Indigenous Methodologies

Researchers are accountable to those they have involved in their research. When undertaking Indigenous research, the ethics, values, protocols and behaviours of the communities or peoples being researched must be considered as an integral part of the methodology.
Indigenous peoples have inhabited this continent for thousands of years. During this time they have developed their knowledge systems and passed them on from generation to generation. Their knowledges have developed on and with the land, and are grounded in their relationships with Country. As such, Indigenous knowledges are experiential, holistic and evolving. Epistemologies (theories of knowledge), ontologies (study of existence) and axiologies (study of values) are entwined with these knowledge systems. While European colonisation disrupted Indigenous ways of lives and ways of living, Indigenous knowledge systems remain intact and continue developing as living, social schemas (Moreton-Robinson & Walter 2009, p. 3).

Western academic research has often disempowered Indigenous peoples, it has taken extensive knowledges away from the Indigenous peoples it belonged to, and has used Indigenous peoples as sources of information and passive objects without giving much back in return (Porsanger 2004, p. 108). However researchers are accountable to those they involve in their research. When undertaking Indigenous research, the ethics, values, protocols and behaviours of the communities or peoples being researched must be considered as an integral part of the methodology.

According to Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Maggie Walter (2009, p. 2), "Indigenous methodologies are a vigorous and active field of knowledge production involving Indigenous peoples from around the world, including Australia, applying their own lenses, perspectives and understandings to social research and methodologies".

Indigenous methodological frameworks recognise that knowledges are "socially situated, partial and grounded in subjectivities and experiences of everyday life" (Moreton-Robinson & Walter 2009, p. 2). This results in a necessary reinterpretation of traditional Western methodological meanings and values, resulting in the critique of those theoretical perspectives, and the development of methodologies based on indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

Indigenous methodologies are based in a number of theoretical principles, those being:

- Recognising Indigenous worldviews, knowledges and realities as being distinctive and vital to the existence and survival of Indigenous peoples
- Honouring Aboriginal social mores as essential processes through which they live, learn and situate themselves as Aboriginal people in their own lands and in the lands of other Aboriginal peoples
- Emphasising the social, historical and political contexts which shape Indigenous peoples experience, lives, positions and futures
- Privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands (Martin & Mirraboopa 2003, p. 205).
Key texts relating to Indigenous methodologies

Linda Tuhiwai Smith
Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples
[http://find.lib.uts.edu.au/?R=OPAC_b2815639]

Dennis Foley
Indigenous Epistemology and Indigenous Standpoint Theory

Lester-Irabinna Rigney
Indigenist Research and Aboriginal Australia
[http://find.lib.uts.edu.au/?R=OPAC_b2839132]

Aileen Moreton-Robinson & Maggie Walter
Indigenous Methodologies in Social Research
[http://find.lib.uts.edu.au/?R=OPAC_b2644977]

Karen Martin & Booran Mirraboopa
Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing: A Theoretical Framework and Methods for Indigenous and Indigenist Research

References


