

Indigenous Research Unit & Griffith Social and Behavioural Research College

A brief exploration of the key issues for
Indigenous Research

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IN THIS TALK ...

1. Acknowledgement to Country
2. Brief exploration of Indigenous methodologies
3. Key questions to improve your research with Indigenous communities



Why is history important?

Occupation and Extermination 1824 – 1908

The prevailing Darwinian belief in racial “survival of the fittest” and the superiority of Anglo-Saxon “civilisation” made the job of extermination all the more justifiable. The Aborigines were seen as “the link between man and brute creation” and were numbered among “the gorilla, orang, gibbon and chimpanzee” In 1902, a member of the new Commonwealth Parliament stated “there is no scientific evidence the Aboriginal is a human being at all” (Evans cited in Wearn, 1980: 4-5).



Initial Contact

1788

• *Invasion / Colonisation*

• *Protection / Segregation*

• *Assimilation / Integration*

• *Self-Determination / Self-Management*

• *Reconciliation / Treaty*

• *Shared Responsibility / Mutual Obligation*

• *Intervention in NT*

2016

• *Indigenous Advisory Council*

Present



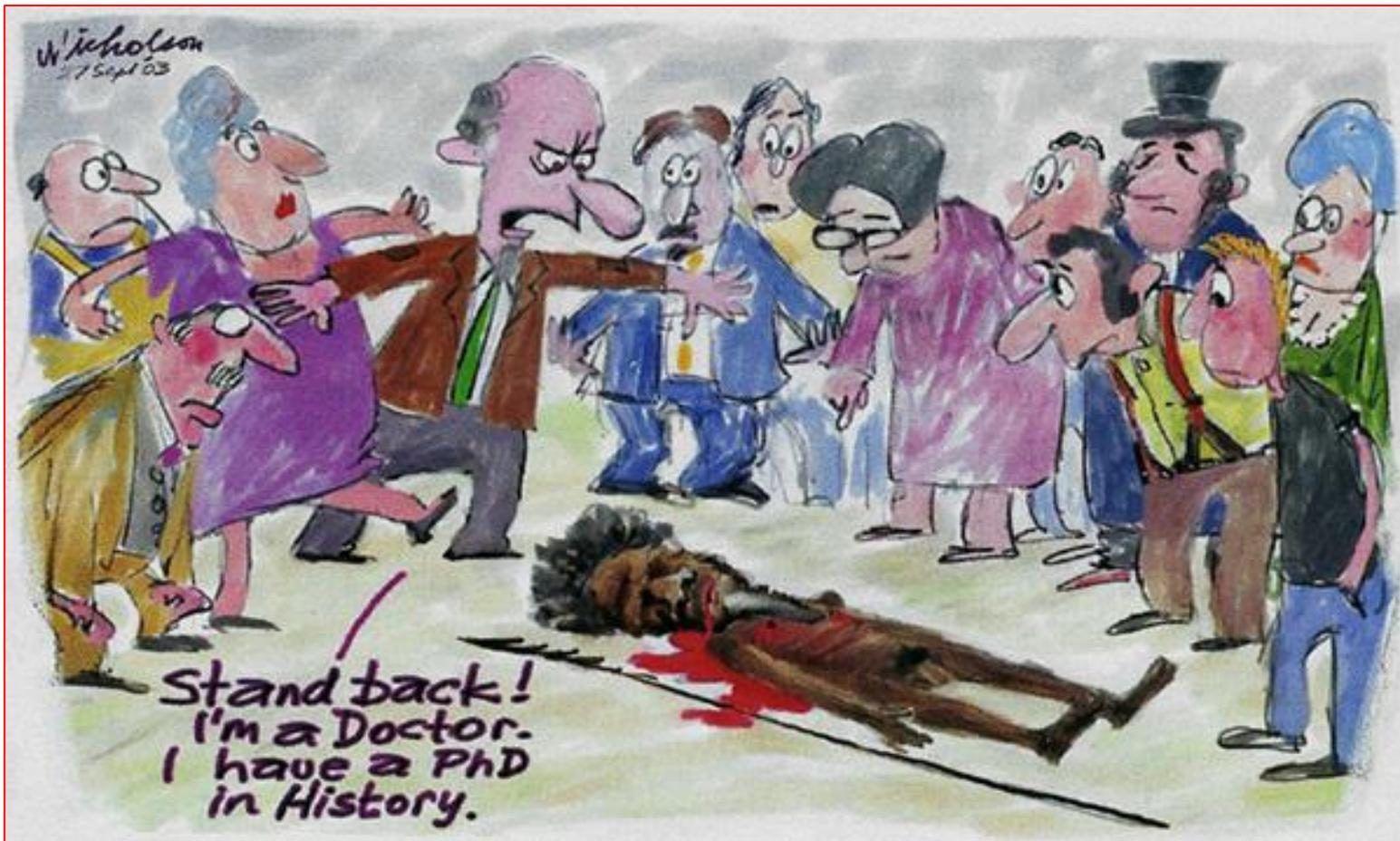
Policy Era's

Timeline of the history of Indigenous policies



Challenge

- Understanding the importance of history



Indigenous Population Issues

• Irregular census years

Year	Pop. Count	% Increase in Census
1901	48248	23.7
1911	30052	-37.7
1921	39399	31.1
1933	45066	14.4
1947	51048	13.3
1954	62084	21.6
1961	80526	29.7
1966	101978	26.6
1971	115953	13.7
1976	160915	38.8
1981	159897	-0.6
1986	227433	42.2
1991	265371	16.7
1996	352970	33.0
2001	410003	16.2
2006*	517200	26.1

1967 Referendum – Australian Constitutional change

- Between 1991-2001 Censuses:
- Total population increased **5%**
- Indigenous population increased **95%**



Exploring Indigenous Methodologies



Indigenous Research

- Historically, research has not been a positive experience for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Smith, 1999).
- Researchers have a responsibility to cause no harm, but traditional forms of research have been a source of distress for Indigenous peoples due to inappropriate methods and practices (Cochran et al, 2008).



The history of research and Indigenous people ...

- has **documented** the extent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **disadvantage** but that it has provided a poor focus for improving conditions for Indigenous peoples (Anderson et. al, 2001)
- has not generally been to the advantage or benefit of Indigenous peoples and that it has been considered '**seriously damaging and harmful**' and '**insensitive, intrusive and exploitative**' (Johnstone, 1991, Bourke, 1995, Maddocks, 1992, NAHS 1989)
- reflects the exploitative **history of colonialism** in this country (Thomas, 2001, Humphery, 2000, 2001, Manderson et.al. 1998)
- is designed to **serve** the academic, political or professional **needs of researchers** (NAHS 1989)



And there's more ...

- *Aboriginal communities have become highly critical and cynical about research as an activity ... their experience of research has been one of paternalistic probing, of being constructed by disciplines that are presented and portrayed as impenetrable sources of knowledge and power (white mythologies?), of being written about, and of others gaining status on their backs. (Deakin University, 1994, p. 2).*
- *In whichever discipline researchers have worked - history, sociology, anthropology, psychiatry - most have failed to perceive the insiders' view - how black people themselves perceive and understand their condition (Langton 1981, p16).*



And more ...

- *Indigenous perceptions of Australian research practice have emphasized their subject status, in which academics have been seen to descend on a community, gain peremptory permission to conduct their work, collect their data (biological or social) and leave, with little or no feedback to the community and no lasting benefits to it. (Manderson et al 1998, p223).*



Impact - Research Benefit

- Adoption of the research has produced an outstanding social, economic, environmental and/or cultural benefit for the wider community, regionally within Australia, nationally or internationally.
- Impact is defined as “an effect on, change, benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life beyond academia.
- It includes, but is not limited to, an effect on, change or benefit to:
 - » The activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding
 - » Of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals
 - » In any geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally (Norrie, 2012).



Derrick, G. E., Hayen, A., Chapman, S., Haynes, A. S., Webster, B. M. and Anderson, I. (2012), A bibliometric analysis of research on Indigenous health in Australia, 1972–2008. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 36: 269–273.

- Conclusions: While there has been positive growth in publications referring to Indigenous health, the attention paid to this research through citations remains disappointingly low.
- Implications: Given that research concentration and impact can be an index of how seriously a nation considers a health problem, the low visibility of Australian research examining Indigenous health does not demonstrate a level of concern commensurate with the gravity of Indigenous health problems. Further investigation for the reasons for lower citations may identify potential intervention strategies.



How do we make it better?



High Benefit

How do we get to work in this quadrant?

X
DBRCT

X
PAR

Research "On"

Research "With"

X
Cross-sectional

X
Longitudinal

Low Benefit



Research may be:

- suggested (proposed) by an outside researcher or organisation – *researcher driven*
- commissioned by the government – *government or public policy driver*
- commissioned / instigated within or by a community – *community instigated*
- suggested and undertaken by a local community organisation - *community driven*



Indigenous people should make decisions about research to ensure that research respects:

- shared values,
- acknowledge diversity,
- sets priorities, needs and aspirations;
- that benefits Indigenous peoples as well as researchers and other Australians.



The Research: 8 steps of the research journey

•1-3 Covered...
• today

1. Building relationships
2. Conceptualisation
3. Development and approval
4. Data collection & management
5. Analysis
6. Report writing
7. Dissemination
8. Learning from experience

•Not Covered..



1. Building relationships

- The first step in any research journey is about **building relationships**. This refers to both the researchers and the community/organisation members getting to know one another.
- As well as being the first step in the journey, it is important to **maintain relationships** throughout the whole research journey (ideally, sustained and maintained beyond the project).



1. Building relationships cont.

- During this stage we need to think about whether or not the research team has the **knowledge, skills and experience** to do this research.
- The communities/organisations can then decide whether to:
 - » go ahead with the proposed research
 - » go ahead with the research but with changes to the processes, outcomes or even how the research question is framed; or
 - » not go ahead with the research.



2. Conceptualisation

- The second step, **developing the research idea or conceptualisation**, is where we explore all aspects of the research.
- This stage is where we think broadly about what we want (planning), what the **researchers want**, how the research might **benefit** the Indigenous community or organisation, and what **risks** there might be.



2. Conceptualisation cont.

Things to think about include the:

- focus of the research
- management of the project including steering or advisory committees
- levels of participation
- skills development (capacity building) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- outcomes from the project (including dissemination)



Project Governance e.g.

**1) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Project Reference Group**
3 meetings a year

**2) Partner Organisations
(Executive Officers or Gov)**
2 meetings a year

3) Project Management Group (PI's)
2 meetings a year
4) Scientific Development Group

5) COMMUNITIES

Need to describe each layer



3. Development and approval

- The research team and the communities/ organisations work out all the final details.
- Three things to do:
 1. Provide a letter of community/ organisation support.
 2. Jointly develop the ethics application for approval.
 3. Develop the Research Agreement and make sure that everyone understands it.
- Do not start the research without ethics approval.



Does an understanding or application of Indigenous Methodologies help in your research?



Example 1: Rigney 1997



Indigenist Research

Rigney (1997) promotes the concept of an Indigenist methodology that focuses on developing an “anti-colonial cultural critique of Australian history in an attempt to arrive at appropriate strategies to de-colonise epistemologies”

**Resistance as
the emancipatory
imperative**

Indigenist research is informed by three fundamental and inter-related principles:

- 1) resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research
- 2) political integrity in Indigenous research
- 3) privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenist research



Political integrity



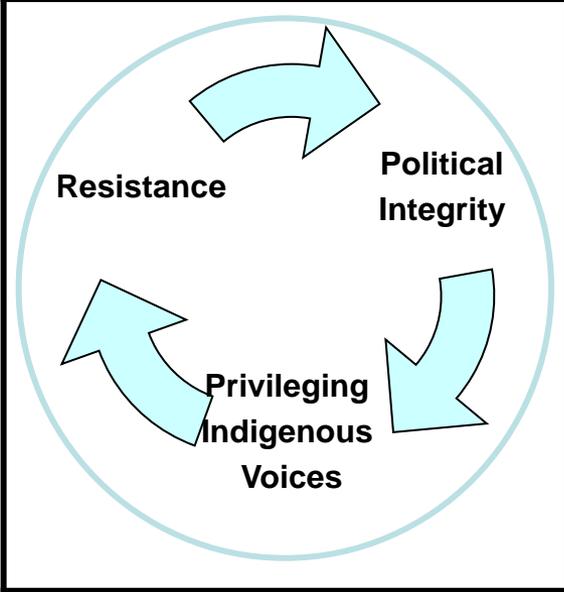
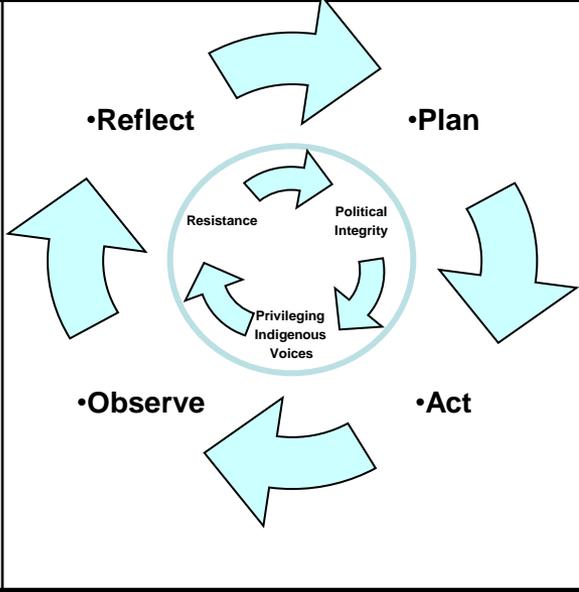
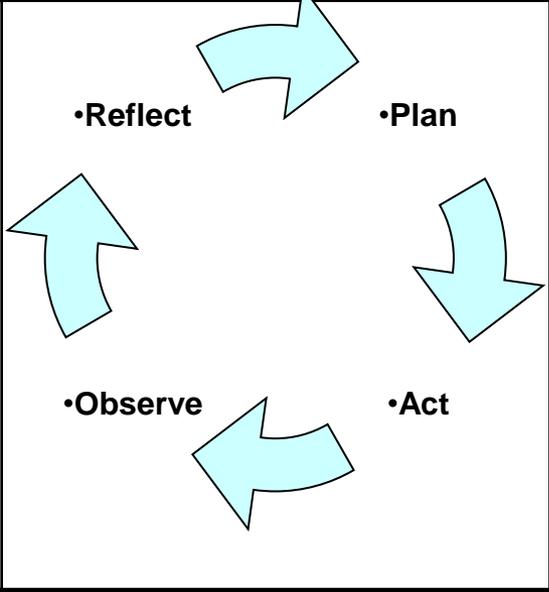
**Privileging
Indigenous
voices**



Example 2: Evans M, Miller A, Hutchinson P & Dingwall C, 2014



Participatory Indigenist Research

<p><i>ηala gumbarra gayga</i> The Cyclone Eye</p>	<p><i>ηala gumbarra</i> The Cyclone</p>	<p><i>ηala gumbarra gulubu</i> The Cyclone Wind</p>
<p>Indigenist Research Principles</p>	<p>Participatory Indigenist Research</p>	<p>Participatory Action Research Framework</p>
		

(Evans M, **Miller A**, Hutchinson P & Dingwall C. “De-Colonizing Research Practice: Indigenous Methodologies, Aboriginal Methods, and Knowledge/Knowing”, in *Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Patricia Leavy (ed.) New York: NY, Oxford University Press, 179-191, June 2014)



The Cyclone *ηala gumbarra*

- The Cyclone Eye
•*ηala gumbarra gayga*

- The Cyclone Wind
•*ηala gumbarra gulubu*



Methods

Principles

Plan - Community Engagement & Participation

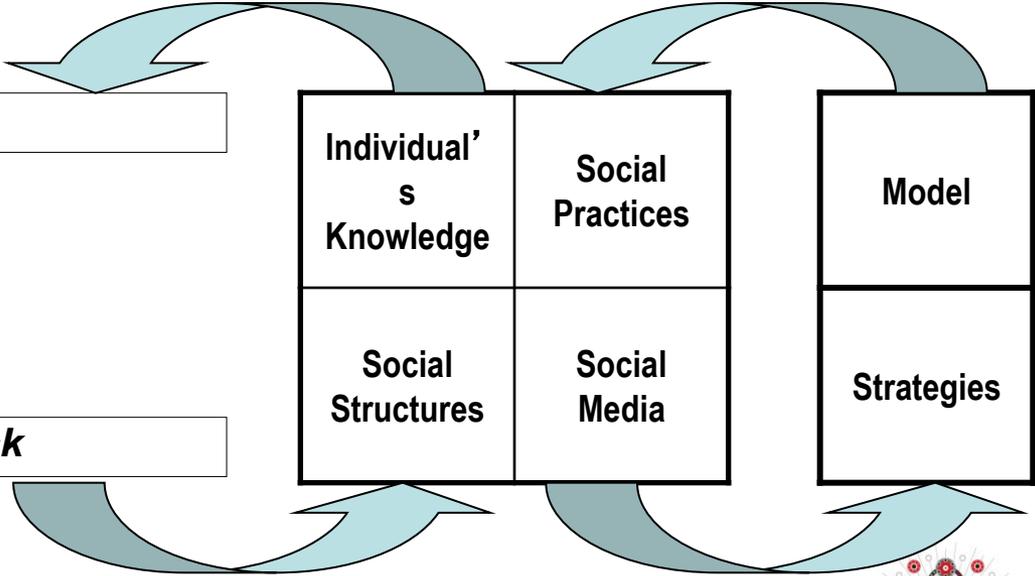
Act - Data Collection

Research

Observe - Data Analysis

Indigenist

Reflect – Dissemination and Feedback



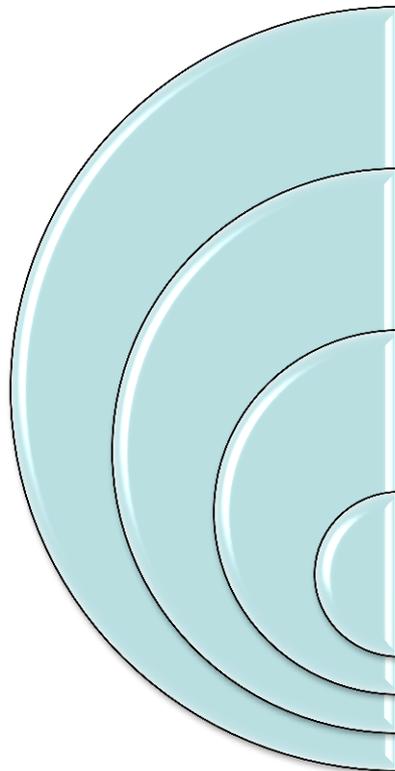
Plan

Act

Observe

Reflect





Attwood
Said
Foucault
Aristotle



Aboriginalism

Aboriginalism is the intellectual development and constructions of authoritative and essentialist truths of “Aborigines”; which is characterised by the relationship between power and knowledge.



Aboriginalism: exists on 3 levels:

1. As Aboriginal Studies through the teaching and scholarly pursuit of knowledge about Aborigines by non-Indigenous intellectuals who claim Aborigines cannot represent themselves and therefore must be represented by experts who know more about them than they know about themselves.
2. As a style of thought that places emphasis on the imagined distinction between Aborigines and Europeans in order to construct Aborigines as the “Other” and to form a “Them” and “Us” relationship.
3. As corporate and government institutions exercising authority over Aborigines claiming rights, laws and information about them.

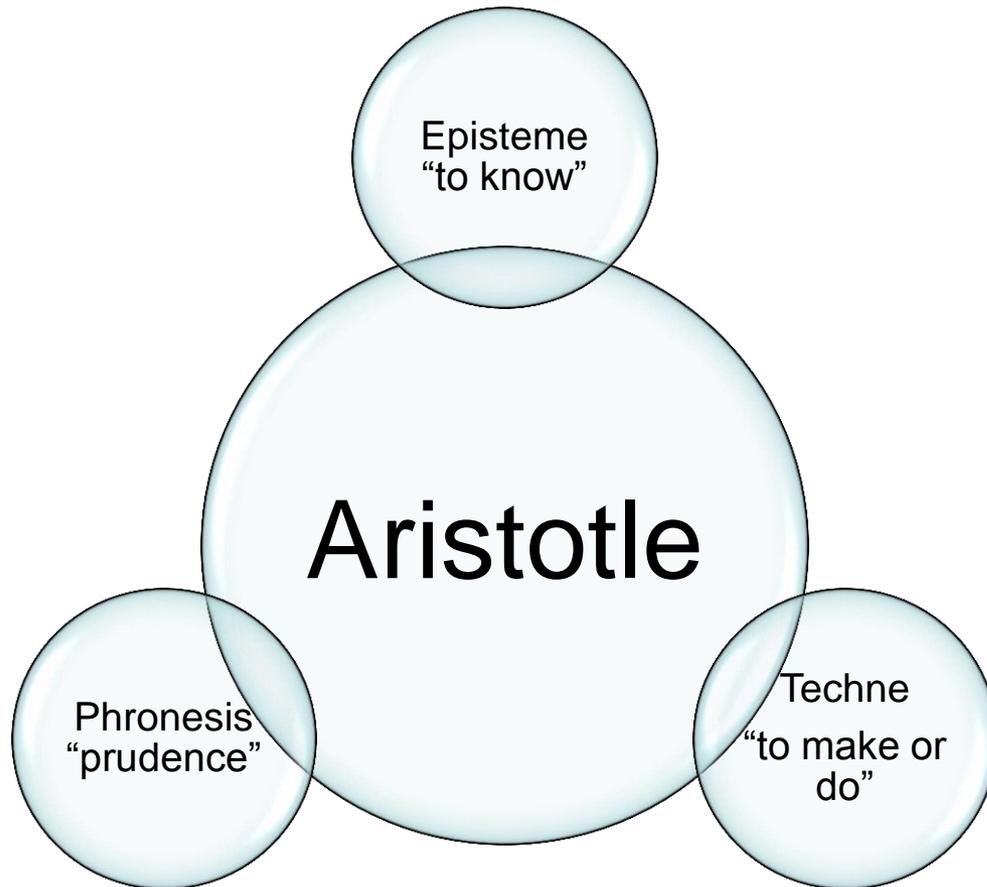


Aboriginalism and Indigenous research

- It is at this point Attwood fails to deliver the most important factor which is the essential role of Indigenous people have in developing, controlling and determining their own epistemological trajectory.
- Research can play a key role in empowering Indigenous people to fulfil this role.



Aboriginalism and Aristotelianism



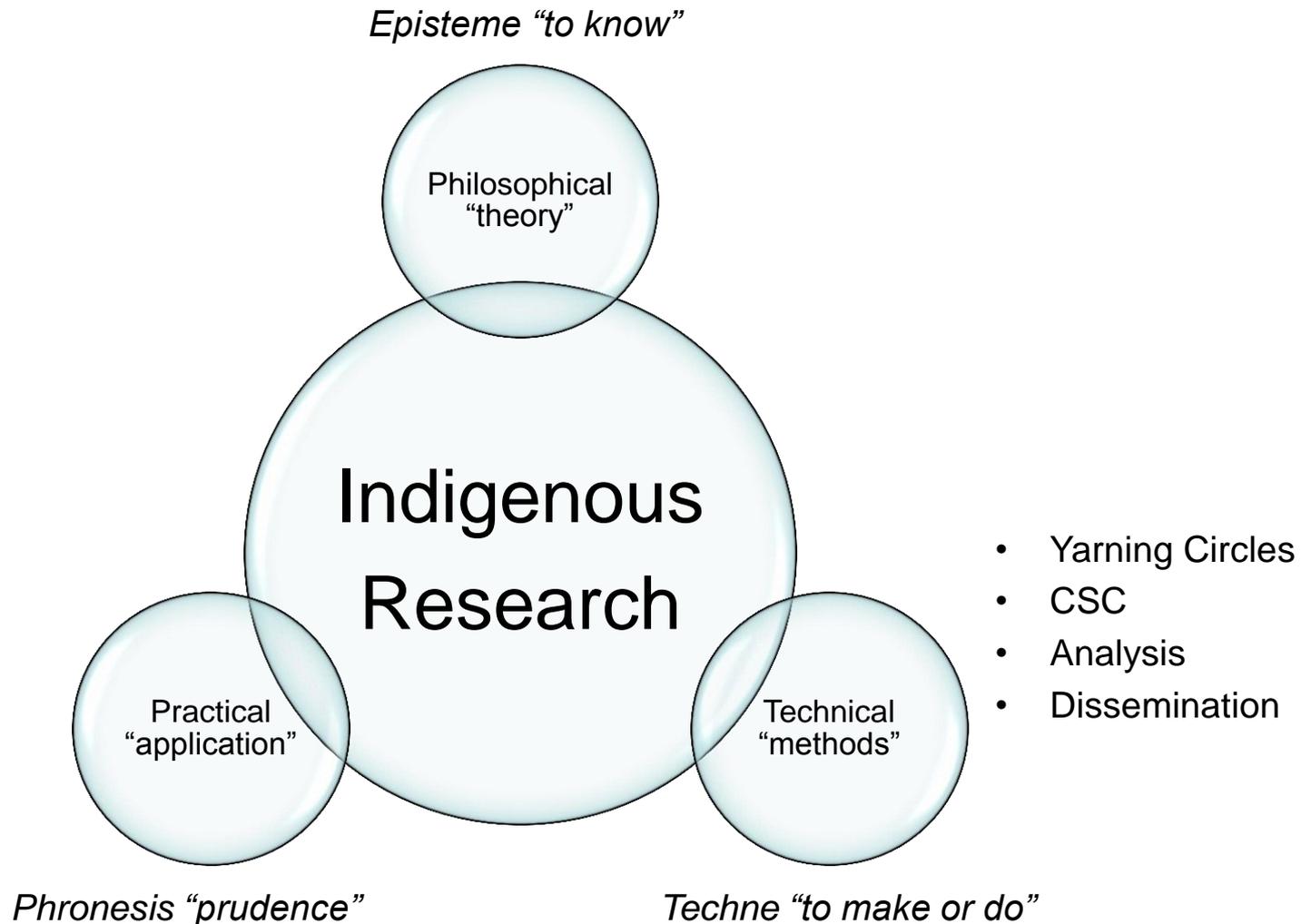
Phronetic social science

Focuses on four value-rational questions:

- (1) Where are we going?
- (2) Who gains and who loses, by which mechanisms of power?
- (3) Is this development desirable?
- (4) What should we do about it?



Methodology Development



Example 3: Martin 2009



Paradigm Shifts and Indigenist Research

Rigney 1997

- Resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research
- Political integrity in Indigenous research
- Privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenist research

Martin 2009

- Recognition of our worldviews, our knowledges and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival;
- Honouring our social mores as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our own lands and when in the lands of other Aboriginal people;
- Emphasis of social, historical and political contexts which shape our experiences, lives, positions and futures;
- Privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands.

Key Questions



Key questions for the researcher (s)

What is the **significance** of the research? For example is the project:

- » “researcher driven research” or
 - » “community driven research” or
 - » based on previous research or
 - » adds to knowledge / scientifically significant etc.
-
- Title / Hypothesis / Research Question(s);
 - Goals / Aims / Objectives;
 - Rationale / Background / Literature Review.
-
- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **HREC**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- Excluding research team members, in what ways have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander been **involved**, or will be involved, in the:
 - » Design;
 - » Implementation; and / or
 - » Monitoring and evaluation of the project

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **HREC**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- What groups, communities or services researchers need to be approached?
- What are the roles these groups play in relation to the project?

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **HREC**
 - » **Community**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- a) What is the project's anticipated **impact** on individuals and/or communities participating in the research?
- b) Is the project **extending, enhancing or supporting** existing services or structures within the community? If so, briefly explain how.
- c) Will the project **disrupt** the community in any way? If yes, please provide detail on how this will be minimised/managed.

- **Requirements**
 - » **HREC**
 - » **Community**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- a) What are the short and long-term **benefits** for the community or individuals within the community?
- b) Has your proposed project **evaluated** and documented the likely or potential benefits of the research?

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **HREC**
 - » **Community**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- a) What are the **risks** of the project to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the community, or individuals participating in the project?
- b) What strategies have you considered to address these risks?

- **Requirements**
 - » **HREC**
 - » **Community**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- a) Have the researchers considered the **costs/expenses** of the research on the community, service groups or individuals? Has provision been made for remuneration or reimbursement if required?
- b) Does the project provide for remuneration or **reimbursement** for community members acting as facilitators, informants and interpreters for their skills, time and expenses?

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **Community**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- Is the research **methodology** appropriate, and does it take into account and address:
 - Cultural security and cultural safety;
 - Appropriate quantitative / qualitative / mixed method study design;
 - Outcomes.

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **HREC**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- Has the project received approval from the relevant formal Human Research **Ethics** Committee and Site Specific Approvals / Endorsement? Does your research requires institutional, state authorities or national ethics approval requirements. How will you ensure you have informed consent?

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **HREC**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- Has the project team addressed the issues of **intellectual and cultural property rights**?

- **Requirements**
 - » **HREC**
 - » **Community**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- Has the project produced a comprehensive **research transfer strategy**, including provision of feedback and access to research by communities and individuals?

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **Community**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- How does the project comply with appropriate **data management** principles?
- **Requirements**
 - » **HREC**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- Does the project include adequate processes for the **monitoring and evaluation** of the research?

- **Requirements**
 - » **HREC**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- Is the **timeframe** of the research achievable and appropriate? If there are factors which might impact on the ability to achieve the project within the intended timeline, what are these and what strategies might be put in place to ensure the research aims can be met?

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **HREC**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- Does the research project require a **formal agreement or MOU** with any participant groups to the research?

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **HREC**
 - » **Community**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- What is your **publication and dissemination strategy** for the research?
How will you include or encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in authorship?

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **Community**



Key questions for the researcher (s)

- a) Will the project contribute to **capacity building** of the community, services, or individuals within the community?
- b) Does the project provide opportunities for the **employment and training** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

- **Requirements**
 - » **Funding Body**
 - » **HREC**
 - » **Community**



IN SUMMARY

If you've taken the time to seriously consider how you or your team respond to these questions, should result in a research proposal that is meaningful, respectful, responsible, competitive and applicable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities.

