Creativity and institutional innovation in intercultural research

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Abstract: As researchers build interdisciplinary and international teams to ensure global reach and relevance, challenges encountered in intercultural research are increasing. Sophisticated forms of methodological plurality are engaged and comprehensive multi-method approaches utilized to address complexities involved in such research programmes. The focus of this article is to offer insights into qualitative intercultural research based on current and past individual and team experiences. In doing so, I hope to shed light onto questions raised such as, in what ways are qualitative methodologies in intercultural research any different to other research processes? Are there any points of differentiation worth considering? What might make a highly contextualised intercultural study by an individual different from a large globally based research team operating across and within many societies?

The primary purpose of this article is to elucidate the dynamics of intercultural research from a Māori perspective. Challenges and opportunities in different institutional contexts are raised along with design and procedural issues. A metaphorical framework "haka in the ballroom, waltzing on the marae" is offered to enable the structuring of reflection. Haka represents the challenges involved in amplifying a Māori ontology in the Western academy which is symbolised by the ballroom. Waltzing signifies engagement with complementary approaches to research. The marae represents Māori institutions that hold Māori researchers accountable to broad communities of practice and engagement. Whilst the metaphorical framework highlights both difference and complementarity, this article argues that the space in which intercultural research occurs is dynamic, requires flexibility, intellectual creativity and institutional innovation.

Keywords: Indigenous studies, intercultural research; Māori

Introduction: "haka in the ballroom, waltzing on the marae"

The haka signifies the challenges involved in amplifying a Māori social ontology in intercultural research. Haka are associated with Māori forms of song and dance. Teams of performers express challenge, welcome, exultation and defiance. As sophisticated compositions, haka integrate the physical, elemental, and spiritual. They are purposively designed to be disciplined, vigorous, emotional, emotive, passionate, motivational and imaginative. In an international context, haka in various forms, are associated with sports, creative, business and political events.

The ballroom represents the Western academy. Ballrooms are elegant architectural masterpieces, symbolic and real expressions of creative endeavour. Ballrooms are public arenas as is the Western academy, but in the latter, the emphasis is on intellectual debate. These debates are designed to raise levels of inquiry. Academic rigour, originality and creativity are valued. Like ballrooms, the Western academy is a highly charged political arena. Whilst not as overtly grand as ballrooms, institutionally and via various rituals, they can have a sense of panache and pageantry. Ballrooms are also a scene for romantic dalliances and "ivory tower" forms of romanticism are sometimes associated with academia.

The waltz expresses a preparedness to engage in complementary methodological approaches in intercultural research. The waltz as a musical composition is graceful. It is also a structured, elegant and measured dance of fluid expression (Fantel, 1971).The metaphorical framework extends to waltzing on the marae to indicate a shift in both dance and context.

The marae represents Māori institutions included in an intercultural research programme. The marae, like the ballroom, plays an important role in highlighting contextual and institutional differences as the dance itself changes from haka to waltz. Further to this, the Māori term for research is 'mahi rangahau'**.** Thus the marae encompasses the rituals and ceremonies that take place that reinforce the "hau" or reciprocal nature of research. Respect for the significance of ancestral, spiritual and cultural aspects in Māori social engagement across all institutions is a key feature of research in practice.

Finally, researchers often undertake research holding multiple frames of reference. Biases can be self-evident in the overall framing of inquiries. Researchers may also face personal challenges along the way. On an individual level, the marae represents a centrepoint for reinforcing a sense of cultural, social and spiritual self.

Amplifying a Māori social ontology

A real challenge of intercultural research involves finding ways to design and develop research programmes on terms and articulated in ways that resonate with the worldview(s) and real needs of the researcher(s) and their communities of interest, engagement and practice (Wolfgramm, 2007). Worldviews reflect and imply different grounds for understanding the social world and can thus influence both the approach to and development of theory (Goia & Pitre, 1990; Little Bear, 2000). This is important, particularly as social scientists generate research that articulates a view of the world consistent with their underlying assumptions relegating the need to test these fundamental assumptions to the margins (Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

However, Gergen (1992) argued that as theorists we must make sense and this will require engaging with cultural norms of intelligibility. This article argues that the amplification of a Māori ontology will highlight cultural intelligibilities that guide and inform ways of articulating, expanding, elaborating, and synthesizing knowledge. The objective is to consider how this may lead into new realms of thinking about research and theory development (Gergen, 1992). This approach may also challenge taken for granted assumptions that researchers bring at the outset of designing intercultural research.

In a Māori ontology, knowledge does not emerge from within relatively recent Western designed academies. Rather the genesis begins with understanding that knowledge emerges from within a worldview. Interconnectedness of the spiritual, human and physical world are fundamental features of a Māori worldview forming the basis of a Māori ontology and epistemology. Principles of this worldview include Te Āo Marama and Te Āo Hurihuri. Te Āo Marama refers to the world of light and enlightenment. Knowledge development is a dynamic and organic process in which learner and learned interact within a cosmos, one that is as defined and specialised or as broad and encompassing as one chooses. Te Āo Hurihuri refers to the changing world and is a term that embodies recognition that the world is at one level always changing, whilst at another, holds constant universal principles. These principles inform and are applied to areas including research, knowledge generation and creative processes (Barlow, 1991; Durie, 1998; Kawharu, 1989; King, 1997; Marsden, 2003; Metge 1976, 1995; Moko-Mead, 2003; Henare, 2003, 2001; Henry & Pene, 2001; Royal, 2002; Salmond, 1985, 1991; Walker, 1991). A Māori theory of vitalism (Henare, 2001, Marsden, 2003) also recognises tapu (potentiality), mana (ancestral authority and efficacy), mauri (unique life forces), wairua (spirit) and hau (reciprocal energies in exchange relationships).

In communicating the relevance of this perspective in research, Marsden argues that in order to express and understand Māoritanga, passionate subjectivity and a taste for reality are important (Marsden, 2003). Tewa scholar, Gregory Cajete concurs, viewing objective abstraction as both an intellectual and real trap that could lead to an atrophy of human sensibilities to such an extent that nature's voices become tuned out (Cajete, 2000). Bohm and Peat advanced the argument that intense passion and vibrant tension are necessary for stimulating and sustaining the kinds of energies needed for creative perception in the generation of ideas, knowledge and thought (Bohm & Peat, 1987).

Consistent with amplifying a Māori ontology in intercultural research, consideration of Kaupapa Māori theory is vital (Bishop, 1996, 2005, Pihama, Cram & Walker, 2002, Smith, 1996; Smith, 1999, 2005). According to Smith, there are three critical features of Kaupapa Māori Theory; resistance, conscientisation and transformation, all of which occur at individual, collective and societal levels (Smith, 1996). Kaupapa Māori research relates to being Māori, is connected to Māori philosophy and principles, takes for granted the validity and legitimacy of Māori, the importance of Māori language and culture, and is concerned with the struggle for autonomy and ownership of cultural well-being (Smith, 1999).

A Kaupapa Māori approach identifies complexity involved when one is a researcher, collaborator, change agent and participant in transformative process. The approach allows for the structuring of assumptions, values, concepts and orientations to emerge that resonate with the researcher. When engaged, Kaupapa Māori operationalizes cultural aspirations, understandings and practices important to Māori (Ruwhiu & Wolfgramm, 2005). As Bishop states:

> …researchers in Kaupapa Māori contexts are repositioned in such a way as to no longer need to seek to give voice to others, but rather to listen to and participate with those traditionally othered as constructors of meanings of their own experiences and agents of knowledge. It is only when nothing is desired for the self, not even the desire to empower someone, that complete attention and participation in 'kinship' terms is possible. (Bishop, 1996, p. 77).

Kaupapa Māori research is thus a culturally attuned instrument which enables investigation and understanding of an Indigenous worldview and it is also a transformative research approach that provides for culturally informed theory building (Ruwhiu & Wolfgramm, 2005). In practice, this may require giving fuller consideration to the experiences of individuals beyond the immediacy of singular contexts particularly given the holistic nature of social engagement of Māori. For example, in a study of Māori organisations, Puketapu (2000) found that the contexts of the term Kaupapa Māori can change in foundation and meaning depending on the researchers own whakapapa (kin based), or the nature of the kaupapa (foundational and strategic objectives) of the organisation under study (Puketapu, 2000; Metge, 1976, 1995).

In terms of performing a "haka in the ballroom", taking ownership of these facets of a Māori ontology can be liberating. The haka enhances and enables one to better cope with challenges involved in deconstructing intellectual barriers and rearticulating knowledge that centres a Māori worldview (Wolfgramm, 2007). Henry and Pene (2001) note that Kaupapa Māori research is sensitive to Māori ontology, epistemology, and methodology, as it focuses' on issues of empowerment and legitimation of alternative worldviews. Having a somewhat defiant attitude that reflects a preparedness to challenge institutional and intellectual norms and barriers, real and perceived is important.

Institutional innovation in the ballroom

In the Western academy, progressive research occurs within institutionalised contexts that presume cultural neutrality, objectivity and rationality. Whilst the study of ideologies is important, knowledge production that is not situated within paradigms of Western rationality and logic is often critiqued as being cultural relativist, postmodern, semiological, regressive and essentialist. For example, with respect to Kaupapa Māori theory, Marie asserts it is all of the above and insubstantive, a socially necessary illusion that reifies Māori culture creating new forms of intellectual elitism (Marie, 2000).

In contrast, Smith has argued that the academy be a location for decolonisation (Smith, 2000). Decolonisation in the academy allows real opportunities for intellectual progression. However, it is challenging and involves transformation and innovation in institutional structures and power bases alongside strategic use of resources.

The growth of Māori based research centres in Western academies and purpose designed Māori tertiary institutions over the past decades is evidence of the results of a form of decolonisation in Western academies. Political lobbying, spearheaded by Māori intellectuals has also played a role with government now introducing policy initiatives and incentives developed to encourage and facilitate intercultural research at local (Āotearoa New Zealand) and international levels. Such advances are significant and the results of intercultural research programmes and initiatives important in the context of national relevance and global reach.

Thus, from a Māori perspective, intercultural research has required a high level of flexibility, intellectual creativity, institutional innovation and often the creation of entirely new institutional forms. In this space, freedom of expression, critique of society, multiplicity of voices, stances and power-sharing occur in the co-creation and development of new knowledge. Only then does the academy become a public arena where new intellectual and academic traditions flourish (Henry & Pene, 2001).

Waltzing partnerships in intercultural research

For Māori and indigenous researchers, refuting benefits of complementary methodologies in progressing knowledge is not entirely satisfactory. Māori and indigenous peoples continue to benefit from multiple advances in science, health, medicine, business and technology. Therefore, I argue, that in extending the realms of knowledge creation and development, it is important to consider research methodologies and engage research methods that complement a Kaupapa Māori approach. To articulate this process, I extend the metaphorical framework from “haka in the ballroom” to “waltzing on the marae”. Waltzing involves partnerships and is an excellent metaphor to engage in order to extend the discussion on the dynamics of intercultural research.

Such an approach implies methodological plurality and in intercultural research this is accompanied by several challenges (Pringle, Wolfgramm & Henry, in press). Firstly, it is a considered approach that requires confidence. There are also paradigmatic controversies and potential contradictions associated with methodological plurality (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). However, harmonising approaches enables researchers involved in qualitative intercultural research to retain integrity to their own worldviews in paths of inquiry. This is relevant particularly as a primary goal of qualitative research is to generate holistic and realistic descriptions and/or explanations of phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Martin, 2002).

Given these points, it is possible to engage in intercultural research that simultaneously amplifies a Māori worldview and engages complementary approaches when situated within a

participatory paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, 6.1-6.5 pp.256-263; Wolfgramm, 2007). In a participatory paradigm, ontological realities are co-created in a subjective objective interface and the process occurs within a cosmological framework with researchers both suspending and engaging multiple perspectives.

Furthermore, participatory action research involves according recognition, honour and value to the realities of lived experiences (Brown, 1993; Heron & Reason, 1997; McNiff, 2000; McTaggart, Henry & Johnson, 1997). From a Māori perspective, this encompasses expressions of tino rangatiratanga (sovereign self determination), wairuatanga (spirituality), manaakitanga (generosity) self and collective efficacy. It includes valuing, respecting and enhancing the mana that already exists within communities of engagement. It is also important to acknowledge 'whakapapa' (genealogy) ancestral efficacy and whanaungatanga (kin and kaupapa based collectives) as participation involves co-creating a sense of shared ownership of the research process and outcomes.

In addition, a participatory process allows the researcher's voice to emerge through self-reflective action and enables the voice of co-participants to illuminate theory through a variety of presentational forms including narrative (Reason, 1994, 1999; Rhodes & Brown, 2005; Rosaldo, 1994). More generally, action research is an important form of personal and collective learning for social benefit, a practice undertaken collaboratively (McNiff & Whitehead, 2000). Collaborative action inquiry resonates with a Kaupapa Māori approach as knowledge is considered living phenomena situated within communities of interest and practice in which processes and outcomes favour transformative action.

Exploratory reflexive action research is another approach as, in this context, it allows for a Māori understanding of the "unfolding" nature of knowledge creation (Ruwhiu & Wolfgramm, 2005). Reflexivity is useful as it enables an open play of reflection across and within various levels of interpretation, is multidimensional and organic (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2003).

Sophisticated approaches in qualitative research also include interpretive, naturalist, narrative, artful inquiry, visual, symbolic interactionism and critical hermeneutics (Barry, 1996; Bates 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Jeffcut, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Martin, 2002; Stratti, 1998; Van Maneen, 1996). As a process, qualitative research gives preference to personal, face-to-face and immediate interactions. It is focused on understanding a given social setting, and requires researchers to stay in settings over time. The length of time differs with some researchers preferring fast ethnography combined with various types of quantitative methods over lengthier longitudinal based case studies. Irrespective of choice, qualitative design requires researchers to become the research instrument. Role descriptions and recognition of researchers' own biases' and ideological preferences is generally fairly transparent. Unlike extrapolating from fixed data, qualitative design often involves ongoing data analysis with researchers' developing models or frameworks based on what occurred in a given social setting (Janesick, 1994).

While it has been important to recognise the contributions qualitative methodologies and methods make to intercultural research, such approaches have not necessarily derived from historical, cultural or spiritual foundations encountered by and in Māori and indigenous contexts (Henry & Pene, 2001). Yet Denzin and Lincoln now argue that seeking an imaginative form of qualitative inquiry in the 21st century will require grounding the self in a sense of the sacred that connects dialogically to nature and the worldly environment. Such a model of inquiry seeks a sacred epistemology that recognizes the essential ethical unity between mind and nature. The research endeavour is situated in a non-competitive, non-hierarchical relationship to earth, nature and the wider world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Given the above discussion, the metaphorical framework "waltzing on the marae" presents a case for plurality in intercultural qualitative research that includes participatory action research in which ontological positioning is co-created and inter-subjective. The epistemological orientation reflects inter subjectivity in participatory transaction within a cosmos. Reflexivity, interpretive, naturalist, narrative, artful inquiry, visual, symbolic interactionism and critical hermeneutics are also considered complementary methodologies. An indeterministic, non-reductionist approach is important to enable insights and explanations of events to unfold organically. Active cultural interpretations, meanings assumptions underlying behaviour and organizing processes are then revealed in their own ways.

Marae as Māori institutional contexts: Reciprocity in research

Thus far I have explained that the waltz represents opportunities to engage in complementary methodologies in qualitative based intercultural research. However, as noted previously, as the dance shifts from haka to waltz, so to does the context from ballroom to marae. In elucidating contrasts between Western academies represented by the ballroom and Māori institutions signified by marae, this article notes that Māori institutions have particular norms of behaviour and types of social and cultural etiquette enacted through rituals and protocols. These are encapsulated in the term tikanga. Rules of engagement may often be negotiated but tikanga is fundamentally respected. Behaviour and activities are designed to reinforce a sense of self (whakapapa) identity, wairuatanga (spirituality) and whanangatanga (belonging).

In terms of research, native science and specialisation in Māori society occurred within institutional environments that maintained the holistic plurality implicit in a Māori worldview. For example, this is manifested corporeally in the marae. Marae are designed to be cultural epi-centres, havens for holding taonga or living treasures such as carvings and associated knowledge deemed of high significance to Māori. Some tribes may have up to 24 different marae in there districts. Marae also include whare tipuna or ancestral abodes, and marae atea or communal spaces where ceremonies and rituals take place. Whare wananga or learning institutions are also a feature of Marae playing an important role in learning, teaching and transmitting traditional and contemporary forms of general and expert knowledge. Urupa or burial grounds are often adjacent or close by Marae. If the marae is part of a papakainga, residences for the elders are also to be found. Buildings are often adorned or dressed with whakairo (carvings), whariki (patterned and woven narratives) and kowhaiwhai (figurative paintings). Such taonga or living treasures transmit knowledge making multiple connections between the human, the environment and the spiritual worlds.

On marae, the "how" is linked to the "why" and often reinforced on a daily basis. Practices and rituals such as powhiri or welcome and blessing ceremonies inclusive of haka (dance) waiata (song), karakia (prayers, incantations) and whaikorero (speeches usually by esteemed orators) appropriate to the occasion, are processes that remind, reinforce, elucidate and illuminate the importance of active participation. As Henare argued, the dynamics of Māori spirituality and religion can best be understood through a study of the culture and its practices via observations and participation in outward manifestations (Henare, 2003).

As marae represents Māori institutions more broadly in this metaphorical framework, there are several points to be made. First, Māori expectations of reciprocity are consistent with the Māori term for research (mahi rangahau) where 'hau' is the ethic of reciprocity. Secondly, marae encapsulate collective forms of engagement that are consistent across Māori institutions. This collectivity rests on the notion that individual gain is achieved with the community, not detached from it. Such an approach to research contrasts sharply with the overt and sometimes aggressive promotion of the individual in the Western academy. From the perspective of an individual Māori researcher, the complexities of intercultural research may be significant given the community of engagement may include numerous local

organisations and extend to a very broad global group of stakeholders (Wolfgramm, 2007). Finally, just as marae have evolved over time to meet the changing needs and demands of Māori society so to is innovation evident in many Māori institutions operating in political, economic, social and cultural arenas (Walker, 1990, Wolfgramm, 2007). This institutional innovation is occurring against the backdrop of a transforming Māori and national society in New Zealand.

Whilst such innovations are in most instances positive, the "waltz on the marae" can become challenging for Māori researchers because the terms and rules of engagement shift and expectations are sometimes made ambiguous in the transforming spaces. These issues are not Māori specific as institutions moving through significant growth cycles face similar challenges. A positive consequence of this is the need for a high degree of flexibility as researchers often have to adapt quickly to accommodate change. In turn, this has led to the creation of entirely new institutional processes. By contrast, the ballroom may appear relatively stable, with well established rules of engagement and clearly defined roles and expectations. Hence reinventing new types of norms and practices based on tikanga and kaupapa Māori and embedding them within Western academies has become important for Māori in academia.

Conclusion

Interdisciplinary research with global reach and relevance has increased the demand for intercultural research. One consequence of this is an increase in challenges and opportunities when approaching intercultural research from diverse ontological perspectives.

This article offers insights into these issues by focusing on qualitative approaches in intercultural research. The metaphorical framework "haka in the ballroom, waltzing on the marae" is presented to elucidate challenges and opportunities of intercultural research from a Māori perspective. The haka metaphor involved amplification of a Māori ontology in the Western academy or ballroom. Waltzing signified a willingness to engage in complementary methodologies with the marae representing Māori institutional contexts. This metaphorical framework is designed to capture intellectual movement and dynamism in intercultural research.

Creativity, flexibility and institutional innovation are seen as critical features of intellectual progression. The proliferation of Māori based research centres in Western academies and purpose designed Māori tertiary institutions over the past decades are evidence of political and economic triumphs made possible through intercultural research, knowledge creation and intellectual progression. Such advances are significant and the results of intercultural research programmes and initiatives emerging from these innovative new institutions important in the context of national relevance and global reach.

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