Indigenous engagement, research partnerships, and knowledge mobilisation

Think Piece

Giovanna Fassetta and Maria Grazia Imperiale

University of Glasgow
School of Education
UNESCO-RILA Chair

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration
through Languages and the Arts,
University of Glasgow,
United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland

Executive Summary

This Think Piece provides a critical reflection on international development research with Indigenous peoples, including considerations of engagement, research partnerships, and knowledge mobilisation. It starts from a review of recent academic and grey literature on research with Indigenous peoples, highlighting the main themes that emerged and focussing, in particular, on the ways in which participation and engagement are conceptualised and operationalised in the studies considered. The review shows that, while the underpinning ethos of research with Indigenous communities is to contribute to social justice by legitimising Indigenous ways of knowing and by arguing for Indigenous rights, effective and full engagement and participation of Indigenous peoples is not easily achieved.

Gaps in current research with Indigenous communities are identified by the think piece around three main points: insufficient considerations of diversity between and within Indigenous communities; lack of open and frank reflection on challenges or missteps or ineffective practices; lack of clarity on the ways in which methods are adapted to contexts and participants' characteristics, and of the ways in which the information gathered is processed, translated and disseminated.

Moving from the gaps identified, the Think Piece offers suggestions on capacity building needs and guidelines for best practice. It concludes with a set of recommendations for research with Indigenous communities, endorsing research that:

- Refers to existing guidelines on ethics in research with Indigenous people and communities;
- Prioritises questions or problems raised by Indigenous communities;
- Demonstrates full inclusion of Indigenous people at all stages of the research process;
- Aligns with Indigenous knowledge systems and processes;
- Considers issues of researcher positionality and power imbalance and provides clear processes for assessment and reflexivity throughout.
- Is grounded on the specific research context, ensuring that it is tailored to the communities and groups it aims to engage, considering diversity between and within communities.
- Identifies the most appropriate research methods for the problem or questions to be explored in close collaboration with Indigenous peoples and communities.
- Clearly illustrates the ways in which the information collected will be analysed and translated into action and dissemination and the role of Indigenous participants at this stage.
- Demonstrates an intersectional approach, considering the diverse experiences, capabilities and needs that exist within an Indigenous community (e.g. gender, age, (dis)ability, sexuality, socio-economic background).
- Takes into consideration the role of language(s) throughout a research project, including: the role of Indigenous languages and other semiotic systems; how these are used at different stages of research; how they are translated for a wider audience and what happens in the process of translation; the role of interpreters and translators and whether this is inscribed in Indigenous systems of knowledge and/or processes.
- Works with Indigenous people to explore the use of digital tools in research and the ways in which they can be combined with traditional knowledge systems and practices.
- Includes an interdisciplinary dimension, essential to ensure a holistic approach to research.
- Engages, whenever possible, international collaborators with substantial experience and knowledge of research with Indigenous people in order to build capacity.

Preamble

This Think Piece strongly advocates Indigenous participation at all stages of research as the only way to ensure engagement, knowledge mobilisation and sustainable impact. However, neither of us, authors of this piece, comes from an Indigenous background, and we are aware of the contradiction this entails, and we wish to acknowledge that this is a limitation of this work. What we have been able to offer, to partly redress this shortcoming, is our substantial experience of conducting participatory research and action research in ODA countries, working with participants for whom past colonisation still reverberates in daily life, but also with participants for whom colonisation is still an everyday occurrence. We hope that our experience and understanding, together with the impressive range of insights, knowledge and expertise we have accessed while researching this piece, means that the points we make here will be useful to spark reflections and encourage conversations around ways of working that aim to make a real difference.

Giovanna Fassetta and Maria Grazia Imperiale

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Introduction

The UN definition of 'Indigenous peoples' includes around 370 million people who are spread across 70 countries worldwide (UN Factsheet, ND). Indigenous peoples "[…] have been present for thousands of years, preserving their language, traditions, culture and livelihoods […]" (FAO, 2016). Historically, Indigenous populations have been subjected to the colonisation of their land and culture and deprived of sovereignty by the colonisers. Far from being a thing of the past, "[…] imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly" (Smith, 2012: 20) and contributes to marginalise Indigenous communities, their knowledges and practices. The term 'Indigenous peoples' thus represents a very broad category, internally diverse, one that is brought together by common experiences of colonisation, and by their struggle for self-determination, for rights to ancestral lands and natural resources, and for the protection and revitalisation of their knowledge systems, spiritual beliefs, customs and languages (FAO, 2016).

Indigenous people possess invaluable knowledge of practices for the sustainable management of natural resources, and hold their own diverse concepts of development, based on traditional values, visions, needs and priorities (UN Factsheet, ND). Attempts by researchers to tap into Indigenous knowledge systems, however, often come across reluctance and barriers, as historically research practice has been, for many Indigenous peoples, synonymous with being colonised, with Western appropriation of land and resources and, more recently, also with attempts to commodify Indigenous knowledge (Sillitoe, 2015; Briggs, 2013). This is an element that researchers, in particular non-Indigenous researchers, need to be aware of - and critically engage with - when planning work with Indigenous communities (Tilley, 2017). 'Extractive' models of research have further alienated Indigenous people and communities, since they find they have little say on the issues being studied, are not always included in the communications of findings or the shaping of outcomes, and often do not see any lasting benefits from the research they are asked to be part of. It is therefore unsurprising if, as several authors point out (e.g. Smith, 2012; Sillitoe, 2015), indigenous communities are weary of researchers and unwilling to engage in research projects.

In the next sections we summarise our review of some of the most recent literature that discusses research with Indigenous peoples, highlighting recurrent experiences and narratives as well as the gaps we have identified. Following on from this, we explore needs for capacity building in relation to research with Indigenous communities; list some guidelines for best practice; and identify potential criteria for the funding of international development research that aligns with these practices.

Approach to the literature review

As a result of the breadth and the profusion of studies which engage with Indigenous knowledges in research, the literature review undertaken required a rigorous but also adaptable approach. We conducted an initial search on multiple databases, using a variety of keyword combinations (e.g. "Indigenous engagement" AND "research partnership"; "community based research" AND "Indigenous"; '"Indigenous methodologies" AND "research mobilisation") and limited the results to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2013 and the present, in order to cover the most recent literature.

Since we believe that the main points to be explored in the literature concern: research conceptualisation, design and processes of engagement, we extended our review beyond the field of international development, including all recent literature that clearly discusses ways of engaging Indigenous communities. We believe that adopting an inclusive approach allowed us to expand our understanding of the requirements for ethical and transformative research with Indigenous

communities and, in so doing, to offer an important overview that can inform research in international development projects.

We then reviewed the articles' abstracts and selected the articles that were more relevant to international development and to the aims of the Think Piece, excluding duplicates. The inclusion criteria were:

- Articles that provide examples of empirical research with Indigenous communities on a range of issues relevant to international development priorities;
- Conceptual papers and reviews of literature on Indigenous knowledge and methodologies;
- Literature that outlines best practice guidelines for research with Indigenous communities.

On completion of this initial search, we felt that some seminal publications published before 2013 (e.g. Smith, 2012) and grey literature produced by international and governmental agencies (e.g. the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), also needed to be included. Therefore, a selection of key works, regardless of date of publication, was added to the literature (for a full list of the works consulted, see Bibliography).

1. Main Themes

The extensive and multifaceted debates in the field – which covers different discipline areas, a great range of geographic settings, and sits between local specificities and a global dimension - make summarizing the literature that discusses research with Indigenous peoples quite a demanding task. We identified three broad recurrent themes in the literature reviewed, which will be discussed in detail in this section. The themes are:

a) Epistemologies
b) Methodology and ethics
c) Research methods

a) Epistemologies: bringing together Western and Indigenous knowledge systems.
 Several of the papers reviewed point out the tensions between Western and Indigenous knowledge systems, highlighting how academics and practitioners work with Indigenous communities from perspectives that privilege Western knowledge systems and Western knowledge-creation processes. Even when attempting to include Indigenous knowledges in research, this is often just as an add-on, or knowledge that needs to be validated by Western scientific understandings (Levac et al, 2018). However, several of the articles reviewed argue for the equal validity of Indigenous knowledges, while others support the development of cross-cultural understandings. For example, in relation to the field of traditional, complementary and alternative medicines (TCAM), Massey and Kirk (2015) note how support from the World Health Organization for TCAM has resulted in a view of Western and Indigenous knowledges as equally legitimate and valuable from a scientific point of view. In a similar vein, but in relation to research in the humanities and the social sciences, Levac et al (2018) propose a 'linking framework' that can reconcile and integrate Indigenous and Western ways of knowing. The work of Bartlett et al (2015) builds on the Indigenous notion of 'two eyed-seeing' (*Etuaptmumk*) to highlight the innovative opportunities and understandings that can emerge when two worldviews are brought together.

b) Methodology: participatory, relationship-based ways of working, and ethics.
Much of the literature reviewed addresses issues around methodology in research with Indigenous communities. Best practice guidelines developed in different geographical and disciplinary contexts propose similar principles to implement ethical research with Indigenous groups (e.g. FAO, 2016;

AIATSIS, 2012). There is consensus in all the guidelines about the need for research with Indigenous peoples to be collaborative and participatory. Theoretical and empirical literature also emphasise participatory methodologies and community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches as an essential premise for engagement, stressing the need for: consultation, negotiation, and mutual understanding; respect, recognition, and involvement; benefits, outcomes, and agreement (e.g. Snow et al, 2014; Levac et al, 2018; Sillitoe, 2015). Inclusion can be ensured by engaging Indigenous researchers as part of a research team, but also by involving participants as co-researchers (Burnette and Sanders, 2014). Most important, however, is the development of enduring relationships between researchers and the community they work with. These relationships need to be built on reciprocity and trust in order to allow the co-designing of research and a collaborative research agenda that meets the interests and needs of Indigenous communities (van der Water, 2016, Shordike et al, 2017). Collaborative and solid relationships, furthermore, allow authentic dialogue and intellectual critique to emerge, stimulating critical awareness on issues of power relations (Schech et al, 2015) within the research process and research team (Mikkonem et al, 2017) but also beyond it. Examples of rights-based research are found in environmental studies (e.g. Dodson, 2014, on conservation); land ownership (Pinedo, 2017); and in wellbeing-related intervention projects (e.g. Ugwu, 2017).

The ultimate aim of Indigenous research, as argued by Smith (2012), is to be ethical and transformative in an open quest for social justice. While most of the literature reviewed agrees to this in principle, several authors argue that the bureaucratic policies that govern universities' research ethics seldom align to the protocols to be followed in order to engage with indigenous communities (Taylor et al, 2018; Wilson et al., 2018; Banks et al., 2013; Tolich and Smith, 2014) creating mismatches and tensions between different requirements and expectations.

   c)   *Research Methods.*
 Several of the papers reviewed discuss the need to employ research methods that are adapted to Indigenous knowledge and practices (for a systematic review on indigenous methods, see Drawson et al., 2017). Levac et al (2018) list a series of Indigenous methodologies which includes, among others: storytelling, yarning (i.e. story circles), marae wānanga (i.e. meetings in traditional meeting houses where the researcher is welcomed as a guest, drawn from Maori daily life), art-based methods, critical and auto-ethnography. They also recommend approaching wisdom keepers (e.g. Elders) to ensure the respect of protocols and of Indigenous forms of organisation. Storytelling and digital storytelling (Cunsolo Willox et al, 2012), yarning (Walker et al, 2014) and story circles (Ferguson et al., 2018) – which may also include some visual prompts and photovoice techniques (Harvey Lemelin et al, 2013) are recommended as more suited to the oral approach of Indigenous knowledge, and as ways of establishing links between individual and community narratives (Williams, 2018). Narrative approaches, moreover, allow the exploration and representation of personal beliefs and values, through the sharing of stories and by using informal ways of conversing (Cunsolo Willox et al, 2012). Art-based methods, including the development of films (Orbach et al, 2015), theatre performances with Indigenous youths (Ritenburg et al, 2014), and participation in festivals (Phipps, 2016) are all ways to engage participants and to disseminate aesthetically-valuable research outputs (Camargo Plazas et al, 2018). Meeting Elders and participating in community meetings –as part of ethnographies – are considered ways of working which, despite the challenges that they can pose (Maiter et al., 2012), follow traditional protocols and constitute respectful and ethical research processes with Indigenous communities.

Virtually all the works reviewed use qualitative approaches, which are widely recommended as more appropriate in research with Indigenous communities since they are more in line with Indigenous practices and holistic ways of knowing. However, a small number of the studies reviewed discuss recent and emergent research with Indigenous participants which adopts a mixed-methods

approach informed by postcolonial paradigms. Opening up the perspective to include mixed-methods, the authors argue, enables the integration of multiple epistemologies and enhances the possibilities of developing innovative and ground-breaking models (Chilisa and Tsheko, 2014; Lucero et al, 2018).

2. Engaging with Indigenous participants

As 'participation' is recommended by virtually all the works reviewed as the cornerstone of research with Indigenous communities, we analysed participation as a separate point, to gain an in-depth understanding of the ways in which it is operationalised and which understandings of 'participation' underlie the works examined. To this end, we developed a 'spectrum of participation' matrix, which was then applied to the empirical studies reviewed to collect information on the research ethos and the approach to participation of each paper. This exercise allowed us to classify the papers into three categories (adapted from Frewley, 2017) that enabled us to assess different understandings of 'participation' as:

a) access and consultation;
b) enduring research partnerships;
c) empowerment.

Before we discuss each category in more detail, we wish to emphasise that they were by no means neatly divided or rigidly separated, and for this reason we do not provide quantities or percentages. Rather, the matrix worked for us as an analytical tool to explore what is meant by 'participation', as we felt, in reviewing the literature, that this term had a range of different connotations, and that some clarity would have been useful to researchers wishing to engage Indigenous participants.

a) Access and Consultation.
In this category, we included papers that referred to 'participation' in terms of consultation with, and access to, Indigenous communities. This type of research offers decolonising rationales, works with Indigenous participants and/or researchers from Indigenous backgrounds, and may follow Indigenous protocols in order to gain access to participants. While still adhering to the principles for conducting ethical research with Indigenous communities, the view of participation put forward is more limited in relation to transformative possibilities as it does not specifically aim to establish enduring relationships and does not include an explicit commitment to social justice or advocacy. As Simonds and Christopher (2013) warn, limiting participation to consultation is not sufficient to ensure that 'Indigenous research' is carried out. Similarly, including Indigenous researchers on the team, or adopting storytelling methodologies, do not necessarily imply that Indigenous knowledge is generated. Of course, both inclusion of Indigenous researchers and adoption of culturally-aligned methods is important but in order to be fully participatory, research needs to comply with Indigenous values, knowledge systems and practices, and - crucially - needs to advance the concerns and interests of the Indigenous community.

b) Enduring research partnerships.
In this category, we included studies that adopted participatory ways of working, such as CBPR, and that developed lasting partnerships with the Indigenous communities they engaged with. The research projects we grouped in this category are grounded on collaborative relationships, explicitly and clearly designing the research to achieve a lasting positive impact on the Indigenous community. Relationships of trust, even friendships, are developed within the research team and may include research participants who are engaged as peer co-researchers. This type of research is often built over a larger time-scale and requires long term collaborations. As Hardy et al (2016) suggest, it may involve the development of capacity-building trainings and workshops in order to strengthen the

capabilities of peer co-researchers, and this has long-term beneficial implications for both individuals and communities.

c) Empowerment.

We included in this category studies that clearly state as their aim the empowerment of the Indigenous communities involved, and a commitment to social justice. This type of research focuses on human potential, and on understanding and acknowledging power relations to disrupt existing hierarchies and redress inequalities, with lasting effects beyond the immediate objectives of the research project. The research projects in this group are inspired by the needs of the community as identified by the community itself and often adopt an asset-based approach, emphasising existing practices, knowledge or skills. Some of the studies we grouped in this category are grounded in the Freirian dialogical approach of praxis and reflexivity (Freire, 1970), inviting researchers to critically reflect on the research process while it is ongoing and upon completion, in order to highlight challenges and insights gained and to gauge the impact of research on Indigenous people and communities. This can be a time-consuming endeavour, but one that ensures capacity building and sustainability of results. It also avoids reproducing views of researchers as detached from the community and only interested in advancing their own agenda, a view which has been noted as an recurring obstacle in engaging Indigenous communities (e.g. Smith, 2012; Tilley, 2017; Parsons et al., 2016). The work of Simonds and Christopher (2013) illustrates this approach. The case study the authors discuss began nine years into a partnership that had been established between the academic institutions involved and the Crow Indigenous community. The research project involved an intervention to develop a program to support the Indian Health Service to provide high-quality health care to community members. In their article, the authors discuss the lessons learnt during the project, and offer a reflexive self-evaluation on the Indigenous and Western ways of working they adopted. Their critical reflections are crucial to advance understandings, and offer thinking points for future research.

Most of the papers we reviewed fit into the first two categories. While the third category included only a very limited number of studies, we do not wish to imply that empowerment was not the aim of the other literature we reviewed. On the contrary, all the papers were underpinned by the overarching aim of contributing to social justice by legitimising Indigenous ways of knowing and arguing for Indigenous political rights. However, as Simonds and Christopher (2013) point out, while relatively easy to conceptualise, decolonisation is difficult to implement in practice and many projects fail to achieve it fully.

As well as helping us make sense of the approaches adopted in the papers reviewed and to summarise them, the review of recent literature helped us to identify the potential gaps, which we discuss in the next section.

Gaps in the current research profile

Through our review of the most recent literature and through our personal knowledge of participatory action research and of research based on decolonial and critical pedagogy approaches, we have identified some important gaps in the current research profile of this area. In this section, we discuss these gaps under three main headings. The first heading concerns broad issues around considerations of diversity and self-representation in research with Indigenous peoples. Under the second heading we discuss research design and effective engagement of Indigenous participants in research. The final section reflects on methodology and methods used in research with Indigenous communities. Discussing gaps under these three headings is an instrumental choice, made to

facilitate exposition and to aid reading. We recognise that the issues discussed in each section cannot be neatly separated and that there will be some inevitable overlaps between them.

1. Considerations of diversity and self-representations

The debate around what the term 'Indigenous' refers to - in relation to individuals, communities, knowledge and research - is ongoing, and complex. Resolving the tensions, contradictions and open questions of this debate is beyond the scope of this Think Piece. Many of the works we reviewed acknowledge the challenges of neatly defining 'Indigenous' and warn against a homogeneous and homogenising understanding. Instead, they highlight diversity between and within Indigenous communities, while also maintaining a clear focus on the critical, decolonial and empowering dimensions of 'indigeneity' (e.g. Sillitoe, 2015; Briggs, 2013). However, with few exceptions (Levac et al., Cesaroni et al, 2018) the empirical and grey literature reviewed lacks a clear illustration of the ways in which the specific characteristics of the Indigenous group(s) involved in research influenced the research design, the approach and methods chosen, and/or the ways in which the findings were translated and/or disseminated. The historical trajectory, the socio-economic characteristics, and the specific belief systems and values of Indigenous groups need to be explicitly considered in international development research to ensure that projects are fully grounded in the communities they aim to engage.

While researchers working with Indigenous communities often declare the adoption of a participatory approach, and while theoretical literature (e.g. Snow et al., 2016; Briggs, 2013) and existing guidelines (e.g. FAO, 2016) clearly indicate the need for Indigenous communities to be fully engaged at all stages of a research project, much of the academic literature we examined did not clearly demonstrate collaborative engagement in relation to the framing of the questions, the methodological choice, or the language and media/modes to be used during the research and for dissemination purposes. More generally, there appears to be a gap between the stated empowering aims of research and the involvement of Indigenous communities in shaping the research, including also the understanding of 'Indigeneity' that the research assumes and/or communicates to the wider world.

2. Reflexivity, inclusivity and language

In the literature examined, we found a noticeable lack of open discussion about challenges, setbacks or impediments when engaging in research with Indigenous communities. With the exception of a small number of papers (e.g. Ayre and Mackenzie, 2013: Jones and Bradshaw, 2015) no difficulties, open questions or changes of directions were disclosed. We are concerned that this absence may be the result of a reluctance to engage openly in discussions and reflection about what did not work or did not go according to plan. Several authors (e.g. Levac et al., 2018; Snow et al., 2016; Parsons et al., 2016) include reflexivity as an essential element of research with Indigenous communities, but it is hard to find indications of open and frank reflection on power dynamics or on the ways in which unexpected occurrences were negotiated. This includes reflections on the role of funding allocation to individuals and/or groups within Indigenous communities (especially relevant in the case of international development projects) and about the power dynamics this may set in motion, considerations that were conspicuously absent from all the literature we examined. We believe that alongside the sharing of instances of best practice, openly reflecting about what did not work – or did not work as intended - examining the reasons behind this and discussing the ways in which challenges were addressed and resolved could provide invaluable insights for other academics and practitioners aiming to carry out research with Indigenous communities.

Also absent from much of the literature examined, were clear evaluations of the participatory aspects of the research project. While, as noted in the previous section, participatory research is widely recognised as best practice in research with Indigenous peoples, and while most of the literature discusses projects with a stated participatory approach, open reflections by and with Indigenous participants on the extent to which participation was effectively achieved (and, again, any challenges faced) are seldom shared. We believe that discussions about shortcomings and challenges to effective engagement, and about ways to redress them, are an important gap in the research examined.

A further gap in the available literature concerns the role of language(s), multilingualism and intercultural communication in research with Indigenous peoples. While language is identified as an essential component of 'indigeneity' by most of the works reviewed, only a small number of articles (e.g. Tilley, 2017; Dawson et al, 2017; Harrington and ChiXapkaid, 2013) openly discuss issues of translation and interpreting. However, we believe it is essential to reflect on the ways in which moving between languages impacts on researchers' understanding of: the physical and human context of a research project; the specific relational dynamics; the data collected and ways to read it and interpret it. Most of the literature examined does not specify whether the research was carried out through a shared language and, if so, which language this was and what its choice entails in relation to power dynamics. It does not discuss whether Indigenous languages were used and, if so, whether interpreters were present, what their impact was on the research, and/or what the researchers' familiarity with the language was. Thinking about languages and about their role in research with Indigenous communities, regardless of discipline or aim, is an important step towards acknowledging that research is first and foremost a communicative act, and that the choice of the language(s) we use for communication is never a neutral one.

3. Methodology and methods

Methods in Indigenous research focus mainly on oral/visual storytelling techniques, often discussed in explicit contrast to positivist paradigms. However, even some of the papers which report on projects clearly grounded in a humanities and/or social sciences background fail to acknowledge the extensive and ongoing debate on participatory practises in research (e.g. Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005; McIntyre, 2008; Cooke and Kothari, 2001), particularly in research with minority and/or disadvantaged groups and communities. Much of the literature examined makes generic references to the use of participatory methods and/or to action research, with little discussion of the ways in which these were tailored to the specific Indigenous group or community, and how they worked in practice. While it is important to adopt research methods that are grounded in Indigenous practices and in line with Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies, clearer rationales on the choice of methods in relation to the specific context of research and from an intersectional perspective would illustrate how approaches to participation are contextualised, assessed and adapted to ensure that they are the best possible fit, rather than a 'default' choice.

While storytelling and other oral/visual methodologies are almost invariably identified as better suited to research with Indigenous communities, we found only one article (Drawson et al., 2017) that clearly discusses the issues faced at the analysis stage, illustrating the ways in which the narratives collected were interpreted in relation to the research problem or questions. Moreover, we found no discussion about whether Indigenous people and communities were engaged in the analysis of the data generated, and only a few articles illustrate clear strategies to ensure that research findings are accessible to the participants and the wider community (e.g. Bharadwaj, 2014; Parsons et al, 2016). While the need to engage Indigenous communities at all stages of the research process is stated in principle, applied and detailed examples of how this was done at the analysis and dissemination stages are rare.

As a specific point in relation to methods, we found very few articles which discuss the potential of online and digital tools for research with Indigenous groups (e.g. Simonds and Christopher, 2013; and Dawson et al, 2017). Depending on consideration of appropriateness to the research aims; of contextual specificities; of participants' preferences; and – importantly – of safety and security, digital tools can offer further means for participation, co-creation and engagement. Of course, these do not need be an alternative to more traditional practices but may offer opportunities to integrate and expand them in creative and innovative ways.

Capacity building needs

We suggest knowledge exchange/building workshops for researchers and practitioners aiming to work in international development projects with Indigenous communities. The workshops (to be held at the very start of a research project) should be geared towards discussing and contextualising existing guidelines on best practice in research with Indigenous peoples. They should include academics and practitioners with experience in research with Indigenous communities and allow the sharing of good practice and critical reflection on practice. Examples of themes to be explored include: participatory research designs; methods in Indigenous research; analytical skills; collaborative project management; working multilingually and interculturally; thinking about intersectionality in Indigenous research; digital tools in Indigenous research.

As a wealth of expertise on research with Indigenous communities is available in countries such as Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the US, international research collaborations that include Indigenous peoples, researchers and practitioners from countries with a long tradition of inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in research should be encouraged. These collaborations with more experienced partners should clearly identify processes and strategies for knowledge exchange and capacity building.

Ensuring that a number of peer researchers from Indigenous communities are included as full partners is a further step towards emancipatory research that really serves the needs of communities and that is grounded in Indigenous knowledge and practices. This would require strategies for reciprocal training and knowledge sharing between Western academics and Indigenous peer researchers; they should be negotiated at the start of a research process and considered as an essential component of the research for both time and funding allocation.

To redress the paucity of critical reflection in research with Indigenous communities, an independent team of 'critical friends' – including representatives of Indigenous communities – should be set up to offer constructive feedback on a research project at key points. The 'critical friends' team can have an advisory role but should not be limited to this. Its role should be primarily to provide a 'compass' for the research project, so that the needs, assets, knowledge and practices of Indigenous communities are kept in constant focus, ensuring that there is effective collaboration, representation and inclusion, and that the research process results in emancipatory and sustainable outcomes for the Indigenous community.

Guidelines for best practice

Guidelines on best practice in research with Indigenous communities have been developed by agencies and in several countries (e.g. Putt, 2013; AIATSIS, 2012; World Health Organization, ND; FAO, 2016) and academics and practitioners wishing to undertake international development

research with Indigenous communities should become familiarised with this literature. They represent a clear basis for reflection when planning research with Indigenous peoples, although they also need to be carefully considered and adapted to the specific social and environmental context of a research project, and to the intersectional characteristics of participants.

Careful and respectful engagement with - and understanding of – Indigenous communities' protocols of hospitality is vital to successful collaborations. However, the ritual and ceremonial dimensions of these protocols may prove difficult to navigate. On one hand Western secular scholars may feel their own personal ethics is compromised by adhering to these protocols while, on the other, Indigenous peoples may perceive secular protocols as incompatible with their own understandings of ethics and accountability. Recognising the potential for this tension and considering ways to resolve it is essential to ensure that all involved feel respected and trusted. The ethics guidelines of the Association of Social Anthropologists (2011) can be an excellent starting point for these important considerations, as are guidelines available in several other countries (e.g. AIATSIS, 2012).

We recommend support for the creation of international mentoring networks. These will include academics and practitioners - from Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds - who have substantial experience and knowledge of research with Indigenous communities, who could act as mentors for researchers who feel they need guidance and support beyond existing guidelines and literature. Where possible, the mentoring networks should come together in person, but forms of online mentoring could also be considered.

Reflective, multimedia research notes that discussing concerns, challenges, unexpected developments, and any strategies found to overcome setbacks or disputes should be encouraged. These could, with consent, be made public as discussion prompts for peer learning and, where appropriate, to provide a thinking toolkit for skills development and training of early career researchers.

As recommended earlier, encouraging and ensuring teams of 'critical friends' to be included throughout a research project should become a matter of best practice. Indigenous people – representing as closely as possible the community researched not just in relation to background but also to other characteristics such as gender, age, etc. – should be part of the 'critical friends' teams, alongside any non-Indigenous researchers and practitioners that have relevant skills, experience and knowledge. Processes and strategies for the monitoring of and feedback on the research process (with an eye on effective participation, relevance of methods, analysis and knowledge dissemination/transfer) should be identified at the research proposal stage and be reflected in working packages and budget.

ESRC-AHRC-GCRF funded projects should fund post-project evaluations (carried out by an independent team) to examine a research project's long-term effects. These would explore the long-term social and emotional legacy of research, such as: the connections and networks developed by Indigenous communities; the learning processes of Indigenous people or groups; the effective opportunities for community empowerment offered by the research process and through the relationships built in the course of it.

Finally, we suggest engaging academics, practitioners and Indigenous communities in a discussion on ways to develop the Capability Approach pioneered by Amartya Sen (2009) and Martha Nussbaum (2011) to provide tools for evaluating research and practice on sustainable development research with Indigenous communities. As Sen and Nussbaum argue, evaluations of development cannot just concentrate on economic measures of living standards but should instead focus on the actual

opportunities individuals and communities have to live lives they have reason to value (Sen, 2009). Developed as an alternative evaluation framework for sustainable development initiatives, the Capability Approach can also lend itself as a tool for evaluation of research that has a commitment to social justice at its core.

Opportunities for interdisciplinary research

With very few exceptions (e.g. Loban et al, 2014; Goulding et al, 2016) the studies reviewed did not have an explicit interdisciplinary dimension. However, precisely because of the fundamentally holistic nature of Indigenous knowledge systems, cosmologies and practices, we believe that international development research with Indigenous communities requires an interdisciplinary dimension. Furthermore, as outlined in the introductory section of this Think Piece, research with Indigenous communities is underpinned by knowledge systems, values, principles and ways of working that remain constant regardless of disciplinary methodological requirements. This commonality should facilitate the establishing of interdisciplinary networks and cross-cultural collaborations and offers great potential for the breaking down of disciplinary barriers that are not consistent with the beliefs and practices of Indigenous communities.

Funding focus

From the previous analysis on gaps and potential for capacity building and best practice, the ESRC and AHRC should consider focussing funding on projects which:

- take into consideration existing guidelines on ethics in research with Indigenous people and communities;
- prioritise questions or problems raised by Indigenous communities;
- demonstrate full inclusion of Indigenous people at all stages of the research process;
- align with Indigenous knowledge systems and processes;
- consider issues of researcher positionality and power imbalance and provide clear processes for assessment and reflexivity throughout.

In relation to research design, funding should focus on projects that explicitly address the following points:

- Cleary ground the research project on the specific research context, ensuring that it is tailored to the communities and groups it aims to engage, considering diversity between and within communities.
- Identify the most appropriate research methods for the problem or questions to be explored in close collaboration with Indigenous peoples and communities.
- Clearly illustrate the ways in which the information collected will be analysed and translated into action and for dissemination and the role of Indigenous participants at this stage.
- Demonstrate an intersectional approach, considering the diverse experiences, capabilities and needs that exist within an Indigenous community (e.g. gender, age, (dis)ability, sexuality, socio-economic background).
- Take into consideration the role of language(s) throughout a research project, including: the role of Indigenous languages and other semiotic systems; how these are used at different stages of research; how they are translated for a wider audience and what happens in the

process of translation; the role of interpreters and translators and whether this is inscribed in Indigenous systems of knowledge and/or processes.
● Work with Indigenous people to explore the use of digital tools in research and the ways in which they can be combined with traditional knowledge systems and practices.
● Include an interdisciplinary dimension, essential to ensure a holistic approach to research.
● Engage, whenever possible, international collaborators with substantial experience and knowledge of research with Indigenous people in order to build capacity.

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