenous Australians. Moreover, it is research which attempts to support the personal, community, cultural and political struggles of Indigenous Australians to carve out a way of being for ourselves in Australia which there is healing from the past oppressions and cultural freedom in the future.

Political integrity in Indigenist research

Indigenist research is research which is undertaken by Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians are indebted to the contributions many non-Indigenous people have made to the personal, cultural and political struggles of my people. We are indebted too to the research contributions of non-Indigenous Australians to this struggle. It is, however, inappropriate that the research contribution to the political cause should come solely from non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians have to set their own political agenda for liberation. To the extent that research contributes to that agenda, it must be undertaken by Indigenous Australians. There must be a social link between research and the political struggle of our communities. This link needs to be in and through those Indigenous Australians who are simultaneously engaged in research and the Indigenous struggle. Only in this way can research responsibly serve and inform the political liberation struggle.

In saying this I am not suggesting in any way that critical research by non-Indigenous Australians should not continue, or that such research cannot serve to inform the struggles of Indigenous Australians for genuine self-determination. I am saying that Indigenist research is research by Indigenous Australians which takes the research into the heart of the Indigenous struggle. In so doing, it makes the researcher responsible to the Indigenous communities and its struggle.

Privileging Indigenous voices in research

Indigenist research is research which focuses on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations and struggles of Indigenous Australians. It is Indigenous Australians who are the primary subjects of Indigenist research. Indigenist research is research which gives voice to Indigenous people.

Given the history of exploitation, suspicion, misunderstanding and prejudice it is particularly appropriate that it is Indigenous Australians who access and make public the voice and experience of other Indigenous Australians. In saying this, I am not suggesting that there is cultural homogeneity among Indigenous Australians. There is not. Nor am I suggesting that there are no cultural barriers between or inter-communal hostilities within and between the Indigenous communities in Australia. There are. There is no automatic or natural rapport between Indigenous Australians.

Nor am I suggesting that the minds of Indigenous researchers are free of colonial hegemony (colonial internalisation) or that being Indigenous will make better representation of us. Indigenous Australians, however, do tend to be more aware and respectful of each other's cultural traditions. Similarly, Indigenous researcher are more accountable to not only their institutions but also their communities. It is certainly politically more appropriate that Indigenous Australians speak through Indigenous researchers.

Thus Indigenist research is research by Indigenous Australians whose primary informants are Indigenous Australians and whose goals are to serve and inform the Indigenous struggle for self-determination.

I name this research methodology as Indigenist. I am an Indigenous Australian deeply, passionately and actively committed to and involved in the struggles of my people. This research I see as part of that involvement and therefore must be overtly political. For that I make no apologies. I want Indigenist research to contribute to that struggle by unmasking some of the overt and brutal racist oppressions which have been and continue to be part of our reality, and by unmasking also some of its continuing and subtle forms.

In naming my research as Indigenist in the sense described above, I am not also claiming that Indigenist research is characterised by any distinctive models or strategies. Such distinctive models and strategies may evolve over time.

I then sought to adapt tools from critical theory and critical social sciences to inform my Indigenist research. I did this because I agree with critical theory which is guided by a vision for a more just world. Fundamental to this goal is to free individual groups and society from conditions of domination, powerlessness and oppression which reduce the control over their own lives. In rejecting positivistic scientific methods critical theory is committed to human emancipation through reforming society. Whilst acknowledging that critical theory is a racialised epistemology like all other dominate forms it is overtly political in its intentions whereby it advocates for those most oppressed in society. This then suits the agenda of liberatory epistemology.

As an Indigenous researcher the fertile ground of critical theory seemed an ideal foundation to sew the seeds of an Indigenist liberatory epistemology. It allows Indigenous Peoples the room to tackle anti-colonialism and its sites of oppression and power.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to summarise Indigenist. Indigenist research is research by Indigenous Australians whose primary informants are Indigenous Australians and whose goals are to serve and inform the Indigenous liberation struggle to be free of oppression and to gain power.

I have deliberately avoid the issues of research ownership, Intellectual property and ethics for another paper as these need closer interrogation. As such, I acknowledge that these are important issues for Indigenist research.

Indigenous people have the right to expect to be written clearly and affirmatively into research by appropriate methodologies. Therefore, the Indigenous context of knowledge production and research methodologies is about countering racism in and including Indigenous knowledges and experiences for Indigenous emancipation.

I am not arguing for a rejection of British cultural inheritance and its dominant forms of research ontology, epistemology and axiology. What is clear is that there must be a process of de-racialisation and de-colonisation of these issues if cultural freedom is to be achieved in the lives of Indigenous people.

What must be emphasised here is that from an Indigenous perspective, my peoples interests, experiences and knowledges must be at the centre of research methodologies and the construction of knowledge about us.

Incorporating these aspects in research we can shift the construction of knowledge to one which does not compromise Indigenous identity and Indigenous principles of freedom from racism, independence and unity.

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