Does a social movement require higher ethics than the academy?
Following feminist and antiracism movement ethics for rich research outcomes within and beyond psychology

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OUTLINE

1. Purpose - intersection of ethics in Treaty movement with my doctoral research as a means for reflection on, and challenge to, conventional academic research ethics and to feminist research practices.

2. Significance – Reflections on feminist ethics in research often use self-reflexive methods without accountability checks, and often lack accountabilities to groups or between groups. These practices could be called individualistic rather than collective forms of ethical practice and accountability .

3. Literature and theory review – *from my PhD Ch 4 and 7*

4. Relevance to psychology
5. My research & reflections - describe research process and outcomes in a couple of paragraphs, then weave in reflections. *See Ch 5 & 7 with an emphasis on accountabilities to participants, shifts in methods & consent seeking, feedback from participants. Also check Huygens & Humphries (2004); Huygens (2006) Scholar in a social movement.*

6. Conclusions - *see Ch 7 & 11. & Scholar in social movement paper.*

7. Reference list of PhD and published papers

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This paper explores how my doctoral research intersected with the ethics of a social movement in New Zealand, the ethics of activist Pakeha/tauiwi Treaty educators. My reflections challenge as well as endorse feminist research practices, and those of participatory action research generally. By contrasting the critical self-reflexivity typical of feminist research with the multiple strands of collective accountability operating in my research, I argue that a more **interactional** and **collective** reflexivity may be crucial to support social change efforts.

Background

The pro-Treaty movement formed during the 1970s and 1980 as part of a broader decolonisation dynamic among Maori and others in our country. Activist Pakeha and other non-Maori (or tauiwi) gathered in response to Maori challenges to 'honour the Treaty' for European settlement. Composed primarily of white feminist women, the groups undertook to educate themselves and each other about the dishonoured treaty, subsequent destructive colonisation, and to encourage institutional, cultural and social change. The groups drew upon feminist praxis and community organising to build a network of local groups around the country. Today, as Network Waitangi, they continue their work of Treaty and decolonisation education and consciousness-raising in their localities, and meet nationally about once a year.

The values and ethics of this 30 year old social movement developed from several traditions – those of European church and civic participation, feminist praxis and organising, the philosophies and methods of conscientising adult education, and through responding to Maori challenges for collective Pakeha action. At the movement's heart, in common with the above traditions, lay a valuing of collective work and strategising. Such valuing of collective processes in response to challenges created an ethic of transparency and accountability to one's co-participants. For instance, at national gatherings the agenda would be set collectively, issues discussed by brainstorming together, and records circulated for approval by everyone present. There was a clear ethic of collective ownership of intellectual material thus created, with careful negotiation of use of such material.

Key ethics and traditions included:
- an ethic of Pakeha taking responsibility for our institutions and culture and their outcomes (the kawanatanga article of the Treaty)
- an ethic of respecting the Maori world as a self-determined and self-legitimated entity (the tino rangatiratanga article of the Treaty)
- responsiveness and accountability in our work with the Treaty to Maori collectives and their aspirations

- processes for accountability to and support for each other as non-Maori working with the Treaty
- respecting our own local experience and local dynamics with Maori collectives as a source of knowledge
- a tradition of recording our group brainstorms as collective knowledge
- an ethic that researchers show respect for and acknowledge collective authorship in presenting knowledge generated through Treaty work
- attending to our holistic needs such as food, rest and emotional support in our gatherings. (Huygens, 2007, p. 99)

Such ethics of collective work and accountability have been tentatively described in academic writing as moving beyond inter-individual ethics to 'communitarianism' (Prilleltensky, 1990). At a deeper level, these ethics can be seen as expressing an active responsiveness by Pakeha towards the strategic aspirations and worldview of Maori. For instance, local Treaty workers and theorists have suggested that we express a posture of "response-ability" towards te Ao Maori (Humphries & Martin, 2005), or that we enact a Pakeha practice of action and reflection accountable to Maori aspirations (Kirton, 1997).

To engage with such communitarian ethics with a research intent posed significant challenges for me. Western research practices, in both the objectivist and social constructionist paradigms (Crotty, 1998), generally involve a researchers entering a community, gathering intellectual material, retiring to analyse the material, and then disseminating her findings. Except in 'strong' participatory action research, the researcher's analysis and conclusions are not overtly negotiated with the community researched. At best, efforts may be made to consult with a representative of the target community for their approval.

It must be acknowledged that critical and constructivist methods of research use particular principles of validation, often cited as: acknowledging 'interest', (of the researcher); 'trustworthiness' (consistent and adequate methods); 'credibility' (to the participants and readers), and 'generality' (beyond the local) (Schwandt, 1998). Some critical discursive researchers rely on the argument of not needing to check their analyses back with participants, because discursive material is independent of individual speakers (Taylor, 2001a, 2001b). However, many researchers **are** interested in the implications of intellectual material in context, and want to claim credibility and generality for their conclusions, so this defense is not sufficient to justify the researcher neglecting to check with their participants.

Feminist research have developed some strong ethics of participatory research as alternatives to the Western objectivist paradigm, and have particularly emphasised that researchers declare their interest and position. This followed the feminist theoretical focus on personal consciousness, often described as 'the personal is political'. Feminist researchers generally adopt a critical self-reflexive

approach as a research ethic. However, in my reading of feminist research, there is a de-emphasising of interpersonal and inter-group accountability, for instance, the accountabilities of the researcher to their participant groups, or accountabilities between groups of colleagues and participants involved in a project. To emphasise this contrast, I would call the typical feminist research practices of personal reflexivity 'individualistic' in contrast with more 'interactional' or 'collective' forms of ethical accountability.

The process of researching with my colleagues in the Treaty movement severely challenged reliance solely on self-reflexive processes as an acceptable means of ensuring credibility or generality in qualitative research.

MY RESEARCH & REFLECTIONS

I took with me into my doctoral research a clear determination that the most ethical way to proceed as an 'insider researcher' was to fully remain an active Treaty worker, continuing to follow our ethics of practice, and offering my research effort towards ongoing strategic goals of the movement. I needed to act in trustworthy ways in relationships with people who would continue to be my peers throughout my life. I wanted to maintain these relationships as ones of mutual respect while I temporarily moved into the position of researcher. I also reasoned that since the Western academy had traditionally resisted and denied the alternative viewpoints and practices of social change movements, the movement's culture and ethics were likely to be a better guide to my investigation than academic research conventions (Huygens, 2007, p. 99) (*necessary?*). In summary, I positioned myself as an insider Treaty educator remaining accountable to the ethics of our social movement.

However, notwithstanding this earnest determination, I also took with me my history as a qualitative researcher in areas of feminist and community psychology concerns. This meant that I carried with me a number of rather pervasive assumptions - that focus groups would probably be most helpful, that tape-recorded transcriptions would certainly be necessary, and that generally my research would proceed in a benign, earnest, self-reflexive manner.

SLIDE OF BENIGN, EARNEST RESEARCHER INTERACTING WITH HER PARTICIPANTS!

Process

My research involved travelling around the country to record the theorised practice of 10 groups of my Treaty educator colleagues. Since I had pledged to remain accountable to our collective ethics, I needed to respond to challenges, requests from my participants. These were not long in coming. Indeed, at the second focus meeting, participants asked to see and hear what the first group had said. They were, after all, colleagues who shared a long history of intensive work together over many decades.

Mmmm....The consent form I had designed took no account of whether participant groups would be identifiable to each other. So, after reflection, I revised the consent form to allow for group and individual identities to be known and acknowledged in discussion and publications at a national level.

SLIDE - REVISED CONSENT FORM

Secondly, as it became clear that I would need to transmit the previous group's work quickly and easily to the next group. I referred to our movement traditions, and found there a method that would allow this – drawing diagrams. So I encouraged the second group to depict their theorising in diagrammatic form on butcher paper. But I immediately struck a practical problem – carrying butcher paper around 10 groups would leave a tattered remnant. So I brainstormed with my reference group and devised a method whereby each group used coloured cut out felt to create pictorial theories. These felt pieces could then be moved around, removed or added to by subsequent groups.

SLIDE – EXAMPLE OF COLOURED FELT 'THEORY OF PAKEHA CHANGE'

Mmmmmm... so I had to revise my research process.

SLIDE – EXTRACTS FROM MY LETTER REVISING RESEARCH PROCESS

In fact, groups used action methods, children's blocks and a mobile to express their theorising. The outcome of a revised consent form and a revised research process were looking very rich indeed.

SLIDES - SOME EXAMPLES

Finally, upon deep reflection about the ownership of the intellectual material being generated in this collective manner, and the relationship of my short-lived research project with the ongoing cycles of action and reflection in a social movement, I resolved that the participant groups needed direct access to each other's work, unmediated by my personal reflection.

Mmmmmm.... so finally, I revised the research process and consents once again to allow for a national gathering in which (i) each group would present their work, and then (ii) I would open up to dialogue and critique my preliminary interpretation of themes. I bouind together all the focus meeting minutes and photographs of imagery and sent copies to each group.

SLIDE – EXTRACTS FROM SECOND LETTER

Now the outcomes became even richer. The groups listened spell bound to each other's theories, and reflected deeply on what they had learned with each other. Many commented on the stimulating, revitalising, and therapeutic effect of this national sharing of theorising.

SLIDE – COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

DISCUSSION

In summary, as a result of following a more interactional and collective form of reflexivity, an innovative method of 'cumulative theorising' between successive groups developed, culminating in a national sharing of practice theorised verbally and visually. The new method deepened the movement's collective knowledge and contemporary practice, and led to resources useful to the educators and to the New Zealand public – a series of visual theories published in a book and a DVD/video.

METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATION – 'cumulative theorising' of practice
PRAXIS OUTCOME – reflective resources for Treaty educators

CONCLUSION

By following stringent ethics for collective accountability and transparency developed by feminist and antiracism social movements, my research outcomes were significantly richer than had I followed more traditional research ethics. Feminist praxis and research helped to challenge academic norms, as well as being itself challenged by a deeply rooted collective approach.

So for researcher keen to explore 'new' knowledge on women and psychology, and keen to follow more explicitly collective ethics , I would recommend:

1. Reflect deeply on the collective ethics held in your communities of practice
2. Look for suitable structures and processes by which your work might be openly reflected upon, and accountable to collective ethics.
3. Follow the processes of responsiveness and accountability bravely and boldly into the unknown
4. Expect rich outcomes - in terms of
    - useful reflection and development within your communities of practice,
    - theoretical contribution to your research area,
    - innovative resources for your field

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