

# RESEARCHING WITH AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE COMMUNITIES: PURSUING PARTNERSHIPS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL INQUIRY IN SERVICE TO INDIGENOUS FUTURITY

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American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIANs) are the remnant descendants of hundreds of exceedingly diverse Indigenous North American peoples whose fates changed dramatically with the arrival of European explorers to the “new world.” In time, European and Euro American colonization reduced the Indigenous population of the United States to fewer than 250,000 individuals at the close of the 19th century (Thornton, 1987). Today, many Americans lay claim to distant Indigenous ancestry, but AIAN identities persist most strikingly among the roughly 3.5 million members of more than 570 federally recognized Tribal Nations. These communities occupy a distinctive political status owing to international treaties initially struck with European powers and subsequently shaped by U.S. federal law and policy. Operating as “domestic dependent nations,” tribal governments continue to exercise (curtailed) powers of political sovereignty on behalf of their citizens even as they struggle to recover from the ravages of historical dispossession, subjugation, discrimination, and marginality (Pevar, 2012). Owing to their provisional postcolonial status

(depending on the national mood), AIAN communities represent the proverbial “canaries in the coalmine” when it comes to the formulation, cultivation, production, and application of academic knowledge. That is, even though other ethnoracial constituencies in the United States have advanced legitimate historical grievances against research and researchers, AIANs represent the consummate challenge for ethical academic inquiry due to the vexed intersection of our unique collective rights and our long history of brutal colonization. In sum, if research in AIAN communities can be accomplished through ethical, relevant, and useful means, then substantial progress will have been made in addressing similar imperatives of research for other historically marginalized communities as well.

There can be little doubt that ethical and relevant research is desperately needed by AIAN communities. Saddled with centuries of ignorant, misguided, exploitative, and hostile intrusion by outsiders, “Indian Country” today is beset by grinding poverty, overwhelmed institutions, and obstructed opportunities, all-too-often exacerbated

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by hapless national policies. Not even the most talented tribal leaders can be expected to chart a smooth way forward in service to transformative community revitalization and collective self-determination. And yet, in a supposedly rational and resourced “first world” context such as the United States, “fourth world” Indigenous communities need not “go it alone,” as the problems of AIAN communities might in theory be taken up by the best and brightest minds throughout the nation. In this respect, research psychologists would seem to have a crucial role to play. Specifically, AIANs suffer from long-standing health and mental health disparities that shape life and livelihood in these settings in visible, pronounced, and heartrending fashion. Many AIAN communities grapple with epidemic levels of substance abuse, interpersonal violence, posttraumatic stress, relational dysfunction, and suicidal behavior (Gone & Trimble, 2012). Although these pathologies are perhaps best conceived as “postcolonial disorders” (Good et al., 2008), it typically falls to mental health professionals—including licensed psychologists—to provide community-based services in the effort to remedy these vexing problems. Thus, as the only mental health specialty that requires substantive research training as part of its professional credentialing process, disciplinary psychology has both the greatest investment as well as the greatest obligation to ensure appropriate inquiry in community-based research as it seeks a proper foundation of knowledge to effectively ameliorate these rampant health disparities (Trimble et al., 2010).

Current discussions of Indigenous psychology take as their point of departure the coloniality of Indian Country. That is, Indigenous persistence into the 21st century was scarcely imaginable at the outset of the 20th century, given the sweeping impacts of colonization that led Americans to conceive of AIANs as a “vanishing race.” In this *Handbook* chapter, I review issues, approaches, and strategies for psychology research with contemporary AIAN communities whose “survivance” (a portmanteau of *survival* and *resistance*; Vizenor, 1999) was most improbable. First, I canvas the legacy of irrelevant and even exploitative research

by behavioral and health scientists, the recommendations for remedy that have been proposed, and the reparative implications of a shift to a relational ethics in psychology research. Second, I delve more deeply into processes of participatory engagement that follow from adoption of a relational ethics to ensure that psychology research is relevant and useful for AIAN populations. Finally, I consider Indigenous knowledge traditions and research methodologies with respect to the politics of knowledge production in psychology pursuant to AIAN resurgence and futurity. In this chapter, I center the experiences and realities of AIAN communities in the United States, but (because knowledge travels) I necessarily draw on observations and ideas from other Indigenous contexts and settings (especially from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). In offering these observations for the discipline, it is my hope to make psychologists aware of specific research concerns in AIAN communities, to convey expansive conceptions of research ethics with respect to these communities, and to establish useful foundations for novel research approaches and partnerships that may also extend to other vulnerable and historically marginalized populations as well.

## RENDING AND REPAIR IN INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

Striking narratives about exploitative researchers and detrimental research circulate routinely in AIAN communities, testifying to a rending of research relationships. So widespread is this discourse that a robust literature has emerged in the behavioral and health sciences to describe, analyze, remedy, and repair this history of “unethical research abuses” (Hodge, 2012).

### Rending of Research Relationships

Six examples feature prominently in AIAN accounts of the misuses and abuses of research (see Freeman et al., 2006): (a) In the early 20th century, anthropologist Alfred Kroeber sent the brain of his deceased “informant” named Ishi to the Smithsonian Institution for preservation and

study without anyone's permission (Starn, 2004); (b) not long thereafter, an Alaska Native man who died while visiting the Smithsonian was cremated with his child as witness, except the cremation was staged and his body was kept by the Smithsonian for its research collections (Starn, 2004); (c) between 1942 and 1952, Canadian nutrition experts conducted experiments on malnourished Indigenous people—including pupils attending residential schools—without consent to explore health outcomes associated with nutritional supplements (Mosby, 2013); (d) in the 1950s, the U.S. Air Force administered radioactive iodine to Alaska Natives to study acclimation to cold weather (Lanzarotta, 2020); (e) in the 1970s, Foulks reported on high alcoholism rates for an Alaska Native community that was picked up by the national news and resulted in a downgrading of the community's bond rating (Klausner & Foulks, 1979); and (f) in the "oughts," Havasupai tribal members provided genetic material that was subsequently analyzed for purposes (e.g., patterns of "inbreeding" or historical migration from Asia) that neither participants nor tribal authorities had approved or consented to (Mello & Wolf, 2010). This is not even to consider the repugnant tradition of early anthropological trafficking in AIAN remains through grave robbery and deceit (Thomas, 2000). Indeed, the father of American anthropology, Franz Boas, wrote about his own practice of stealing, collecting, and selling Indigenous skulls to museums to make ends meet (Appiah, 2020).

Thus, among the social sciences, anthropology has come up for the most withering of Indigenous critiques (Biolsi & Zimmerman, 1997), but psychology has not escaped unscathed. For example, Darou et al. (1993) recounted the experiences of the James Bay Cree communities of northern Quebec—comprising a population of about 10,000 people—with 13 research projects addressed to psychological topics. Of the six psychologists to have undertaken most of these studies, five were ejected from the Cree territories because research respondents felt "exploited and mistreated." In the wake of these stunning

breakdowns in relationships, the James Bay Cree communities have "forbidden the conduct of further psychological research" in their midst (p. 325). This example illustrates some of the common reasons for AIAN dissatisfaction with academic research, which include the inattention, opportunism, and even arrogance of outside researchers; the denigration and disrespect shown for Indigenous lifeways; the sterility and irrelevance of the resultant knowledge; and the wasteful allocation of scarce community resources. In response, a burgeoning literature addressed to critical reimagining of research in Indian Country has emerged during the past few decades (Mihesuah, 1993; Wax, 1991). Only more recently have these critiques appeared in psychology publications (Trimble & Fisher, 2006). A March 2021 search in the PsycInfo bibliographic database returned 97 journal articles at the intersection of *Indigenous populations* and *research methodology* (using official thesaurus terms for these major concepts, as "exploded" for maximum inclusion), and 53 journal articles at the intersection of *Indigenous populations* and *research ethics* (not an official thesaurus term). Most articles in the latter corpus were not about Indigenous populations in the United States and/or were not published in psychology journals proper.

### Repair in Research Relationships

One of the earliest Indigenous intellectuals to warn against the misuse of scholarly research in the social sciences was Vine Deloria, Jr. (1980), a founder of American Indian Studies. Since then, AIAN communities (with support from advocates and allies) have adopted various progressive measures to promote greater awareness, education, authority, and control over research efforts undertaken in their midst. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)—the United Nations of Indian Country—developed and disseminated numerous documents that provide guidance to Tribal Nations with respect to educating tribal leaders (NCAI, 2009) and tribal members (Sahota, 2010) about building tribal research relationships (NCAI Policy Research Center & MSU Center for Native Health Partnerships, 2012), reviewing

research studies (Sahota, 2009a), and regulating research (Sahota, 2009b). A major component of this endeavor is the creation of independent research review boards (RRBs) by Tribal Nations. Despite significant capacity limitations, many AIAN communities have established such boards, the purview and power of which usually extend well beyond the familiar mandate to protect human subjects. Indeed, in response to criteria originating in Canada (Snarch, 2004), many AIAN RRBs pursue self-determination in expansive fashion with respect to OCAP principles. OCAP refers to tribal assertion of ownership, control, access, and possession concerning research materials, data, processes, and products. For example, many tribal RRBs require review and approval of any manuscripts written by researchers prior to submission for scholarly publication (and sometimes of associated presentation proposals prior to their submission for conferences). These exercises of AIAN sovereignty are becoming normative in Indian Country, and frequently entail entry by researchers into formalized (i.e., contractual) research arrangements that are increasingly governed by research codes adopted by Tribal Nations (American Indian Law Center, 1999).

Thus, in the name of AIAN community protections from harmful or exploitative research, recent decades have witnessed a tangible shift in authority and control over research away from autonomous and unaccountable researchers to sovereign and self-determining AIAN Tribal Nations. Concurrently, there have been proposals for a shift in ethical frameworks that might guide such research. As psychologists know, research regulation with respect to human subjects protections is founded on *The Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979), including its three principles of *respect for persons* (undergirding practices of informed consent), *beneficence* (undergirding practices of risk-benefit analysis), and *justice* (undergirding practices of fair sample selection). With respect to research in AIAN communities, however, the application of these ethical principles and practices falls short owing to an associated

style of reasoning that is relentlessly individualist in orientation. This premise of *ontological individualism* (Wendt, 2010) has shaped ethical reasoning about research in ways that circumvent researcher accountability to tribal polities. The proposed remedies for this ethical incongruity include a shift away from a deontic rationale to a relational rationale (C. B. Fisher, 1999) and from an individualist orientation to a group-based orientation (Saunkeah et al., 2021). Importantly, neither of these shifts entails a formal rejection of the Belmont principles, but rather an expansion of these tenets that better accords with AIAN community sensibilities and commitments. Development of these expansive approaches have entailed a critical assessment of the cultural and epistemological limitations of the received (and reigning) paradigm of ethical reasoning that governs psychological inquiry.

### Ethical Reasoning for Research Relationships

In this respect, C. B. Fisher (1999) delineated 10 ethical assumptions of normative scientific research with “vulnerable populations.” Examples of these assumptions include knowledge gathering is unconditionally and fundamentally good, scientific knowledge production should aspire to be value-free, researchers are entitled to use humans in their pursuit of knowledge, the principle of individual autonomy (i.e., respect for persons) can trump the principles of beneficence and justice when obtaining consent, the absence of research benefits is acceptable so long as the research does no harm, and ethical decision making in research is the proper purview of professionals (whether researchers, ethicists, or institutional review board officials). Fisher considered several sobering challenges to these assumptions and concluded that reigning ethical codes are products of the scientific establishment that predominantly reflect Eurocentric philosophical conceptions (e.g., context-free principles, rational-deductive reasoning, libertarian assessments of the “good life”). In contrast, Fisher advanced an expansive *relational ethics* with explicit reference to the shift in moral reasoning advocated by Gilligan (1982) in response to Kohlberg (1984),

namely, that ethical reasoning is not only about “principle-based justice ethics” but also about “relational-based care ethics.” In this latter approach, proponents have “traditionally taken relationships as fundamental, viewed care as an obligation, focused on how one can achieve individual freedom without violating moral obligations to others, and stressed the construction of moral injunctions to protect relationships” (Fisher, 1999, p. 30). Fisher thus identified the source of AIAN suspicion and anger toward researchers and research: Although it would be difficult to overstate the importance of a relational orientation for everyday life in most AIAN communities (indeed, “being Indian” is fundamentally about one’s kinship ties within a tribal polity), the ethical commitments that have guided psychology research in our communities have privileged deontic principles that have routinely resulted in an absence of care.

Thus, a relational ethics requires assessment of research not only with respect to autonomy, beneficence, and justice in abstracted and decontextualized (i.e., deontic) terms, but also with respect to considerations of power and vulnerability, contribution and accountability, and local conceptions of that which is true, beautiful, and good. Specifically, C. B. Fisher (1999) championed the importance of partnership between researchers and research participants (underscoring research as an interpersonal endeavor) in which learning is bidirectional and in which complementarity (if not symmetry) of status is a cherished outcome of research. With respect to research partnerships with AIAN communities in particular, Saunkeah and colleagues (2021) echoed this expansive ethical shift beyond the Belmont principles to recognition not just of individual autonomy but of group autonomy. In the AIAN research context, they promoted the importance of both *sovereignty* as the expression of respect for persons at the group-based level of Tribal Nations and *solidarity* as the expression of tribal commitments to protecting not just tribal members but collective tribal interests and cultural integrity. Moreover, in an extensive project that was years in the making, professional members of the Society of

Indian Psychologists collaboratively developed a critical commentary on the extant Ethics Code of the American Psychological Association (APA). Drawing on similarly expansive commitments to ethical reasoning—albeit originating from principles and approaches that prevail in AIAN community life—the commentary (García & Tehee, 2014) expressed limited confidence in the ability of the APA Ethics Code to resolve several important ethical issues. Instead, the commentary urged APA to consider lessons drawn from Indigenous values, including relationality and storytelling, in revising its code.

### Summary

AIAN communities have experienced disrespectful, irrelevant, and even exploitative research in their midst, and, thus, frequently maintain a skeptical stance toward researchers. Although AIAN communities in the United States have not experienced researcher abuses akin to Nazi medical experiments or the Tuskegee syphilis study, AIAN communities have taken great offense at the routine failures of researchers to engage in proper partnerships with our communities, typically modeled on local conceptions of kinship that privilege core values such as relationship, responsibility, reciprocity, and redistribution (Americans for Indian Opportunity, n.d.). In consequence, AIAN communities have responded by establishing RRBs that assert sweeping authority over community research, demanding in many instances that researchers accede to tribal authority and oversight with respect to ownership, control, access, and possession of research data, materials, and products. Concurrently, ethicists have been rethinking the reigning paradigm that governs social and psychological research, critiquing it for its tacit commitments to abstract, individualist, and Eurocentric philosophical foundations with utterly inadequate attention to the expansive values of relationality and care. In contrast, a relational ethics seeks to express care through research partnerships that are responsive and responsible to research participants. Importantly, AIAN communities have also been acknowledged as collectivities that express both sovereignty and solidarity with respect to research. Thus, psychological inquiry

concerning AIAN life and experience is now recognized to entail ethical commitments beyond the Belmont principles to a broader ethos of collaboration, partnership, and interaction as “good relatives.”

## RELATIONALITY AND RECONCILIATION IN INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

The success of this shift from a deontic individualist ethics to a relational and group-based ethics ultimately hinges on the adoption of *participatory engagement* by psychologists with AIAN community partners. Fortunately, a participatory approach to psychological inquiry has percolated and proliferated in the discipline for several decades.

### Participatory Traditions in Research

Participatory traditions in behavioral science research have emerged from diverse historical antecedents. Brown and Tandon (1983) compared two such approaches—action research and participatory research—in search of commonalities and distinctions. Action research (as promoted by scholars such as Kurt Lewin, Chris Argyris, and Eric Trist) was an applied endeavor originating in the United States that entails cycles of analysis in which social scientists collaborate with people in organizations (e.g., business firms) to solve practical problems (e.g., workplace injuries) while contributing to new knowledge. Participatory research (as championed by scholars such as Paulo Freire, Bud Hall, and Marja-Liisa Swantz) was an emancipatory endeavor originating in the Global South that entails colearning and consciousness building in which teams of inquirers work together to achieve structural transformations for improving lives (e.g., analysis of local land-owning patterns for political mobilization to remedy unfair tax advantages). According to Brown and Tandon, both approaches value useful knowledge and developmental change but differ with respect to their ideologies. Whereas action research stresses the individual (often in a larger group context), draws on a consensus-based social theory, and centers on problems of growth

and efficiency, participatory research stresses a societal analysis (e.g., economic conditions), draws on a conflict-based social theory, and centers on problems of oppression and equity. Thus, the political economies that shape action research and participatory research, respectively, differ in important ways. The principal distinction is that the former involves working within systems to develop solutions that would presumably benefit everyone in the system, while the latter involves allying with marginalized or oppressed constituencies to develop solutions that might benefit these constituencies by upending unjust systems and the status quo.

Although Brown and Tandon (1983) traced distinctive origins, attributes, and commitments of these applied research traditions, the reality for contemporary inquiry in psychology is that these approaches have been selectively adopted, adapted, blended, transformed, and circulated in the discipline since their emergence after World War Two. In terms of visible formations within contemporary psychology in the United States, these approaches endure in social, organizational, feminist, critical, and liberationist psychology. The subfield of psychology that is perhaps most closely aligned with participatory traditions of inquiry is community psychology (Kloos et al., 2021). Community psychology was born at the Swampscott conference of 1965, in which almost 40 psychologists (including just one woman) convened to chart a disciplinary path forward with respect to community mental health (Kelly, 1987; Walsh, 1987). Dissatisfied with the medicalizing tenets of both clinical psychology and psychiatry as well as with the lab-based conventions of social psychology, community psychologists embraced an expansive view of community mental health and pursued broad-based social interventions for preventing maladaptation, promoting well-being, and remedying social injustice in U.S. society. Throughout its 50 years as a recognized subfield of psychology (Tebe, 2016), community psychology has promoted psychological inquiry that is contextualized (rather than reductive), system-focused (rather than person-centered), ecologically

embedded (rather than individuated), diversity-oriented (rather than universalizing), strengths-based (rather than deficit-based), collaborative (rather than expert-driven), empowering (rather than victim blaming), preventative (rather than rehabilitative), and values-driven (rather than disengaged).

Consequently, the sine qua non of community psychology is participatory engagement with people in their communities. Long cultivated within this subfield, *participatory action research* (PAR; see Brydon-Miller, 1997; Chevalier & Buckles, 2019) is one influential, integrative approach to such community-engaged inquiry. Kidd and Kral (2005) described PAR as a “macro method” that entails “creation of a context in which knowledge development and change might occur” (p. 187). PAR depends on a cyclical spiraling of reflecting, planning, acting, and observing for which the “process is, in effect, the method” (p. 189). Effective PAR fundamentally depends on proper attitudes among researchers and explicitly integrates three commitments: *participation*, requiring efforts to share power; *action*, requiring efforts to induce social change; and *research*, requiring efforts to produce new knowledge. Importantly, however, the generation of knowledge in PAR is not an end in itself but rather a means to transformative social change. In this sense, “knowledge is thus derivative” (p. 189). Finally, with respect to broader disciplinary obsessions with method, rigor, and science, PAR subsumes the selection and application of specific research methods both to the problems at hand and to the preferences of local partners. In a recent update, Kidd and colleagues (2018) acknowledged that shifting societal trends such as the assertion of greater agency by marginalized communities may require a rethinking of some aspects of PAR. One example includes reimagining the nature of participation for communities that have asserted greater control over research in their midst. These authors also acknowledged the challenge of describing “how to do a PAR ‘project,’” even wondering whether the field needs to envision “PAR careers rather than PAR projects” (p. 78).

Despite the perhaps inherent resistance of participatory approaches to procedural “how to” instructions or recommendations (cf. Chapter 15 in this volume), the principles that might guide such research have been thoroughly articulated in recent years in the field of public health. Israel and colleagues (2013) designated nine such principles for community-based participatory research: (a) acknowledge the community as the unit of identity, (b) build on community strengths and resources, (c) facilitate a collaborative and equitable partnership that entails power-sharing and attends to social disadvantage in all phases of the research, (d) foster among all partners both colearning and capacity building, (e) balance the mutual benefits of knowledge generation and intervention for everyone involved, (f) focus locally on the relevance of public health and ecological perspectives to attend to multiple determinants of health, (g) engage in systems development through cyclical and iterative processes, (h) disseminate research findings to partners and engage them in knowledge dissemination, and (i) prepare for a long-term process that commits to sustainability. Based on these principles, it should be clear that participatory engagement in psychological research requires attitudes, orientations, and preparations by researchers that differ from workaday knowledge production in the discipline. Participatory research requires that researchers prepare to interact with community partners much more intensively and proactively than is customary, dispense with the usual expert-layman distinctions by acknowledging the contributions of all partners, provide additional resources to community partners to assist with their engagement in research and commitment to the partnership, and consider issues of sustainability of solutions from the very beginning of the partnership.

### Participatory Research With Indigenous Communities

Given the misuses and abuses in past research with AIAN communities, it is unsurprising that participatory approaches have risen to the fore in psychological inquiry with Indigenous community

partners. P. A. Fisher and Ball (2003) promoted tribal participatory research, which builds on principles and practices of PAR while tailoring these for partnerships with AIAN communities. Specifically, Fisher and Ball recognized two facets of AIAN community experiences that require research accommodation: historical trauma (i.e., colonial oppression and post/colonial suffering; Hartmann et al., 2019) and intertribal cultural diversity. The authors identified four mechanisms to accommodate these facets. The first is *tribal oversight of research*, which includes three components: (a) a formal resolution authorizing the research from the tribal governing body, (b) oversight committees appointed by the tribal government to regulate research activities, and (c) a tribal research code that sets forth research regulations. The second is the *use of a facilitator* to manage the relationships between academic researchers and tribal committee/staff members in meetings to ensure balance among interests and perspectives. The third is the employment and training of AIAN *community members as project staff*, which is essential for building local research capacity in Indian Country. A final mechanism is the adoption of *culturally specific methods for assessment and intervention* in research projects. This entails the local vetting of possible or proposed interventions—along with similar review of tests and measures for assessing intervention impacts—with respect to their relevance and resonance with community values, orientations, and sensibilities. Fisher and Ball also explored the implications of these mechanisms, which frequently require expansions in project timelines, budgetary considerations, outcomes assessments, and researcher-community relationships.

Interestingly, key features of tribal participatory research (and participatory research in general) have found their way into research policies concerned with Indigenous populations in other nations. One striking instance of the institutionalization of a participatory approach occurred when the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (Canadian Institutes for Health Research, 2007) formally adopted as its official funding policy the *Guidelines for Health Research Involving*

*Aboriginal People*. Among its 15 articles was an explicit requirement that “communities should be given the option of a participatory-research approach” (p. 3). Other articles in these *Guidelines* addressed researcher respect for Indigenous worldviews and cultural protocols, community jurisdiction over research, community control of access to traditional knowledge, community involvement in interpretation of data and review of findings, community rights to its intellectual property, protection of community anonymity, assurances of community benefit (including local education and training about research), and credit for contributions by community members. In 2010, the *Guidelines* were superseded by the Tri-Council Policy Statement for *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (Canadian Institutes for Health Research et al., 2014), which continues to govern not just health research but all government-funded research in Canada. Importantly, the ethical commitments conveyed in the 2007 *Guidelines* are largely preserved in Chapter Nine of the Tri-Council Policy, including requirements for community engagement. One of the 22 articles in this chapter stated that “researchers and communities should consider applying a collaborative and participatory approach as appropriate to the nature of the research, and the level of ongoing engagement desired by the community” (p. 128). Clearly, as expressed in these policies, Canada has taken serious measures to remedy the legacy of irrelevant, offensive, and exploitative research in Indigenous communities.

With respect to AIAN community research, the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) has not adopted formal policies that are specific to these communities, but in 2015 it established a Tribal Health Research Office within the Office of the Director at NIH to ensure consultation and collaboration with Tribal Nations regarding NIH policies and programs. This requires coordination and support of tribal health research-related activities across NIH, including the convening of annual tribal consultation sessions and support for a Tribal Advisory Committee. Comprising representatives appointed by AIAN tribal



governments, the purpose of this committee is to ensure that NIH research funding helps to address the health inequities of Indian Country. Moreover, in recent years, the NIH has issued requests for applications for research funding that are explicitly designated for AIAN health issues (including addiction and suicide) and that encourage community engagement and participation for ensuring acceptable and useful research projects. Beyond such occasional requests for applications, NIH also funds the Native American Research Centers for Health portfolio. Supported through an NIH partnership with the federal Indian Health Service, these research grants are designated for competitive award directly to AIAN governments (or associated tribal organizations) for administering projects in partnership with academic researchers of their own choosing. Created to support tribal health priorities, community capacity building, and engagement of academic researchers in AIAN health research, these grants reflect a distinctive federal commitment to promote AIAN participation in community research. NIH also supports the Intervention Research to Improve Native American Health program, which is designed to support health intervention research in partnership with AIAN communities (K. Etz, personal communication, March 19, 2021).

Beyond NIH, the National Science Foundation in the United States, which funds social science research (including psychology research), primarily addresses AIAN research through funding to bolster the number of AIAN-identified researchers in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. It also supports a small Tribal College and University Program to fund research in these institutions. Finally, federal funding is also available to AIAN communities for health surveillance and program evaluation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (which funds most costs for the national network of Tribal Epidemiology Centers, which are explicitly tasked with supporting Tribal Nations) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (which routinely requires collection of basic information pertaining to the health

programs it funds throughout the nation, including in Indian Country). In comparison with Canada, then, the United States lags in adopting formal research policies that mandate participatory approaches in funded research, even though the amount of research funding to and for Indigenous communities is higher in the United States (which, of course, has a larger Indigenous population).

### **Contextual Realities of Indigenous Research**

Again, the promise of participatory approaches in research with AIAN communities is to repair the rending of relationships by past researchers in pursuit of contemporary reconciliation through new kinds of academic-community collaborations. To that end, initial discussions between academic researchers and community partners are likely to benefit from frank exchange concerning priorities, sensitivities, values, and expectations by all parties. These arise from and are situated within respective academic and AIAN community contexts, the implications of which are not always self-evident to the various partner constituencies. There are at least four summary contextual realities that academic researchers need to understand about AIAN communities. First, owing to past colonial subjugation, AIAN communities are sensibly sensitive to issues of autonomy and exploitation in research partnerships, which heightens the need for researcher awareness, respect, transparency, communication, and accountability (and, indeed, the need for contemporary reconciliation in research collaborations). Second, owing to cultural difference in the context of enduring power asymmetries, AIAN communities are committed to notions of what is good, right, proper, or fair (i.e., ethics) in ways that differ from those governing psychology research (motivating the shift, already described, from a deontic to a relational ethics). Third, AIAN communities are increasingly dedicated to celebrating and protecting Indigenous traditional knowledge and practices (Battiste, 2007). Owing to routine (and offensive) Euro-settler misappropriation of these, AIAN communities experience great ambivalence about whether and how to share such knowledges and

practices, desiring to signal the centrality of these traditions for modern-day health and life but needing to protect these vulnerable traditions from ongoing misappropriation. Balancing these trade-offs requires close consultation and mutual trust. Finally, AIAN communities frequently contend with grave challenges and scarce resources, meaning that there is too much to be done by too few with too little support and funding. Although managing researchers and research in our midst is clearly necessary, doing so remains another demand on limited resources. It is, thus, important for academic researchers to recognize that the incentives for AIAN communities to engage in research partnerships include alignment of research with tribal priorities, utility of results, accessibility of findings, contribution of resources to the community (e.g., employment of research staff), and general efficiency of research activities, processes, and products.

In a parallel sense, in the spirit of relationality and reconciliation, there are at least four summary contextual realities that AIAN community partners would benefit from understanding about academic researchers and research. First, most academic researchers are typically conscientious and responsible people who do not intend to offend or distress others; it is unfair to generalize from the attitudes and behaviors of a few “bad apples” to all researchers. Consequently, within a relational frame, a proper response to lapses by academic researchers may be to seek contextual explanations for such lapses rather than to presume negative character attributes, with the immediate goal being to pursue communication, negotiation, recommitment, and remedy on all sides. Second, for most academic researchers, the primary reward for engaging in research is not primarily income, prestige, or power, but rather pursuit of intellectual questions or interests within the domain of one’s professional expertise. One implication is that academic researchers may be unable or unwilling to accommodate every conceivable research request by AIAN communities. Importantly, a norm in some sectors of academia is the pursuit of one’s intellectual interests as an entrepreneurial endeavor, and academic researchers can become

accustomed to exercising immense freedom and control in their research efforts. Adoption of a participatory approach to research clearly upends these norms, but it does so against a backdrop of extensive researcher autonomy. Third, research universities are run by their faculty, resulting in a wide range of competing obligations for academic researchers. In this sense, scholars at research universities are metaprofessionals who must juggle responsibility for research, teaching, and service. Balancing so many professional obligations and personal commitments is challenging. Moreover, those who undertake time-consuming participatory research are often disadvantaged in their research productivity relative to many colleagues. Thus, on occasion, efforts by academic researchers to manage multiple responsibilities beyond research proper falters, and lapses in project partnerships can result. Finally, the professional reputation of academic researchers is based on prominent publication of research findings. Appraisal of research quality is tied to methodological rigor and independence of analysis, and failure to publish the right number of articles in the right kinds of journals using the right forms of analysis in one’s discipline can result in disapproval by one’s colleagues. Again, participatory approaches entail alternative norms, but even dedicated academic researchers who embrace a relational ethics must contend with the broad pressures and sanctions associated with the academic context.

Most analyses of research with Indigenous populations focus on observations, analyses, and recommendations targeting academic research and researchers more so than focusing on AIAN communities. As an Indigenous research psychologist, I close this section with a few additional words for AIAN communities who are considering entry into participatory research with academic partners. The frame for these suggestions and recommendations is the shift beyond a deontic ethics to a relational ethics (as already discussed). First, I suggest that AIAN communities should partner with researchers based on researcher reputation, experience, and understanding of community priorities. Partnerships with new or unknown researchers should unfold carefully to

afford community appraisal of researcher attitudes, values, and commitments in relational fashion. Second, I suggest that AIAN community partners should make clear their expectations of researchers early on to ensure researcher awareness of tribal plans for much greater involvement in research oversight. Indeed, mention of tribal RRBs rather than “tribal IRBs” may help to prevent researcher misimpressions that AIAN communities are only concerned with protecting human subjects in a narrow sense. Third, I suggest that AIAN community partners should recognize and respect the need for intellectual integrity in research publications by engaging in relational fashion to negotiate creative ways to address any community concerns about research findings. Usually, in good participatory fashion, communities and researchers can settle on consensual resolution of such concerns in research reporting. Finally, I suggest that AIAN community partners should interact with researchers not primarily through by-the-book procedures or contractual adherence but rather through open-minded, individually tailored acts of interactive problem-solving and mutual goodwill. Indeed, within a participatory approach, it is the relationships rather than the rules, the interpersonal dynamics rather than the rote procedures, that matter most for success (in fact, an obsession with bureaucracy may be a salient vestige of the colonial legacy in our communities).

#### METHODOLOGY AND METHOD IN INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

As I have already conveyed, psychology research with AIAN communities requires an alternative (or alter-Native) disposition and orientation if it is to prevent harm, promote reconciliation, and provide benefit in the wake of long histories of colonial subjugation. That is, for psychological inquiry to proceed in anticolonial fashion with Indigenous community partners, commitments to relationality and repair are fundamental. Thus far, I have considered legacies of misuse and abuse by researchers, an expansive shift in ethical frames, and the importance of participatory engagement in future AIAN research partnerships. These are

principally concerned with attitude, approach, and interaction in research activities, but what are the implications of these commitments for the adoption of specific methodologies (i.e., rationales or logics of inquiry) and methods (i.e., systematic procedures for analyzing “data”) in psychological inquiry? Guba and Lincoln (1994) elaborated on the distinctions between *methodology* and *method*, in which the former arise from paradigmatic commitments by researchers to certain ontological (i.e., concerning the nature of reality) and epistemological (i.e., concerning the nature of knowledge) tenets, while the latter entail systematic procedures of reducing and transforming observations into findings. Importantly, such procedures can be adopted or incorporated across a variety of methodological paradigms (e.g., positivism, constructivism). The diversity and pluralism of knowledge production in psychology with respect to these distinctions is already evident across the various sections of this handbook. For my purposes, I will consider important trends in Indigenous research with respect to methodology and method, all of which emerge from an awareness of and sensitivity to the postcolonial politics of knowledge production.

#### Decolonizing Methodologies

Academic knowledge production entails the exercise of expertise and authority that is premised on access to resources and status (i.e., “loot and clout”; Ryan, 1976). Scholars with tenure in research universities occupy coveted positions of privilege and autonomy. By virtue of our standing, such researchers can disproportionately influence others through our ideas, analyses, and findings. In short, we exercise power in society. But many voices, visions, and viewpoints are not well represented in academic research, including those of AIAN people. For these reasons, knowledge production is inherently political: Research entails the asymmetrical exercise of power by privileged constituencies who hold differing—even conflicting—perspectives about issues of concern to marginalized others, including Indigenous communities. Past colonial subjugation deliberately sought the eradication and displacement of

Indigenous knowledges as uncivilized or savage, so AIAN communities today are deeply committed to the preservation and protection of remnant traditional knowledges and see value in these for charting self-determined, postcolonial futures. Beyond the political act of reclaiming Indigenous knowledge traditions proper, AIAN communities also seek to adopt (and adapt) modern knowledge practices in their own ways and on their own terms to meet pressing needs. It is for these purposes that knowledge and inquiry in psychology seems most relevant for AIAN lives, especially in practical domains such as education, health, leadership, and governance. Individual tribal members and distinct tribal communities must determine for themselves whether and how research activities and analyses pertain to their immediate situations, yielding interesting possibilities for agentic adoption, selective adaptation, or sweeping rejection of research.

A seminal contribution pertaining to these issues was the 1999 publication of *Decolonizing Methodologies* by the Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Writing about social research and Indigenous peoples in her homeland of Aotearoa (New Zealand), Smith (2012) synthesized and summarized global trends in research about Indigenous populations in critical fashion with an eye toward decolonizing such research. Importantly, she observed:

Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centering our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes. (p. 41)

Thus, Smith (2012) provided a sensitive, nuanced, and elegant argument for wresting authority and control over Indigenous research away from autonomous (and unaccountable) academic researchers and instead for recentering such research predominantly within the realm of Indigenous self-determination. Using a metaphor

of ocean tides, Smith depicted an Indigenous research agenda that includes explicit reference to psychological issues in three interrelated process domains: decolonization, transformation, and healing (p. 121). With respect to methodology in psychology proper, Wendt and Gone (2012) identified four features of qualitative inquiry that might advance decolonization in AIAN community research. Specifically, they observed that qualitative research could contextualize AIAN experiences within the colonial legacy, center AIAN cultural commitments, privilege insider (i.e., emic) AIAN perspectives, and preserve AIAN voice in psychology research.

Since then, attention to decolonization—as a self-conscious commitment to undo the legacies of colonization as these continue to structure modern life—has begun to circulate more widely in psychology (Bhatia, 2017; Goodman & Gorski, 2014), including in special issues of psychology journals (Adams et al., 2015; Barnes & Siswana, 2018; Carolissen & Duckett, 2018; Seedat & Suffla, 2017). Concurrently, some Indigenous scholars have contested the adoption of this term for “metaphorical” purposes (Tuck & Yang, 2012), in which *decolonization* is applied to broad antioppression or emancipatory projects (as in “decolonizing research,” “decolonizing methodologies,” “decolonizing psychology”) rather than to formal restoration of Indigenous relationships to land (including a literal return of dispossessed lands to Indigenous control). In a recent special issue of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* dedicated to research methods, I proposed that decolonization was best conceived as an approach to research that “is methodological without being a methodology” (Gone, 2021, p. 260). I adopted this approach to recover a specific domain of colonized knowledge, namely, traditional American Indian therapeutic expertise. By recounting the healing career of the 19th-century medicine man Bull Lodge among my own *Aaniiih* people and explicating the implicit therapeutic rationale that structured his doctoring practices, I grounded this tradition in longstanding tribal conceptions of land (and relationships to land). I then traced the significance of these conceptions

and relationships for method, power, and process in the decolonial reclamation of AIAN therapeutic traditions prior to charting the general implications of a decolonization agenda for advancing social justice through knowledge, practice, and training in professional psychology.

### Indigenous Knowledge Traditions

*Indigenous psychology* (in contrast to local or ethnopsychologies that are “indigenous” to all human communities) emerges at the confluence of psychology and Indigenous peoples. There are at least four domains circumscribed by this concept: (a) descriptive formulations of mind, mentality, and behavior in particular Indigenous communities (i.e., cultural psychologies of Indigenous peoples; see Gone, 2019b); (b) illuminating explanations of Indigenous life that privilege these formulations (e.g., “loneliness” as the Salish Flathead idiom for clinical depression; O’Neill, 1998); (c) creative application of these formulations in local programs, interventions, and services (e.g., ceremonial practices as treatment for addiction; Gone & Calf Looking, 2011, 2015); and (d) novel contributions to psychological knowledge based on Indigenous “ways of knowing” (Deloria et al., 2018). Each domain entails the apprehension, elucidation, and/or application of Indigenous knowledges, but the latter domain is perhaps most directly tied to methodologies and methods in AIAN community research. Indigenous knowledges refer to the diverse knowledge preferences and practices of Indigenous peoples, whether modern or traditional, but even modern Indigenous knowledges typically trace some continuity with the Indigenous past. By way of brief background, Indigenous knowledge traditions (IKTs) can be characterized with respect to at least four attributes: (a) IKTs are usually described as originating prior to European contact and colonization; (b) IKTs were altered, disrupted, suppressed, and sometimes even eradicated during European colonization; (c) despite such historical adversity, some features and forms of IKTs persist in AIAN communities today; and (d) such modern expressions of IKTs reflect these long histories of contact, subjugation,

and exchange (for additional explication, see Gone, 2019a).

Castellano (2000) identified three sources and five characteristics of ITKs. Sources of ITKs include: (a) *traditional teachings* that are reproduced across generations in Indigenous communities, such as various myths and tales (as illustrated in Gone, 2019b) and technological know-how (e.g., tepee construction, hide tanning); (b) *empirical knowledge* that accumulated across experiences and over time through careful observation (e.g., migration patterns of animal relatives); and (c) *revealed knowledge* of a sacred or mystical quality that is spiritually obtained through dreams and visions (e.g., Black Elk’s grand vision, as discussed in Gone, 2016). For purposes of psychological inquiry with AIAN communities, the sources of principal interest would be relevant empirical knowledge and traditional teachings (especially as these address familiar psychological domains such as cognition, motivation, development, identity, maladaptation, and behavior change), but usually not revealed knowledge owing to its spiritual or religious character. Castellano also described the following five attributes of IKTs: (a) *personal*—tied to the integrity and perceptiveness of the knower rather than to the general and abstract claims of unknown others; (b) *oral*—communicated in-person (within the broader context of interpersonal responsibility for transfers of sacred power) as opposed to written or recorded for sharing with unknown others; (c) *experiential*—subjectively felt, richly interpreted, and implicitly self-referential as opposed to abstracted and removed from lived experience; (d) *holistic*—comprehended in integrative fashion across all domains of the self (physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual) as opposed to merely rationally considered; and (e) *narratively conveyed*—shared through stories (in keeping with diverse genres employing oblique instruction) as opposed to delineating abstract principles and propositions (or rendering admonitions and judgments).

Vine Deloria, Jr. (2001) explained that “the key to understanding Indian knowledge of the world is to remember that the emphasis

was on the particular, not on general laws and explanations of how things worked” (p. 22). This observation captures the divergences that can appear between remnant IKTs and dominant scientific knowledge practices in psychology. Notable characteristics of the former are that salient knowledge preferences and practices are: personal and particular rather than abstract and general; holistically experienced across rational, emotional, and intuitive registers; valued for their subjective, introspective, and self-relevant qualities; evaluated with respect to the authority, influence, and reputation of the knower; and disseminated within a context of relationships and responsibilities. In contrast, notable characteristics of the latter are that salient knowledge preferences and practices in psychology are: probabilistic, abstract, and general (i.e., nomothetic) rather than deterministic, concrete, and particular (i.e., idiographic); rationally assessed in skeptical fashion; valued for their “objective” (i.e., distanced and unbiased) qualities; evaluated with respect to their reliance on rigorous and robust research designs and subsequent replication of findings; and disseminated through publication as journal articles following anonymous interrogation and critique by peers. Despite the reductive hazards of drawing sharp contrasts (e.g., IKTs are themselves integrative of other knowledge traditions, disciplinary psychology has been marked by methodological pluralism since its inception), such divergences in knowledge characteristics present certain philosophical, methodological, and practical challenges to psychology research in AIAN communities. And yet, in the past 2 decades, Indigenous scholars—mostly outside of psychology—have sought to harness IKTs for their methodological potential to contribute to academic knowledge production.

### Indigenous Research Methodologies

Smith (2012) initially set forth the conceptual and political terms for decolonizing methodologies in Indigenous research. In directly addressing the politics of knowledge, she allowed that appropriate research with Indigenous communities need not exclude “Western” ideas and approaches but rather

resituated these within a broad pro-Indigenous ethos or ethic in service to Indigenous self-determination. Subsequent attention to *Indigenous research methodologies* (IRMs) has emerged from Indigenous scholars, primarily in the fields of Indigenous Studies or Indigenous education. Most summary accounts (e.g., Windchief & San Pedro, 2019) trace the origins of IRMs to Smith, as elaborated by the Canadian Cree scholar Shawn Wilson and the Canadian Cree/Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach. In *Research Is Ceremony*, Wilson (2008) considered the distinctive conceptual foundations of Indigenous research, explaining that the shared and defining quality of Indigenous ontology and epistemology is *relationality* (which, he noted, constitutes reality) and that the shared and defining quality of Indigenous axiology and methodology is *accountability to relationships*. He outlined the practical implications on relationality and accountability for inquiry as sequentially determining the selection of what to study (i.e., topic), how to gather information (i.e., methods), how to interpret information (i.e., analysis), and how to transfer knowledge (i.e., presentation). He concluded that research is ceremonial in the sense that “the purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves . . . that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world” (p. 11). Wilson modeled such relationality in his book through copious incorporation of conversations, dialogues, and exchanges with others in presenting these ideas.

Defining IRMs as “the theory and method of conducting research that flows from an Indigenous epistemology” (p. 20), Kovach (2009) noted the resemblance and overlap between IRMs and various qualitative methodologies even while asserting that “there is a need for methodologies that are inherently and wholly Indigenous” (p. 13) and that such “Indigenous approaches to seeking knowledge are not of a Western worldview” (p. 21). She reinforced many of the same ideas discussed by Smith (2012) and Wilson (2008), such as the importance of relationality, the adoption of a decolonizing lens, and the resituating of

research within Indigenous community priorities and interests. Beyond this, Kovach also delineated a Plains Cree epistemology based on the pre-reserve traditional practice of bison hunting. Kovach's signature contribution, however, was her emphasis on narrative as an IRM (i.e., on "story as both method and meaning" [p. 94]). Specifically, Kovach described storytelling as the primary Indigenous modality for disseminating knowledge. Although narrative features prominently in all human societies, she observed that Indigenous stories stand out for their anchoring to particular places rather than their orientation to linear time (cf. Gone, 2008). Moreover, according to Kovach, Indigenous storytelling preserves a holistic relationality that ties speaker and listener within immediate and unfolding context, presenting problems for researchers when transferring these accounts from oral to literate form. Finally, for Kovach, Indigenous storytelling enacts and contributes to collective memory. Each of these attributes renders storytelling as a preferred means for undertaking Indigenous research that requires an "understanding [of] their form, purpose, and substance from a tribal perspective" so as not to "miss the point, possibly causing harm" (p. 97).

More recently, Dawson et al. (2017) conducted a systematic review of IRMs and identified 64 peer-reviewed journal articles from 11 bibliographic databases that they organized into five themes: general Indigenous frameworks, Western methods in an Indigenous context, community-based participatory research, storytelling, and culture-specific methods. They noted that the term *method* was used somewhat ambiguously across this literature to refer both to framework and procedure, with the former giving rise to the first thematic category. Beyond this, the authors classified photovoice, autoethnography, mixed methods, and Kovach's (2009) conversational method as those most familiar within a "Western" context, and catalogued a variety of culture-specific methods that emerged from or were tied to specific Indigenous communities (e.g., offering tobacco ties or participating in talking circles). From this latter category, one method that has circulated widely

is *Two-Eyed Seeing*, which entails "learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing, and to using both these eyes together" (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335). For example, Hutt-McLeod and colleagues (2019) adopted a Two-Eyed Seeing approach in First Nations youth mental health, thereby offering youth "the choice between standard Western mental health services, or Indigenous methods of improving well-being, or a combination of the two" (p. 42). Dawson and colleagues concluded that "research done in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples cannot only reveal knowledge, but also decolonize, rebalance power, and provide healing" (p. 12). IRMs are, thus, conceived as an eclectic variety of methodological frameworks and procedures—all inspired by, originating in, or connected to Indigenous communities—that remain closely associated with existing critical, qualitative, and contextual inquiry in the behavioral sciences. What differentiates these, however, is their adoption, deployment, and promotion in accordance with a relentlessly relational ethos that is heralded as emancipatory for AIAN communities.

Promotion of IRMs is still relatively new and has thus far rarely appeared in psychology. A March 2021 search for "Indigenous methodologies" in PsycInfo returned 122 journal articles. Most of these did not appear in psychology journals and did not substantively address or incorporate IRMs per se. In the context of mental health, Lucero (2011) deconstructed scientific methodologies to advocate for AIAN therapeutic traditions as evidence-based practices in decolonizing fashion. Drawing on Smith (2012), she advocated for adoption of qualitative methods and narrative forms of data collection for outcome assessment in AIAN health organizations. Three other articles appeared in community psychology journals. Chung-Do and colleagues (2019) described a Native Hawaiian community-academic partnership that committed to participatory approaches and IRMs (but they did not discuss procedures associated with data collection or analysis).

Furness and colleagues (2016) described a similar partnership in a Maori setting and noted that a non-Maori researcher undertook interviews about adult literacy education in a conversational style with attention to the discursive and reflexive aspects of data collection. Gone (2017) discussed the ethics and dynamics of discussions of AIAN sacred knowledge in IRMs. Finally, only three articles appeared in any of the 90 psychology journals published by the APA. Dennis (2016) adopted Kovach's (2009) conversational method to interview Lakota elders about their traumatic experiences (she analyzed these interviews using familiar thematic analysis). Hill and colleagues (2010) sought to decolonize personality assessment by undertaking a "quantitative-qualitative-Indigenous" mixed methods study, in which their "quantitative results guided the qualitative approach," as "heavily informed and directed by Indigenous methodologies which privilege the perspective of the colonized" (p. 17). Lopez (2021) adopted an "Indigenous quantitative methodology"—the embedding of psychometric analysis within a pro-Indigenous ethic—to assess the construct validity of a new scale based on responses from members of the Quechan and Cocopah Tribal Nations.

In sum, IRMs are holistic and relational, situated and contextualized, practical and relevant, responsible and accountable, anchored in lived experience, dependent on personal narratives, and expressive of Indigenous language and worldview. In application they may sometimes seem indistinguishable from data collection and analysis elsewhere in the qualitative social sciences, but they may also feature adaptations and augmentations that enhance or underscore relationships between researchers and respondents (and relevant others) and between content and context. Elsewhere, I have reviewed several misgivings about the ways in which IRMs are sometimes promoted (including occasional engagement in untenable ethnoracial and cultural essentialism, insulation of Indigenous research from critical scrutiny, emphasis on aesthetic forms more than substantive findings, or obscuring intellectual debts to "Western" critical theories

and approaches; Gone, 2019a). Nevertheless, it would be reckless to overlook the potential for IRMs to contribute to an expansive knowledge in psychology. IRMs seem readily compatible with (some forms of) qualitative inquiry (when these methods are deployed in pro-Indigenous fashion) and appear to "stand in" for practices associated with "primary orality" (Ong, 2012). Indeed, much of what has been claimed about IKTs and IRMs is recognizable from Ong's (1986) systematic comparisons of orality and literacy, in which "primary oral culture"

keeps its thinking close to the human life world, personalizing things and issues, and storing knowledge in stories. Categories are unstable mnemonically. Stories you can remember. In its typical mindset, the oral sensibility is out to hold things together, to make and retain agglomerates, not to analyze (which means to take things apart). (p. 25)

In consequence, IRMs invite Indigenous scholars and other researchers to forge a new methodological synthesis that might bridge oral tradition and academic knowledge production even as it elucidates connections between parts and wholes that may afford more integrative perspectives on important psychological domains in AIAN communities.

## CLOSING

Indigenous communities in the United States have improbably survived centuries of European colonization. Persisting within a settler nation-state, contemporary AIANs endeavor to chart robust futures in the context of ongoing poverty, marginality, and discrimination. AIAN communities frequently express marked ambivalence (or outright anger) toward psychosocial research, recognizing that past research has been irrelevant, insensitive, or even exploitative. And yet, Indigenous survivance stands to benefit from appropriate research across multiple psychological domains, including the design of strengths-based community



prevention programs, the tracing of psychosocial impacts from the legacy of colonization, the amelioration of postcolonial pathologies and mental health problems, the formation of resurgent cultural identities in the context of societal racism and discrimination, and so on. In this chapter, I reviewed the history of AIAN communities and psychosocial research, the promise of a relational research ethics to provide greater benefit for these communities, the politics of Indigenous knowledge in the context of postcolonial survival, and the methodological innovations that might arise through a synthesis of modern academic and Indigenous traditional approaches to knowing and knowledge production. In so doing, I aimed to promote academic-community partnerships that will empower AIAN communities as they vigorously exercise sovereignty in service to relentlessly self-determined futures.

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