



education review // reseñas educativas

editors: david j. blacker / gustavo e. fischman / melissa cast-brede / gene v glass

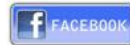
a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

February 19, 2014

ISSN 1094-5296

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the
College of Education and Human Services of the University of Delaware
the National Education Policy Center, and the
Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University

Follow *Education Review* on Facebook



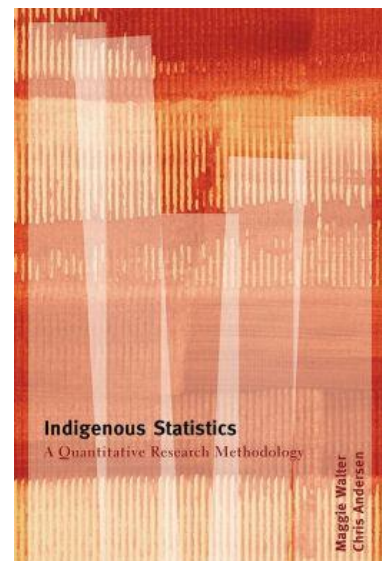
and on Twitter: #EducReview

Walter, Maggie & Chris Andersen. (2013) *Indigenous Statistics: A Quantitative Research Methodology*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Pp. 159 ISBN 978-1-61132-293-4

Reviewed by Nicole Blalock
Arizona State University

Indigenous Statistics: A Quantitative Research Methodology is, as the title suggests, a book about indigenizing quantitative research. But it is more specifically an appeal to all who work in data collection (e.g., census organizations, state departments of education, academic researchers) to address the need for more mindful practice around the frameworks that shape quantitative research focusing on indigenous peoples (and if extrapolated, other marginalized groups).



Citation: Blalock, Nicole. (2014 February 19) Review of *Indigenous Statistics: A Quantitative Research Methodology* by Maggie Walter and Chris Andersen. *Education Review*, 17. Retrieved [Date] from <http://www.edrev.info/reviews/rev1275.pdf>

From the beginning, **Walters** and **Andersen** acknowledge positionality as being of intrinsic importance to statistical methods, in that how numbers that are generated and used are merely interpretations of reality, yet these data greatly influence understandings of society. They remind us also of how the social, cultural, and political perspectives of the people constructing and interpreting these numbers “infuse” research data.



These ideas, while often talked about among indigenous methodologists, have generally been lost within the reductionistic frameworks often used by statisticians, particularly in educational research. As a counterpoint, the authors effectively weave a more culturally-based and culturally-sensitive framework for indigenous statistics, with cases in point using population and large-scale survey data of indigenous communities, in Chapters 4 and 5 specifically. These examples show how critically questioning data from an indigenous lens transforms research narratives away from damage-centered frameworks (Tuck, 2009) and towards indigenous knowledge frameworks prioritizing process, place, and purposes. The research examples demonstrate an indigenous paradigm of investigating policy issues. Each one begins with the framing of research questions from an indigenous perspective and incorporates a specificity in defining the place (sometimes geographically, sometimes culturally, and sometimes a mixture of both) that captures the complexity of the issues being examined.



The best parts of the book include the following:
Introduction – in which the authors provide an argument for understanding statistics as situated, contextual, and distinguishable (or ripe for distinction) among methodologies and methods; Chapter 2 – *Conceptualizing Quantitative Methodologies* in which the authors develop a theoretical model of quantitative methods and remind readers to not get caught up in the “rule of difference” – which wrongly privileges Western methodological frames against other methodologies, from which differences must be explained in order to be legitimized (Chatterjee, 1993); and Chapter 3 – *The Paradigm of Indigenous Methodologies* in which the authors decouple the method (statistics) from the methodological framing of research in order to distinguish between the tools of research and the position from which researchers design and conduct their

studies. These chapters promote and charge others to be sensible, again, about research, data collection, and analytical approaches that really would be useful for anyone conducting educational research, or research no matter their discipline, particularly if their research involved indigenous, or other marginalized groups.

The remaining chapters utilize the framework the authors have constructed: in Chapter 1 – *Deficit Indigenes*, the authors explore the colonial frames of indigenous identification and policy that continue to shape research on indigenous peoples as being in “deficit” to White settlers; in Chapter 4 – *nayri kati (“Good Numbers”) – Indigenous Quantitative Methodology in Practice*, Walter explores examples of indigenous quantitative methods in Australia by performing secondary analyses from a *nayri kati* frame on extensive data previously compiled by government bodies; in Chapter 5 – *Indigenous Quantitative Methodological Practice – Canada*, Andersen explores research examples of indigenous quantitative practice in Canada, deconstructing government labeling of indigenous bodies to expose Aboriginal diversity previously masked by statistical practice; and in Chapter 6 – *Conclusion – Indigenous Peoples and Statistics*, the authors (as is appropriate for an indigenous methodology) circle back to the beginning and reflect on the way most statistics do not accurately portray the reality of indigenous communities.

In addition, they generate an argument for researchers to begin utilizing indigenous quantitative methodologies to expand the tools available for indigenous research and policy work. These chapters, and their place within the overall text, represent both explanations of indigenous quantitative methodologies and exemplify good research practice when it comes to collecting and analyzing such data in practice.

In sum, as a first step towards differentiating methodologies that shape the way scientists approach research, and the specific methods they might use to conduct research, this book is long overdue. In particular, the authors remind us that no single method can measure a social system, and both qualitative and quantitative methods “can be equally authentically operationalized within an indigenous methodology” (p. 74). Previous theory has focused on indigenous methods being

comprised almost exclusively of research utilizing qualitative methods (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). This book refocuses that conversation and creates a space for quantitative methodologies and methods within indigenous research communities, and shows readers that indigenous methodologies, no matter what method used, are as rigorous as mainstream research frameworks.

Overall, the book was both well-written and conscientiously thought out. The authors successfully present readers with a solid foundation of the historical reasons behind, and contemporary continuing tensions between, indigenous peoples and quantitative research. This book offers something entirely new in the indigenous methodology literature in its examination of quantitative methods for the benefit of indigenous communities. It likewise offers all readers insight as to how numbers used in statistical analysis are not separate from the knowledge from which research is framed, and the knowledge with which research is carried out, calling on us all to critically examine our presuppositions about data and what numbers derived for research purposes indeed mean.

References

- Chatterjee, P. (1993). *A nation and its fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: characteristics, conversations and contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books, LTD.
- Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409–428.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.

About the Reviewer

Nicole Blalock received her Ph.D. in 2013 from the University of California, Davis from the Graduate Group in Education with an emphasis in School Organization & Educational Policy. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in educational equity in diverse schools with the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. Her interdisciplinary research focuses on contemporary society and how its policies and practices influence not only access to education for Indigenous peoples, but also student experiences and attainment in those settings. As a mixed-heritage scholar, Nicole is also interested in issues of representation, identity, and the tensions of tribal memberships, sovereign nation-to-nation politics, and decolonization. Currently, Nicole is developing multiple research streams to enrich understandings of critical Indigenous issues. She continually pushes the boundaries of her research praxis, incorporating multiple and novel methods to demonstrate existing trends and elucidate approaches to support Indigenous educational and schooling success.



Copyright is retained by the first or sole author, who grants right of first publication to the
Education Review.

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the
College of Education and Human Services of the University of Delaware
The National Education Policy Center <http://nepc.colorado.edu>, and the
Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University

Editors

David J. Blacker

Gustavo Fischman

Melissa Cast-Brede

Gene V Glass

Follow *Education Review* on



Facebook and on Twitter:



#EducReview