

Rigour or rigor mortis

The small 'r' approach to research

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The following notes are taken from the Powerpoint slides used in the plenary session on Thursday 11 November. Any enquiries regarding these notes should be directed to Phil Crane at p.crane@qut.edu.au

Your reaction to the term 'RESEARCH'
??

Your reaction to being called a
'RESEARCHER'
??

Do you

- Identify with those terms?
- Or say 'Not me'!!!
 - Paralysed with fear, or thinking that is simply not very relevant
 - "*I'm practical not theoretical !!!!!*"

What would it take to have confidence in the
action research undertaken through your
Reconnect or HOME Advice service?

Is 'rigour' important?

- On what do we base our practice?
- Debates about different ways of 'knowing'
- Rigour allows us to have confidence in making a statement or taking the next step

What is research with a small 'r'?

- A **systematic** process for inquiry
- The goal is coming up with **well founded** understandings to use in improving practice
- Undertaken in an **ethical** way

Elements of small 'r' research

- Research design: **What is our question and how will we go about answering it?**
- Data gathering: **Getting a diversity of information that helps answer the question**
- Data analysis: **Working out what the information means**
- Theorising: **What have we found out?**
- Communication: **Telling people what we think we have found out and asking for feedback** (also called 'publishing')
- Action: **Implementing or seeking change**

In AR these are not simply undertaken in a linear way

In AR well founded (*rigorous*) understandings depend on ...

- Being systematic
- The participation of key people & groups
- Using multiple & diverse methods ('triangulation')
- Developing an evidence base
- An open process that is transparent
- Seeking disagreement (as well as agreement)
- Checking your conclusions out in practice!! (multiple cycles)

and 'publishing'

- Telling the **story** of your AR, written for an audience
- Allows insiders to say if the story is accurate. **Seek disagreement** as well as agreement and be prepared to modify
- Allows outsiders to consider **the relevance** of your story to their contexts
- There are **lots of ways** to 'publish' during and after an AR process

Case study was presented by
Belinda Trikilis outlining the AR process
written up as:

Yarning about cultural appropriateness

Stories and findings

from the

“Miimali 2004 Reconnect Action Research Focus Groups
Project”

The report was prepared by Miimali Aboriginal Community Association by:

- **Kathie Naden** (Aboriginal Family Liaison Officer)
- **Belinda Trikilis** (Service Co-ordinator)
- **Gillian Bonser** (Service Mentor)
- **Pauline Boothey** (Trainee)

Thankyou to everyone in the Aboriginal community who took part in the focus groups – we appreciate your time, support and ideas.

With special thanks to those Aboriginal community members who read the draft documents to check the accuracy of the stories and the quality of our listening.

The *Yarning About Cultural Appropriateness* report can be accessed on the ReconnectAR web site in the New Contributions or National AR Training sections (see home page). The Address is <https://olt.qut.edu.au/udf/RECONNECTAR/> Email aaneilsen@optusnet.com.au or p.crane@qut.edu.au if you have any difficulties with access.

Telling AR stories

- What was the question/ issue?
- Where did this interest come from?
- How did you go about exploring this?
- How did you document your process?
- What learnings came from this process?
- Who was involved in confirming these as learnings?
- What did you decide to do as a result of the learnings?

- Remember the 'bigger' the generalisations you make the more you have to:
 - **explain** your process
 - and your 'evidence'
 - **consider** what others have said about the topic
 - **seek** critical reflection & feedback on your story and conclusions by insiders and outsiders

 - Its fine to state your learnings tentatively (?!?!)

Possible limitations of AR

- Can be hard to say that your findings apply to other contexts ('generalise')
- That is why most AR is talked about as a 'case' study
- Very hard to know *what influenced what* in real world complexity
- High personal involvement can mean conclusions reflect personal biases

Building ethical AR relationships

Guidelines for Ethical Research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research

Spirit and integrity
Reciprocity
Respect
Equality
Survival and protection
Responsibility

(See ReconnectAR website page on National AR Training for link to these National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines).

Playing by ethical 'rules'

- Voluntary involvement
- Getting permission/ Informed consent
- Protecting privacy/ Confidentiality
- Not doing harm
- Right to complain
- Acknowledging contributions

What would it take to have confidence in the action research undertaken through your Reconnect or HOME Advice service?