

Decolonizing Methodologies Linda Tuhiwai Smith

# METHODOLOGIES

Chilisa Indigenous Research Methodologies

Mertens  
Cram &  
Chilisa

INDIGENOUS PATHWAYS  
into Social Research

# UNDERSTANDING RACE WEEK 7

ALANA LENTIN

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# RELEVANT MATERIAL

**The place of race in developing epistemologies and methodologies**

<https://www.alanalentin.net/2018/08/27/the-place-of-race-in-developing-epistemologies-and-methodologies/>

**The Power to Undo**

<https://www.alanalentin.net/2019/08/23/the-power-to-undo/>



**A/Prof Jason De Santolo**

Talk for 'Understanding Race'  
Western Sydney University MRes  
Alana Lentin

# OVERVIEW

- **Introduction: Why is the question of methodologies important?**
- **Terminology**
  - **Epistemologies, paradigms, methodologies**
- **White logics (positivism, imperialist disciplines)**
- **Power/knowledge**
- **Black Feminist Epistemology**
- **Indigenous Women's Standpoint**
- **Kaupapa Maori Research**

## WHY IS THE QUESTION OF METHODOLOGIES IMPORTANT?



“The term research itself is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself , 'research' , is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary.”

LINDA TUHIWAI SMITH, *DECOLONIZING METHODOLOGIES*, P. 1

# CRITICAL LISTENING

**WHY WOULD 'RESEARCH' BE A DIRTY WORD?**

**NAME TWO REASONS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR INDIGENOUS  
OR OTHERWISE RACIALISED PEOPLE TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH?**

# KAUPAPA MAORI RESEARCH

**“When Indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms.”**

**LINDA TUHIWAI SMITH (1999) DECOLONISING METHODOLOGIES, P. 196.**

Smith explains that Kaupapa Maori research is ‘research for, by and with Maori’ (Tuhiwai Smith 2012: 183). It is ‘research which is ‘culturally safe’, which involves the ‘mentorship’ of elders, which is culturally relevant and appropriate while satisfying the rigour of research, and which is undertaken by a Maori researcher, not a researcher who happens to be Maori’ (ibid. 184).

Therefore, it is vital that research that is carried out within the Kaupapa Maori framework is done in the interests and under the guidance of the community concerned. Here there is no notion that the academy or ‘science’ knows best. Rather, she cites Russel Bishop who claims that ‘Maori people should regain control of investigations into Maori people’s lives’ (ibid.). So the ‘whanau’, or the extended family, has a major role to play in deciding on what to research, how to research it and in carrying out the research.

So, the whanau acts as the research supervisors. Smith says that, in this way, research is part of the overall struggle for Maori self-determination. In that Indigenous people struggle to regain control over their lands, their culture and their languages, they are also engaged in a struggle over how knowledge about them is created and to what ends. Because, as has been made clear, knowledge about racialised and colonised peoples has been traditionally developed in order to better control them, and this continues in many ways (particularly in so-called problem areas such as crime, health and education), it is absolutely vital that minoritised people can determine what and how knowledge is produced about them.

In her discussion of Kaupapa Maori, Smith asks whether it is possible for non-Maori people to be involved in the research? She writes that while it is not possible for non-Maori to lead research, they can be involved as part of a team: ‘some non-indigenous researchers, who have a genuine desire to support the cause of Maori, ought to be included, because they can be useful allies and colleagues in research’ (Tuhiwai Smith 2012: 184).

This introduces questions about the relationship between doing research that contributes to the struggle for self-determination or liberation as described by Tuhiwai

Smith and Hill Collins and doing research that is explicitly antiracist and/or seeks to uncover and challenge the workings of race. Clearly the two are interrelated but there are important discussions to be had about the role of the positionality of the researcher in the latter.

This raises important questions about who does research on race and why. There is an undeniably important connection here between lived experience of racism and what epistemologies are brought to the fore in doing research on what race does. However, at the same time, as Tuhiwai Smith says, this should not mean stepping away from the importance of rigour in research. Too often there has been an assumption that experiencing racism makes people too emotionally invested and unable to ably conduct research, a notion that has been debunked by Black feminist and Indigenous scholars.

Nevertheless, because race acts to compartmentalise, working to produce differences between peoples, understood as 'populations', there has also been a parallel division within research by and for racialised and Indigenous people. As Tuhiwai Smith points out in her talk at CUNY the reality of Indigenous peoples is not 'neat and tidy'. The contemporary context in which Indigenous people live is in constant flux, it is dynamic. It is impossible, she says to simply 'stop and Indigenize or decolonize' in a way that doesn't take account of the constantly changing and risk-laden terrain in which we all exist.

Additionally, she says, Maori people are intertwined with white/Pakeha people through intermarriage, and so while they know their Maori selves, their lives and histories have necessary been messily entangled with those of the colonisers. All of this, she says, means that we cannot go back, we can only move in one forward direction, but we do not have any certainty of what we will find in the future. Research, for Tuhiwai Smith, is mainly about building and sustaining relationships, but relationships should not only be forged for the purpose of carrying out research. As researchers, we need to be open to questions such as 'who are you to be doing this research?' 'Research is not a short term relationship for an instrumental gain,' she warns.

## INTRODUCTION: WHY IS THE QUESTION OF METHODOLOGIES IMPORTANT?

Use the Padlet to brainstorm

Open mic.

<https://padlet.com/AlanaLentin/understanding-race-class-padlet-1mjagtjfaq3b6xgd>



## TERMINOLOGY

- Epistemology
- Paradigms
- Methodology

From, Patricia Hill-Collins, *Black Feminist Epistemology*



I Want To Get  
Intersectional  
♥ With You ♥

# **ONTOLOGY (SCIENCE OF BEING)**

What we think is real

# **EPISTEMOLOGY (SCIENCE OF KNOWLEDGE)**

How we know what is real

# **AXIOLOGY (STUDY OF VALUE)**

The system of values we bring to understanding the world

For further reading: [https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-assets/110627\\_book\\_item\\_110627.pdf](https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-assets/110627_book_item_110627.pdf)

# EPISTEMOLOGY

- Overarching theory of knowledge
- What are the standards used to knowledge/why we believe what we believe
- How do power relations shape who we believe?



Hill Collins gives the example of Sally Hemings, who was enslaved by Thomas Jefferson. Her account, that he fathered her children were denied by his white progeny.

PHC, Black Feminist Thought p. 252:

‘Epistemology constitutes an overarching theory of knowledge (Harding 1987). It investigates the standards used to assess knowledge or why we believe what we believe to be true. Far from being the apolitical study of truth, epistemology points to the ways in which power relations shape who is believed and why.’

PHC: Epistemology is important because it determines which questions get asked based on what is seen as important. In the Hemmings example, asking questions about her relationship to Jefferson was not seen as important by those who denied that Black women’s voices should be listened to.

Ultimately this lead to which version of truth will prevail.

# PARADIGMS

- Interpretive frameworks
  - Intersectionality
  - ?



PHC, Black Feminist Thought p. 252:

A paradigm is an interpretative framework such as intersectionality.

Name other interpretive frameworks?

CRT/Race critical  
Feminist theory  
Indigenous theory  
etc.

According to Tuhiwai Smith, is Kaupapa Maori a paradigm? (P. 193)

# METHODOLOGY

- Principles of how to conduct research
- How to apply interpretive frameworks



An example of 'graphic recording' methodology as used in the project, 'Visual Policy Analysis: Developing Policies to Address Anti-Indigenous Racism'

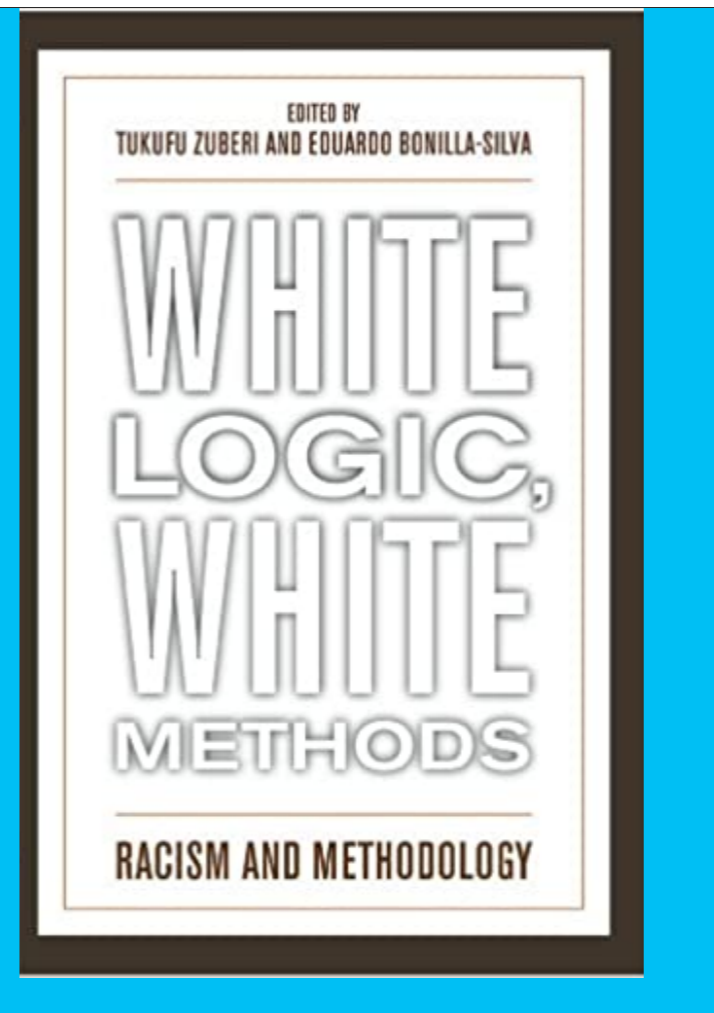
Visual Policy Analysis: Developing Policies to Address Anti-Indigenous Racism:

[https://drawingchange.com/\\_trashed/](https://drawingchange.com/_trashed/)

How can we choose the method that is adequate for reflecting our vision of reality (ontology), our values (axiology) and how we understand knowledge (epistemology)

## WHITE LOGICS

- Artificial distinction between analysis and analysts (Bonilla Silva and Zuberi, p. 4)
- A Eurocentric, male viewpoint has dominated research
- Positivism 'aims to create scientific descriptions of reality by producing objective generalisations' (PHC, p. 255)
- White logic: objectivity is not only achievable but yields 'better' research results
- Race is used as a variable in research without showing how it is constructed
- The epistemically racist origins of science (natural and social) are obscured
- The colonial/imperial roots of the social sciences are not admitted



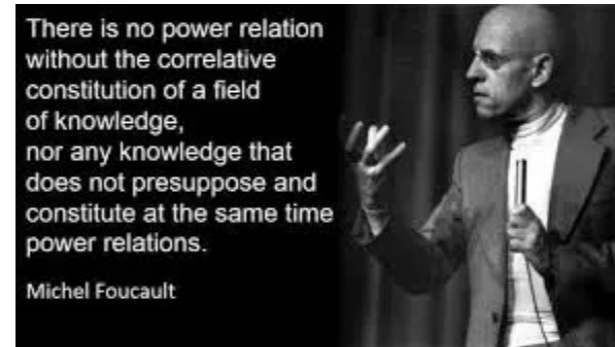
Bonilla Silva and Zuberi challenge the notion that it does not matter who is doing research. How research is approached, what questions are asked, who is doing the asking, what values guide the questions and the analysis and what knowledge is brought to bear on the research subject - these are all things that are influenced by 'white racial logic' in a white supremacist society.

The denial of the significance of racialised frames is part of the white racial logic which posits that objectivity is possible and that people with no experience of someone else's life experience can just as easily research them as someone within their own community, or worse, that they will be able to do so better because they can take 'distance' from the topic and be more 'objective'

Epistemic racism/coloniality of knowledge: the rejection of the knowledge of non-Europeans as deficient/non-existence and its subsequent erasure.

# POWER/KNOWLEDGE

- Each knowledge claim is grounded in a scholar's placement in 'intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation' (PHC, p. 253)
- A white dominated academy assesses the validity of knowledge, thus suppressing other knowledges/the knowledge of others
- PHC: Black women's knowledge of their own worlds competes with dominant paradigms established by 'white logic'
- Black, Indigenous, POC people's absence from knowledge institutions matters because it leads to their knowledge appearing as though it doesn't exist
- These researchers have to fight the institution to have their world view and epistemologies recognised and accepted as legitimate



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# BLACK FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

- Lived experience as a criterion of meaning and evidence (PHC, p. 257)
- Formal education is not a prerequisite for knowledge
- Storying and narrative are important sources and modes of analysis Dialogue and connectedness (PHC, p. 260)
  - Indigenous yarning (Bargallie 2020)
- Ethics of caring (PHC, p. 263)
  - Individual uniqueness in African American communities
  - Appropriateness of emotions in dialogues
  - Capacity for empathy
- Ethic of personal accountability (PHC, p. 265)
  - Personal beliefs and personal biography are not beyond question
- Black women as agents of knowledge (PHC, p. 266)

Black feminist thought is subjugated knowledge that is situated in political and economic reality, not divorced from it (PHC, p. 269).

PHC talks about the necessity of **knowledge and wisdom** for Black women's survival.

She argues that knowledge is adequate for the powerful but wisdom is necessary for this without power.

**Lived experience** is a source of wisdom

**Storywork and narrative** are important sources and methodologies -



# STORY-WORK

“Story work is a practice of giving voice in order to ‘rectify the damage and reclaim our ability to story-talk, story-listen, story-learn and story-teach.’”

**ARCHIBALD ET AL.,  
DECOLONIZING RESEARCH, P. 7**



With a  
Foreword by  
Linda  
Tuhivai Smith

Edited by  
Jo-ann Archibald,  
Jenny Lee-Morgan and  
Jason De Santolo

## Decolonizing Research Indigenous Storywork as Methodology

### Connections to Indigenous methodologies :

PHC recognises this as do Archibald et al in their book Decolonizing Research. The book describes research which gives voice to stories told by Indigenous elders that contain life lessons and from which we can derive meaning. These stories resist western positivist accounts ‘with an objective facade of research, and an assumed position of racial superiority’ (Archibald et al. 2019: 5).

Story work is a practice of giving voice in order to ‘rectify the damage and reclaim our ability to story-talk, story-listen, story-learn and story-teach’ (Decolonising research p. 7).

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**Dialogue** is central (not to be confused with debate).

Call-and-response discourse mode common among African Americans.

Recalls Indigenous yarning as used by Bargallie in her research.

Everyone must participate, and so no one is left out.

## **Ethics of caring**

- Each individual is listened to in her uniqueness
- We should not separate intellect from emotion
- Empathy - people will open up to the they feel are empathic towards them. This may come from shared lived experience though not necessarily.

## **Ethic of accountability**

Researchers must be accountable for their knowledge claims.

It is not beyond the pale to question someone's personal motives for doing research or their viewpoint as positivist epistemology would have it.

## **Black women as agents of knowledge**

To exist in the academy many Black women have had to reject the principles of Black feminist epistemology.

Black women had to prove that they could master white male epistemologies to survive

Black feminists had to then grapple with competing epistemologies - their own realities vs. the worlds they worked in.

# BLACK WOMAN'S STANDPOINT

**“The existence of a self-defined Black women’s standpoint using Black feminist epistemology calls into question the content of what currently passes as truth and simultaneously challenges the process of arriving at that truth.”**

PATRICIA HILL COLLINS, BLACK FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY, P. 271

## **Black woman’s standpoint**

The emphasis is not on how Black women’s standpoint differs from other groups. Rather the emphasis is on how ‘Black women’s collective experiences serve as one specific social location for examining points of connection among multiple epistemologies’ (p. 270).

So, it is not about Black women having a more accurate view than others.

‘Each group speaks from its own standpoint and shares its own partial, situated knowledge. But because each group perceives its own truth as partial, its knowledge is unfinished.’

The each group is able to consider others’ standpoints.

## INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S STANDPOINT

- 1st world feminist standpoint posts a Body/earth split
- Relationality: Indigenous people's embodied connection to 'our respective countries, all living entities and our ancestors' (AMR, p. 337)
- Nakata: Indigenous standpoint 'is not a social position but a discursive method'
- Indigenous women's standpoint:
  - Ontology
  - Epistemology (relationality)



AMR's Indigenous standpoint theory mirrors many of the concerns and principles raised by PHC

Aileen Moreton-Robinson critiques first-world feminist standpoint theory (Sandra Harding)

Feminist standpoint theory posts a body/earth split in which female humans are placed above other beings and the earth.

The approach to lived experience is rather different to PHC.

For Nakata, it is an entry point to investigating how Indigenous experience sits within/against western knowledge.

Indigenous standpoint 'is not a social position but a discursive method' - recognises that everyone's social position is discursively constituted within and constitutive of complex social relations (Nakata).

But Nakata does not account for gender differences.

He ignores PHC's point that who we are - or in this case how we are gendered - will inform how and what we know. He runs the risk of universalising Indigenous men's experience as the experience of all Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous women's standpoint is informed by:

### **Ontology (way of being):**

Derived from relations to country.

'Knowledge and beliefs from the origin time inform the present and future' (p. 340)

Ontological relationship is created through the connections between Ancestral beings, humans and country.

'Indigenous women's bodies signify our sovereignty' (p. 341).

This ontological relationship to country was not destroyed by colonisation.

**Epistemology (ways of knowing):**

Coming to knowledge is constituted by relationality - 'one experiences the self as part of others and others as part of the self' (p. 341).

The antithesis of being a privileged knower within the academy which emphasises disconnection and individualised pursuit of knowledge.

**‘...respect and caution frame my approach to knowledge production; the more that I know the less that I know because there are other forms of knowledge that exist beyond us as humans. One cannot know everything and everything cannot be known’**

AILEEN MORETON-ROBINSON, TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S STANDPOINT THEORY', 2013, P. 341.

Because a person is worth no more than other living beings/the earth ‘respect and caution frame my approach to knowledge production; the more that I know the less that I know because there are other forms of knowledge that exist beyond us as humans. One cannot know everything and everything cannot be known’ (p. 341).

## INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S STANDPOINT

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  - Epistemology (relationality)
  - Axiology



Indigenous women have shared experiences and knowledges - e.g. the common experience of living in a society that deprecates them (p. 341). This does not mean that there isn't diversity within Indigenous women's experiences.

### **Axiology (ways of doing)**

Axiology is informed by ontology and epistemology and is an extension of communal responsibilities and sovereignties (p. 342). It is firemen by relationality.

Like PHC, dialogue is important, as well as contemplation.

Thinking and reflection takes a long time and incorporates shared meanings as well as differences and contradictions.

Producing research is a process of years, based on dialogue and reflection in that process.

**Indigenous women's standpoint theory is where embodied knowledge provides the entry point for generating our problematics and research, conceptualised as a situated, critical practice of activity, articulation and relationality.'**

AILEEN MORETON-ROBINSON, TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S STANDPOINT THEORY', 2013, P. 343.



**YOUR**

**ONTOLOGY  
EPISTEMOLOGY  
AXIOLOGY**