

Evidence in an indigenous world

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Abstract

Valid and reliable evidence underpins the usefulness of research to policy, service provision and other research activities. In general, minority world research paradigms assume that the more objective the research, the more valid and reliable the evidence it supplies.

As a consequence, quantitative research methodologies are often more highly valued. Alternatively, experiential evidence is often used to provide substance but not the foundations of evaluation and research. The growth in fourth world (indigenous) movements and acceptance of post-modernism provides a challenge to these assumptions. Fourth world societies value experiential evidence as valid and reliable. In particular, this is founded on the general holism of indigenous communities.

This paper argues that fourth world research paradigms provide access to evidence that is not obtained from current research methodologies dominated by quantitative methods. If we combine consideration of the spiritual and communal outcomes of fourth world paradigms with developed world paradigms, we can obtain a more valid and reliable evidence base in research and evaluation about fourth world communities.

Alternative forms of evidence will be examined through a case study of New Zealand Māori experiential evidence stored in mythology, proverbs, sayings, and people, and the possible use of this style of evidence in research and evaluation.

Research paradigms

I have convinced myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Does it follow that I too do not exist? No: if I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed. But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving me ... the proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind. (Descartes 1999)

First published in 1641, Rene Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, like the entry of France and Sweden into the Thirty Years' War a decade earlier, and the Confession of Westminster forty years later, signalled the protracted end of the Reformation era and the fledgling beginning of the Enlightenment. In effect, no

longer was religion the locus for European knowledge. That locus now lay in Descartes' famous rebuttal to critics of his work: cogito ergo sum¹.

No three words so perfectly describe the gulf between the minority world and fourth world paradigms. Empiricism and philosophical scepticism underpin the minority world mind (Meyer 2001). They are the imperatives that have guided the movement in minority world research from positivism to post-positivism to critical theory to action research to constructivism and to post-modernism. The individualist epistemology (a theory of knowledge) of minority world paradigms and their impact on fourth world peoples is well-documented. Whatever the intentions of the researchers involved, minority world paradigms have disempowered and colonised fourth world peoples.

As an example, Percy Smith published a series of articles in which he identified the original homeland of the Māori as Hawaiki (Smith 1898-99), introduced Kupe as having been the first to discover Aotearoa New Zealand, later followed by Toi and later still by a Great Fleet of canoes by which Māori settled Aotearoa in approximately 1350 (Smith 1910).

This has been commonly accepted as a national Aotearoa New Zealand prehistory and it became incorporated in Māori oral tradition. Over time the presumption of a generalised mythology has been dismantled by further research, but the colonising damage has been done. Rich and diverse hapū (sub-tribe) oral traditions have been at least devalued if not lost to the power of minority world generalisations of Hawaiki, Kupe, Toi and the Great Fleet. Responsibility lies with researchers to understand that “researchers change that which they research... as well as themselves” (Harvey 2003).

Integrity in research necessarily calls for engagement with the researched peoples. Fourth world epistemology offers an opportunity for researchers, indigenous or otherwise, to ensure research for fourth world societies “will be a source of enrichment to their lives and not a source of depletion or denigration” (Weber-Pillwax 1999). Fourth world epistemology:

is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. (Wilson 2001)

Within this epistemology it is useful to identify three types of knowledge: traditional knowledge that is generational; empirical knowledge that is experiential; and revealed knowledge that is primarily supernatural, divulged through dreams, visions, intuition, and spiritual communication (Castellano 2000). Logos, or empirical knowledge is easily accepted within minority world methodologies, and the oral tradition is easily accepted within the framework of qualitative methods. However, mythos², that is

¹ I think, therefore I am.

² “Mythos” are ideas that cannot be verified or proved in an absolute way, which includes, but is not confined to mythology.

traditional and particularly revealed knowledge, does not fit within a minority world paradigm. It must be defined within its own paradigm, to avoid the threat that fourth world paradigms be regarded as “exotic” (Urion 1995) and additional to minority world paradigms.

Engaging fourth world paradigms

A challenge in Aotearoa New Zealand is that there are few (though increasing in number) Māori researchers. I expect that the challenge of working within a fourth world paradigm in any part of the world will initially be a workforce development issue. Working within a fourth world paradigm requires that “the researcher... know the cultural protocols, values, and beliefs of the indigenous group with which they are studying” (Steinhauer 2002). Consequently, fourth world researchers should ideally be responsible for fourth world research because “you are not just gaining information from people; you are sharing your information” (Wilson 2001).

However, in lieu of the ideal, all researchers can and must engage with fourth world paradigms. There are wonderful examples of Pākehā (non-Māori) researchers in Aotearoa New Zealand working relationally with Māori for beneficial research, such as Judith Binney’s *Mihaia* (Binney et al. 1979) and Anne Salmond’s *Hui* (1975). These are models for minority world researchers, and an encouragement to engagement.

The imperative for engagement with fourth world paradigms is to provide access to evidence that is considered more valid and reliable by researched fourth world societies. In the Aotearoa New Zealand context this is particularly related to the partnership principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, but more generally engagement with fourth world paradigms is directly relevant to Parts I, III, V, VI, VII and IX of the *Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNESCO 1993). If discrimination and oppression of fourth world peoples is to be ended (let alone resolved) it will require research that advocates for those communities.

The latter part of this paper is concerned with how researchers can engage with fourth world paradigms, in particular the use of mythos as evidence. This will be demonstrated in particular by a case study of the use of mythos in encouraging Māori to support smoking cessation among whānau (family) members through tikanga Auahi Kore (Smokefree customs/traditions) and then a general examination of Māori forms of mythos.

A case study: tikanga Auahi Kore

Māori have exceptionally high smoking rates. In comparison with OECD countries’ smoking rates, Māori smoking rates in 2002 (49 percent) were higher than Turkey (47 percent in 1995), which has the highest smoking rate in the OECD.³ Additionally, in Aotearoa New Zealand since 1990, the smoking rates for Māori have remained constant while those for New Zealand Europeans and other ethnic groups have

³ The definition of ‘smoker’ may differ between countries so comparisons should be made with caution.

declined. Latterly, tobacco control initiatives have failed to lower overall Māori smoking rates (TQG 2004).

In an attempt to address this disparity, the tikanga Auahi Kore research set out to communicate within a fourth world paradigm that Māori traditionally have high regard for their bodies and particularly their breath and therefore smoking is not culturally appropriate.

The key risk (likely to be relevant to any fourth world research project) for The Quit Group undertaking this research as a national smoking cessation provider is the same risk that Smith succumbed to above: using hapū-based mythos as a national generalization. This has been mediated by engagement with kaumātua (learned elders) involved in the tobacco control sector, but most importantly by both using nationally communicated mythos and carefully acknowledging that hapū may well have different tikanga (customs/traditions) for this kaupapa (subject), and encouraging the communication of those local traditions in preference to our research.

Establishing that smoking is a breach of the tikanga that treats breath and the body as tapu (restricted/inaccessible) lead us to the foundational mythos about the creation of Hine-ahu-one⁴, the first created being.

Tāne Mahuta (the deity of forests and humanity) was responsible for the creation of the first being, and in some hapū this is a man called Tiki, and among many hapū, a woman. The reasons vary from hapū to hapū for his decision to create another being. The location of his creative act also varied, be it at a beach or at the genital area of Papatuanuku (the earth mother of Māori mythos). What seems to be commonly held by those who share this mythos is that Tāne gave life to this creation through a hongī (pressing of noses and sharing of breath) and the recital of an ancient karakia (chant/prayer) (Orbell 1995):

Tihei mauri ora, ki te whai ao, ki te Ao Mārama

Behold the breath of life, strive for the new world, the world of light (TPK 1995).

For the purposes of tikanga Auahi Kore, it is the hongī and karakia that are particularly pertinent. They communicate that every breath is precious, is a creative act that Māori people share with Tāne, and is the reason why Māori hongī when we greet each other. We literally share our life-breath with the other person. Consequently, we communicated in our research that it follows that smoking, a health damaging act, violates that gift of breath.

Māori mythos

The case study is one example of the use in mythos to address a fourth world population in a relevant manner on a public-health issue. The possibilities of application of fourth world paradigms will go as far as researchers wish to go. The

⁴ Throughout the research it was clear that different hapū have differing names and spellings (which often give differing emphases to the mythos) for Hine-ahu-one, and that some hapū do not use this mythos at all.

example above is one form of mythos in Māori tikanga, kōrero pūrākau, or mythological stories that communicate a deep truth about the Māori world view.

There are other forms of mythos that may prove just as relevant. Whakatauki (proverbs) and kīwaha (idioms) are either entry points into kōrero pūrākau or a reflection within themselves on issues of the day. Waiata, waiata tāhwito, waiata-aranga and haka (types of songs and dances) similarly communicate through music the Māori world view and experience. Karakia, Christian or tūturu Māori (traditional Māori), both give an insight to the supernatural world of Māori and particularly its holistic relationship with other aspects of life. Tā moko (tattooing of the body and face) and mahi toi (arts) are other forms of Māori evidence that communicate a variety of themes for those who take the time to learn their meaning.

Mythos is compelling evidence within a Māori paradigm. However, the right to engage is directly related to the researcher accepting the obligations of working within the Māori paradigm. This requires the researcher to be undertaking Kaupapa Māori research. There are four key features to this:

- it is undertaken in Māori language as this is the delivery system of the Māori world view;
- the researcher must become powerless and accept the role of manuhiri (guest) so as to legitimate the sovereignty of the tāngata whenua (the people of the land). This requires that the research process be offered as a koha (offering of acknowledgement) to the tāngata whenua;
- the researcher accepts the role and obligations as a member of the whānau of the tāngata whenua, that is identifies with the tāngata whenua;
- the process must be subject to spiral discourse, to a consensus model that repositions knowledge, such that it become matauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). (Cameron 2004)

Conclusions

Minority world and fourth world paradigms sit apart, differentiated by their individualist and relational epistemologies. Commonly, minority world paradigms have disempowered and colonised fourth world peoples such as occurred in Percy Smith's work.

It is generally accepted that a change is needed. Fourth world epistemology offers an opportunity for researchers to ensure their research is relevant and enriching for fourth world societies. Fourth world epistemology is identified by three types of knowledge: traditional; empirical; and revealed knowledge. Mythos, that is traditional and particularly revealed knowledge, will not fit within minority world paradigms. Consequently, researchers need to engage with fourth world paradigms.

An avenue for engagement lies with the use of mythos as evidence. The case study demonstrated the use of mythos in the area of smoking cessation to research a more relevant smokefree message for Māori. The case study is but one avenue of mythos in

a Māori paradigm. Other areas include kōrero pūrākau, whakatauaki and kīwaha, waiata, waiata tāhwito, waiata-a-ringa and haka, karakia and tā moko and mahi toi.

To use mythos is directly related to the researcher undertaking Kaupapa Māori research, of which there are four features: Māori language; powerlessness; whānau obligations; and a consensus process.

Fourth world paradigms are yet to be fully accepted or used in research. Yet fourth world communities, who have lost faith in minority world processes and outcomes, await this approach. The challenge for researchers established in a minority world is to accept the guidance of fourth world peoples out into te ao mārama, the world of light, understanding and enlightenment.

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