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OPENING UP

*A grounded theory on how urban Indigenous men of Australia
respond to cardiovascular disease*

*A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Public Health
at Massey University, Wellington,
New Zealand.*

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2013

Abstract

Cardiovascular disease is a silent killer which disproportionately affects indigenous communities and families. This research aims to understand how urban Indigenous men of Australia respond, and relate, to cardiovascular disease. The prevalence of heart disease and mortality rate are sixteen times greater for Indigenous aboriginal men aged 25-44 than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Responses and attitudes toward this disparity are also shaped by the social, economic, and cultural realities which urban Indigenous men of Australia confront on a daily basis.

An emergent or grounded theory methodology, informed by an indigenous centred approach was used for this research. Information from twenty in-depth interviews across two community cohorts (New South Wales and Queensland) was gathered, analysed and compared. A number of thematic categories emerged from the data resulting in the observation that urban Indigenous Australian men respond and comprehend cardiovascular disease through the social phenomenon of *Opening Up* which emerges as both a barrier and a facilitator to improved cardiovascular outcomes.

This research has formulated a theory that the relationship between cardiovascular diseases and urban Indigenous males of Australia is a manifestation and consequence of *colonisation*. This relationship is characterised thematically by four Core Categories of *Knowing, Being Indigenous, Being Male and Doing Nothing*. The phenomenon observed is one of ‘Opening Up’ which is characterised by three Key Processes of *Making Sense, Making Sure and Making Connections*.

Opening Up is contextualised within a myriad of complex realities. The theory generated by *Opening Up* is grounded in the data collected and further reinforced by the literature sourced. While not intended to be generalisable, this theory is consistent with this community’s views, needs and expectations. The promotion of *Opening Up* as a process for consideration is far reaching, perhaps contributing to the Closing the Gaps policy agenda within an Australian public health domain. It may also lend itself to a wider global public health deliberation to better understand the impact of heart disease throughout the world today.

Acknowledgements

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari taku toa i te toa takitini
My strength is derived not from the singular, but from that of the many

This research acknowledges the Indigenous people as the original custodians of the land known as Australia. Their enduring commitment to embracing the spirit and intent of reconciliation is acknowledged. This research pays its respects to the elders past, present and future - for they hold the memories, the traditions, aspirations and future hopes of Aboriginal Australia.

Special acknowledgements to the Yugambah people of Central Queensland and the Eora nation of New South Wales for their trust and support, prior, during and after the course of the interviews. Thanks to Professor Alex Brown, Dr Raj Puranik, Vicki Wade, Jack Bulman and Chris Buchanan for their unwavering support and putting up with the continuous pestering. Thanks also to Professor Norman Sharpe and the Heart Foundation New Zealand for their ability to confront cardiovascular disease front on and to the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand, for their scholarship and support.

Many thanks go to Professor Chris Cunningham and Associate Professor Te Kani Kingi, for their wise counsel, patience and guidance. Also, to Emeritus Professor Sir Mason Durie for initially listening to the reasoning behind this research with a sympathetic ear and thinking how this piece of research could prove meaningful. Thank you for all your support during this journey and of course to Angela Coffey for persisting with the limited technology skills and doing it with a smile.

Finally to my wife Sharyn and our four *tamariki* (children), thank you for putting up with the early mornings and late nights in the “*office*” and the continuous references to academic inquiry.

Otirā he mihi aroha ki a koutou e kore e tae awau ki tēnei tū, ki tēnei taumata e kore ai koutou e tautoko ai e awahi ai hoki.

Glossary

Didgeridoo	A ceremonial musical instrument
Jellargel	A description from the Indigenous people of south Queensland when describing the Dreamtime.
Kanyirninpa	Refers to the concept of holding (on to) the practices and maintenance of cultural lore particularly in the remote desert outback of Western Australia.
Kaupapa	The basis or rationale for undertaking something. A strategy or theme.
Kurunpa	Spirit
Kōrero	Conversation or dialogue.
Koro	Grandfather or granduncle.
Kukatja	A description of the remote desert in Western Australia.
Mamae	Pain or sorrow.
Māori	A term to describe the collective indigenous people of New Zealand.
Mataatua	In ethno-history the Mataatua waka (canoe) was one of several to land on the shores of New Zealand particularly within the wider bay of Plenty area.
Mobo Jarjum	A concept known as the Tomorrow Children and an importance placed on the retention of knowledge, culture and history.
Ngāti Porou	One of the recognised iwi (tribe) of the east coast of the North Island.
Ngurra	Indigenous western Australian concept which describes land.
Paepae	A formal area designated for orators on a marae (forecourt).
Pāpā	Father or patriarch.
Papakāinga	Homeland.
Papatūānuku	Earth Mother.
Ranginui	Sky Father.

Tamariki	Children.
Tāne Māori	Māori male(s).
Taonga	Something of value, a treasure or property.
Te Pūmanawa Hauora	The Research Centre for Māori Health and Development, Massey University, Wellington.
Te Tīmatanga	The beginning or the conception of life.
Te Whare Tapa Whā	A holistic public health model which uses the description of the four sides of a house reflecting holistic health.
Tino Rangatiratanga	Self-determination, leadership and control.
Tjukurrpa	Ancestral dreaming specifically of the Indigenous people of Western Australia.
Waiata	Song.
Walytja	Ancestral dreaming specifically of the Indigenous people of Western Australia.
Whakapapa	Genealogy or family tree.
Whānau	Family or extended family.
Wharekāhika	The original place name for Hick's Bay located on the east coast of the North Island.

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