Imagining better communities: doing research differently in local and global contexts

Tuesday, 20 June 2017, 09:30 – 16:00

My Place, St Ann's Road, Rotherham, S65 1PH

Our Speakers

Nēpia Mahuika:

"Te Toa Takitini": Asserting the "Our" and "We" of Community Research.

In the Māori world of Aotearoa New Zealand, "te toa takitini" is an adage that highlights the importance of the collective in any one person's success, research, or aspirations. In community research, this is crucial because it reminds us that we are part of the collective "we" and "our" of the communities that welcome and enable us. This paper explores the notion of asserting the collective "we" and "our" as a crucial aspect of community research. How might we navigate insider/outsider binaries of power; and how do give voice to the chorus of our community? This paper draws on oral history research undertaken within my own tribal community of Ngāti Porou, and pays specific attention to the ethics and practices prevalent to that research as a project driven by the needs and aspirations of our people – te toa takitini (the many). It considers the way we undertake historical research with our communities, the rules, ethics, and aims that are key to amplifying a collective vision for who we have been, are, and who we want to become.

Rangiemarie Mahuika:

The Sacred Responsibility of Researchers in the Articulation of our Research 'Stories'

Academic research is a serious business. Researchers, who in these contemporary times are required to defend the importance and significance of their studies in order to receive appropriate funding and support may feel that the description of their work as mere 'stories' minimises the potential contributions their research might make. I would argue that such individuals should reconsider their understanding of what a story is, and the influence mere stories can have in changing our world.

In this paper I want to engage with the idea of research as a story with the power to construct identities. The paper will explore some of my own experiences around the importance of the stories we tell, the ways in which they shape and influence our identities and the identities of others and the significance of the role of researchers within all of this. Although ambitious, the paper seeks to encourage all researchers to take seriously the responsibility we have to the communities we work with and those who will engage with our work.

Ani Mikaere:

Keeping research honest: what happens when the community controls the academy?

Within most tertiary education institutions, the "community" is referred to as though it sits apart from the academic environment. Research is regarded primarily as an academic pursuit, often conducted in relative isolation. Where projects are carried out with community participation, the work is typically conducted in accordance with rules of engagement that have been established by the institution involved, according to its own definitions of ethical behaviour. Overarching control almost always rests with the academics, who often assume that their involvement validates the research.

How is the activity of research understood in a tertiary education institution that was born out of— and that regards itself as directly accountable to—the community whose needs and aspirations it was created to fulfil? Te Wānanga o Raukawa is such an institution, established by a confederation of three Māori nations[1] as part of a deliberate strategy to ensure their survival as distinctive peoples within Aotearoa/New Zealand and the world. This environment renders any academic/community distinction largely meaningless and turns the usual academic presumptions about validation on its head: at Te Wānanga o Raukawa the validity of any research is reliant, first and foremost, on the approval of its founding community. This presentation will explore some ramifications of this approach.

Biographies

Dr Nēpia Mahuika is a Māori scholar, with tribal affiliations to Ngāti Porou and Waikato Tainui. He is a Senior Lecturer in history at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, and teaches courses in Historical Method and Theory, New Zealand History, Oral History, and Māori and Indigenous Histories. His doctoral thesis focused on oral history form, theory, politics and practice. He is a Fulbright scholar, chair of the National Māori Historian's Collective, and is the current President of the National Oral History Association of New Zealand.

Rangimarie Mahuika is a Maori scholar of Ngati Rangiwewehi, Ngati Whakaue, and Te Rarawa descent. She has an interdisciplinary background as a trained Lawyer and Primary school teacher. She has a Masters in Education and lectured on Kaupapa Maori research theory and method within the School of Education at the University of Waikato. She is very much looking forward to completing her Doctorate within the Te Piringa Faculty of Law at Waikato University this year, which focuses on the evolution of governance within the tribal nation of Ngati Rangiwewehi. Rangimarie has been actively involved in a wide range of research projects within her tribal community in Ngati Rangiwewehi and is passionate about the importance of prioritising the needs of the collective over the needs of the individual researcher.

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[1] Te Wānanga o Raukawa was established in 1981 by Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Raukawa and Ngāti Toa Rangatira, as part of a planning strategy that strove to prepare the three iwi for the 21st century and beyond.

Ani Mikaere is Kaihautū (Director) of Te Kāhui Whakatupu Mātauranga (the Centre for the Reclamation, protection and expansion of Māori knowledge) at the iwi-based tertiary institution, Te Wānanga O Raukawa, in Ōtaki, Aotearoa. She has recently completed a thesis in fulfilment of the most senior degree offered by that institution, Te Kāurutanga, which considers the extent to which Ngāti Raukawa thought has been influenced by Pākehā thinking. Her publications include *The Balance Destroyed* (International Research Institute for Māori and Indigenous Education, 2003) and *He Rukuruku, Whakaro: Colonising Myths, Māori Realities* (Huia Publishers and Te Tākupu, 2011).

Kate Pahl, **Professor of Literacies in Education at the University of Sheffield and Principal Investigator of the Imagine project.**

Kate Pahl is Professor of Literacies in Education at the University of Sheffield. Her book, 'Materializing Literacies in Communities' (2014) is about with everyday literacy practices in community settings. Kate's work is concerned with arts and humanities methodologies in community contexts with a focus on co-production and site specific work.

Zanib Rasool, Development and Partnership Manager with Rotherham United Community Sports Trust

Zanib Rasool MBE, has worked for 30 years in the voluntary/community sector, currently working at Rotherham United Community Sports Trust as Partnerships and Development Manager. She is also a chair of a children's centre, vice chair of a primary school in Rotherham, and also a member of Nexus Multi Academy Trust in Rotherham. She is chair of Rotherham Independent hate crime scrutiny panel.

Zanib is currently undertaking a Doctorate in Education at the University of Sheffield. She is a community researcher on the Sheffield University collaborative project, 'The social, historical, cultural and democratic context of civic engagement: Imagining different communities and making them happen,'. She is also co-editor of Re-Imagining Contested Communities (Connecting Rotherham through research) book to be published in 2017. She was researcher on 'Threads of time', a co-produced participatory arts project. She is Community Co-Iinvestigator of the project 'Taking Yourselves Seriously: artistic approaches to social cohesion'. Zanib is currently exploring ways in which artistic methodologies can support community led research with a focus on the life trajectories of women from Pakistani heritage backgrounds.

The Imagine Project

The Imagine project looks at the way people engage with their communities and with wider society through taking an active role in civic life. It brings together researchers from community and university settings on the theme of 'imagining different communities and making them happen' and asks questions about how communities can work to create change by drawing on their own histories, lived experience and cultures.