

Disrupting entrenched Eurocentric approaches to research with Caribbean peoples: developing a culturally-relevant research methodology

Public Lecture – University of Trinidad and Tobago, Valsayn

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Why research?

Māori - *tangata whenua*

Māori approaches to research

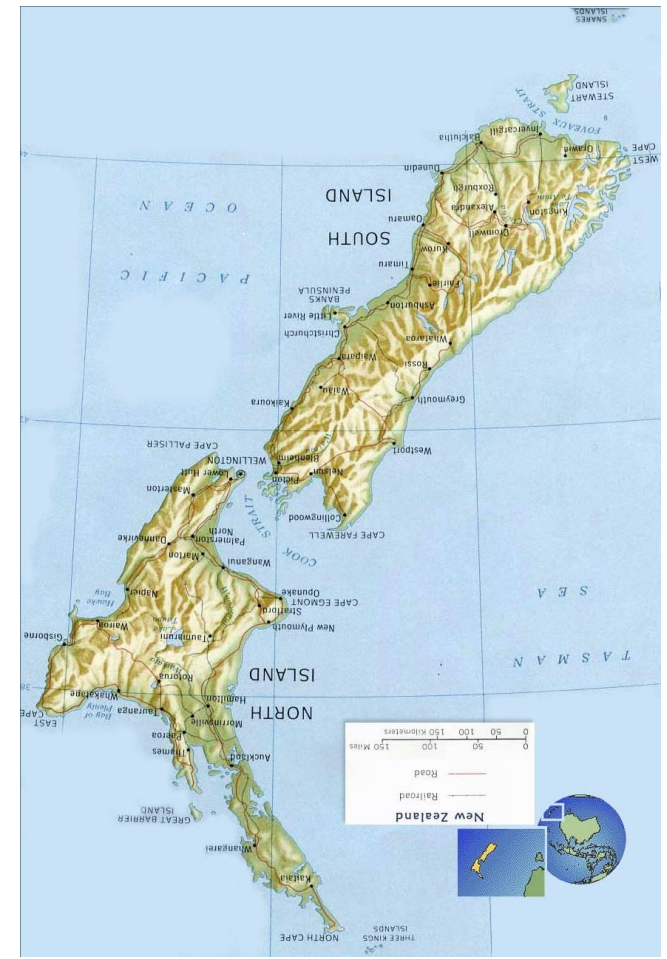
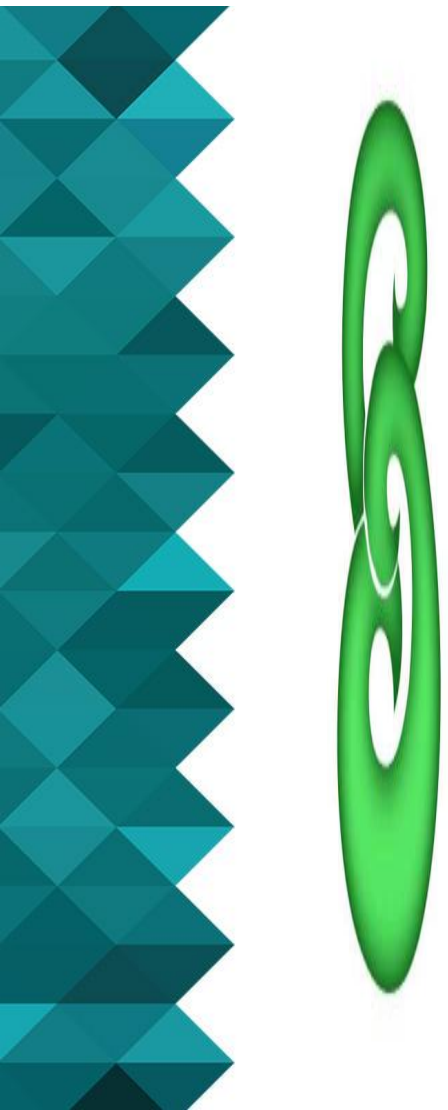
Pasifika in Aotearoa

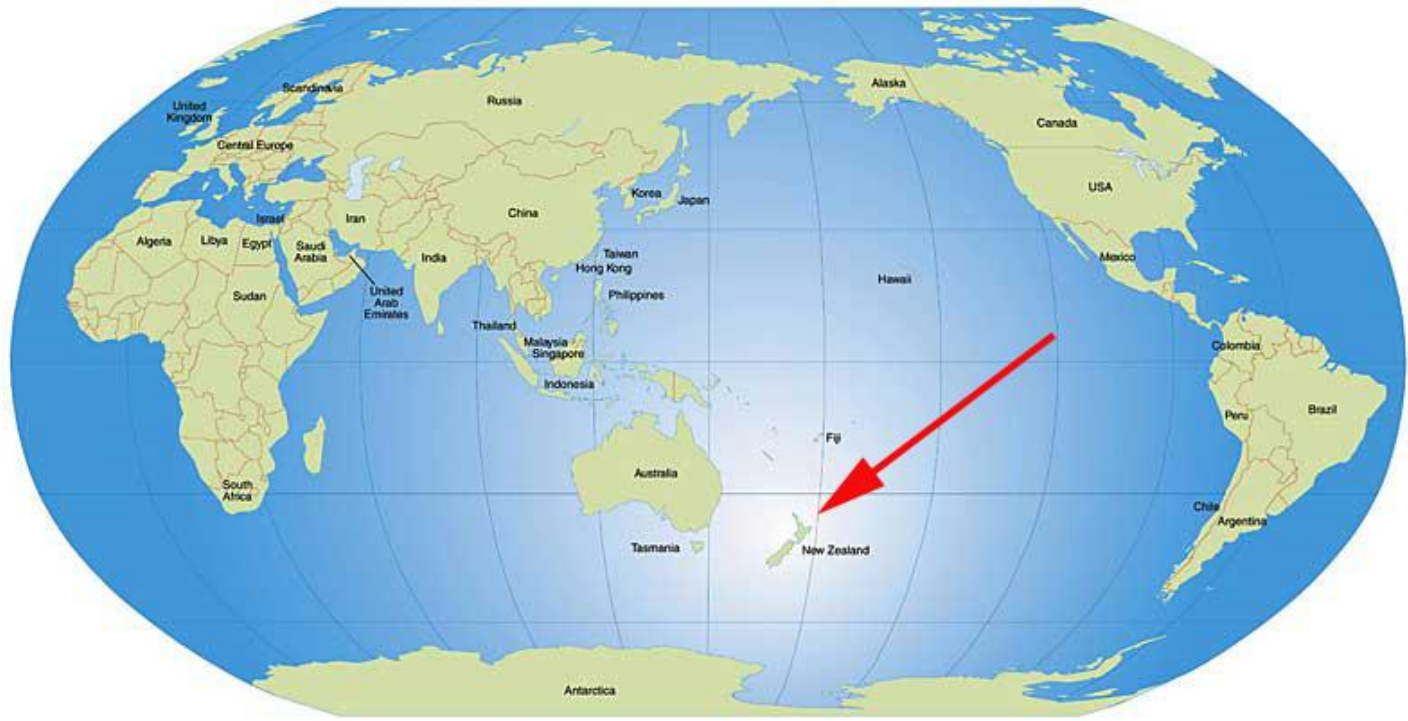
Pasifika approaches to research - Talanoa

African Oral Tradition of Storytelling

Caribbean - Liming and Ole talk, Par, Go de road, Reason, Choteo and Dar muela, Loisir and Reunion

Challenges, Opportunities, Findings





Why research?

- How do we study our social world?
- What frameworks do we employ?
- Whose/ what methods are most appropriate to studying our world?
Does it matter?
- What is (or should be) considered 'acceptable' knowledge?

Disrupting entrenched Western research paradigms

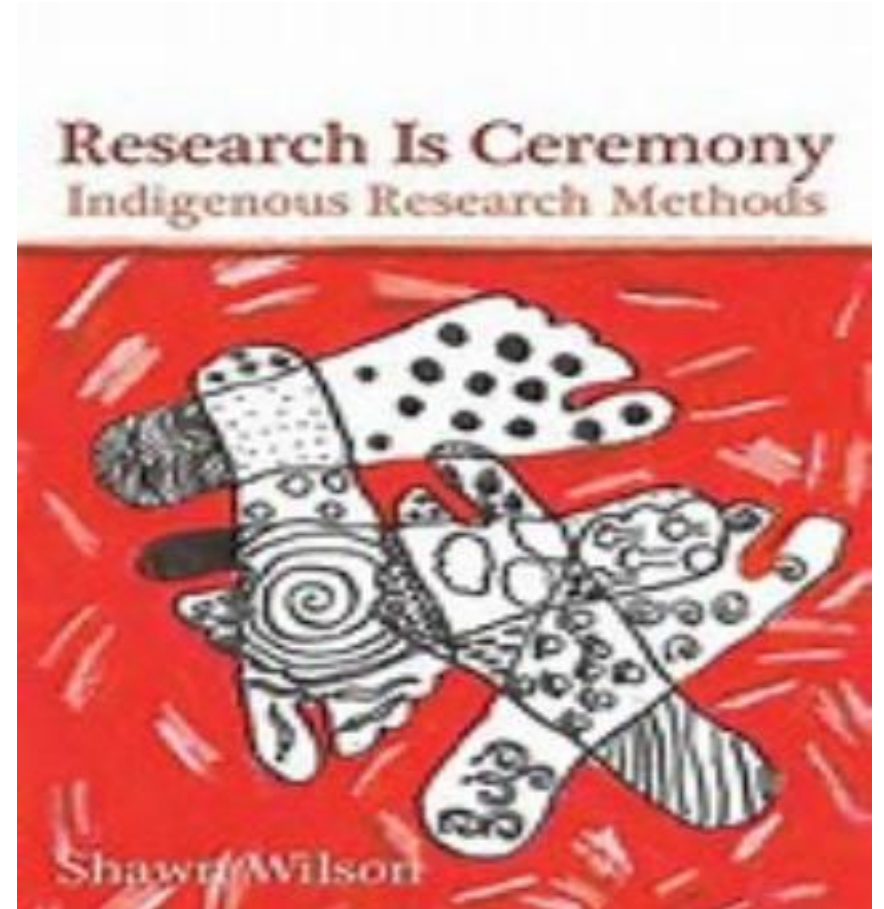
- In recent decades, academics have called for indigenous research methodologies to **reflect their cultural systems with the aim of deconstructing** and reclaiming indigenous knowledge ('Otunuku, 2011).
- Smith's (1999) critique of the domination of traditional Western paradigms of research and knowledge calls for **indigenous research that has a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values** that inform research practices.
- Smith cautions, however, that there are **inherent challenges** to the way that indigenous and local research is conducted when moving into a 'domain with new methodologies'.
- These challenges are not only what is deemed scientifically possible and ethically acceptable, but include '**the conservative forces that seek to disrupt any agenda of social justice... and who have little tolerance for public debate...alternative views...and qualitative richness or complexity**' (p.85).

Indigenous and local research methodologies

- Disrupt the continued domination of indigenous research by Western epistemologies and research methodologies
- Recognize the challenges undertaken by local and indigenous academics and researchers to do so
- Provide for the gathering and sharing of authentic knowledge where existing traditional research might fail to do so
- Value the building and maintenance of relationships in the research setting

Indigenous and local research methodologies

- There are a number of indigenous research methodologies that have contested existing frameworks of research.
- These include **Kaupapa Māori**, **Talanoa** and the **African Oral Tradition of Storytelling**, all of which will be discussed further.



Māori in Research

- Māori have been mostly studied by outsiders
- Objectified as the ‘other’
- Research has often been ethnocentric
- Māori unique history, society and culture have often been disregarded in this process
- Research cycle has perpetuated colonial values in Aotearoa
- Cultural standpoint of the researcher
- Māori research by, with and for Māori is about regaining control over Māori knowledge and resources.
- It is having *tino rangatiratanga* over research that investigates Māori issues

Research processes that govern the work of Māori researchers

- *Matauranga Māori*
 - knowledge underpins the functioning of the group and serves the community.
 - accepting that there will be knowledge that is off-limits. This conflicts with the Western view that sets no limits on what can be researched.
- *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*
 - the importance of the social, historical and cultural context has to be acknowledged as well as the grief inflicted upon communities by previous research experiences.
- *Kaupapa Māori*
 - Retrieve space for Māori voices and perspectives
 - Critiquing dominant Western worldviews,
 - Māori *tikanga*

Challenges faced by Māori researchers

- To convince Māori people of the value of research for Māori
- To convince the many powerful Pakeha research communities of the need for greater Māori involvement in research
- To develop approaches and ways of carrying out research which take into account, without being limited by, the legacies of previous research, or the parameters of both previous and current research
- Māori researchers to reflect on their own research approaches if they are not to perpetuate the victim-blaming approach of many non-Māori researchers

Pasifika Peoples in Aotearoa

- Labour migration
- Dawn raids
- In contemporary society



Pasifika Research Methodology

- Defined as research involving Pacific participants.
- Pacific research design, methods, and approaches will be informed first and foremost from within the continuum of Pacific world-views.
- Pan-Pacific based research versus in-depth ethnic specific studies





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Professor Biman Prasad

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Refreshments will be served



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Talanoa – A Pasifika research methodology

- ***Talanoa*** - developed as a research methodology for use in Pacific contexts.
- Used to describe the conversations in which people are engaged.
- Allows group conversations to develop over a considerable time-period during which the focus is based on the interests of the participants.
- A dynamic interaction of story-telling, debating, reflecting, gossiping, joking, sharing families' genealogies, food and other necessities

Talanoa

- Prescott (2008) sees Talanoa as any form of communication aimed at reaching understanding towards the building or enhancing of relationships
- **Challenges of Talanoa –**
- the large amount of time taken over several sessions in order to cover the research agenda,
- the possible deviation of the Talanoa from the researcher's agenda, deadlines and priorities

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TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAUI



African Oral Tradition of Storytelling

- A research approach rooted in the African oral tradition where stories are told in a particular way, putting the focus on some aspects and ignoring others, in order to build an argument or express passion (Adelowo, 2012; Tuwe, 2016; Orido, 2017).
- The method lays emphasis on both the content of the story and the form of its telling.
- For example, The Journey Motif of African Epic or The Jealous Motif:
 - The African epic which is situated between history and the myth, attributes the entire cultural experience of a society to one character who has made a mark on his/her time .



Liming and Ole talk

- In Trinidad and Tobago, in particular, **ole talk** is traditionally associated with encounters of leisure and gossip.
- Even though **ole talk** is seen as creating new spaces for historic possibilities (Cudjoe, 1997), the use of **ole talk** has not been cited or considered as an investigative tool:
 - in qualitative research
 - to assess its relevance with cultural groups
 - Or as a means of analysis.
- Miller and Slater (2003) have observed the use of **ole talk** to obtain and share information in qualitative settings.



Liming and Ole talk

- Wendell DeRiggs (2009):
 - “Ole Talk transcends idle conversations, exaggeration, or plain shooting from the mouth. It **can involve talk on current events, politics, culture and school days**, as well as trends in behavior and fashion.
 - Ole Talk is any talk and can take place in any setting. (...) Ole Talk **follows no rules of engagement**. Talkers move with ease back and forth between topics of great importance and less so and of great importance again.
 - One aspect of Ole Talk is **humour**. This speaks volumes of the ability of West Indians to juxtapose adversity and hardship with hilarity. One can Ole Talk about a hurricane and the death and destruction it brings whilst extolling the humorous nature of everyday behaviour”.

A Caribbean voice

- Caribbean authors including Beckford (1971), Best (1977) and more recently Lewis and Simmons (2010) have insisted on the importance of **developing a Caribbean independent thought**, given the arguable disconnect of Western epistemic modes and structures with the Caribbean experience and practices.
- Kvale (1996) states that ‘if we genuinely want to hear, to understand an individual, we must **provide a way for him/her to speak in a genuine voice**’ (p.7).
- Within a Caribbean setting, how can the researcher elicit this ‘genuine voice’?



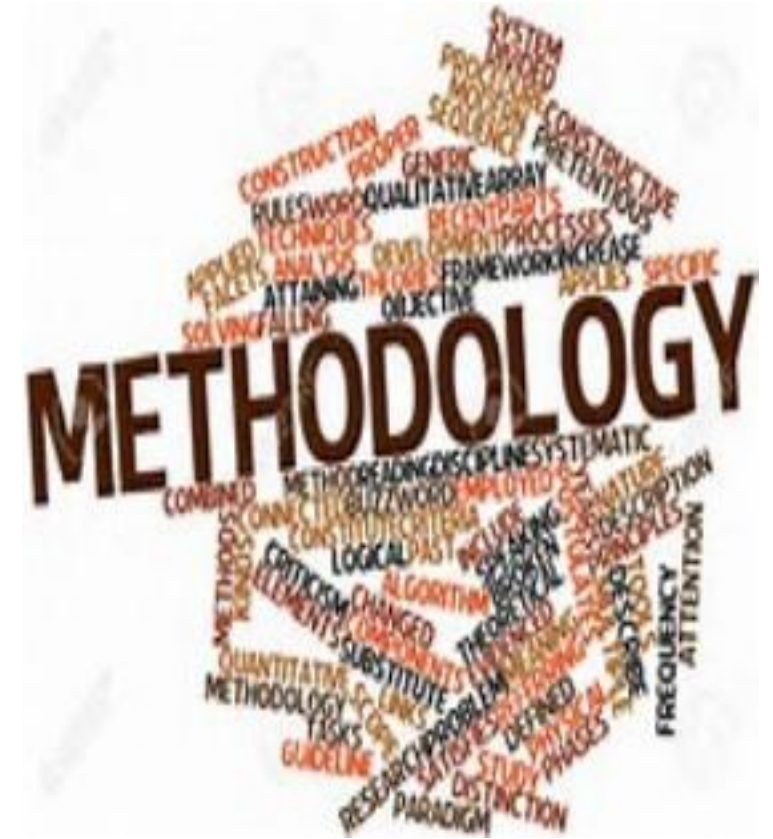
Placing Liming and Ole talk

- Liming and Ole talk interactions have been represented in the region's art, popular culture, film and literature as a central component of subjects' practices and lives experience.
- However, in the academic field there has not been much work involving these practices.



Liming and Ole talk as a research methodology and not just a research method

- Framing the research
- Designing the research
- Understanding the issue
- Sharing knowledge
- Interpreting what is shared
- Analysing what is shared
- Presenting shared knowledge



Our Research Journey

- Ethics approval
- Manuscripts submitted
- Liming sessions:
 - Aotearoa New Zealand
 - Cuba
 - Canada
 - USA
 - Trinidad
 - Jamaica
- PGR9 approved - AUT

Findings so far

- **Terminologies** of the different Caribbean peoples and countries
 - Liming and ole talk – *Trinidad and Tobago*
 - Par/ Go de road/ Reason/ Hold a medz - *Jamaica*
 - Choteo and dar muela - *Cuba*
 - Loisir and reunion – *Haiti*
 - Compartir – *Venezuela*
- **Perspectives**
 - Status of these practices and methodologies in academia
 - Rethinking views of these practices and of academia
 - Comparisons among the different sessions

Challenges

- **First**, an unplanned and spontaneous location for a *par, reason, lime* etc is unlikely and possibly unhelpful.
- **Second**, the timing may not be conducive to some of the participants who might have dropped in unannounced
- **Third**, the seemingly unfinished conversations might suggest that the research has not been concluded or reached a point of data saturation
- **Fourth**, attempting to obtain written consent from those taking part is an intrusion that may reduce the amount and authenticity of the information provided by the participants
- **Fifth**, the digression from the original topic may be a consequence of the informality of these practices
- **Sixth**, differentiating ‘tall’ talk from ‘true’ talk may require some skills
- **Seventh**, obtaining ethics approval

Answering the research question?

- The ethics of not being able to answer the research question should also be considered, not as a flaw in the research methodology but in **exposing the lack of authenticity of other research methodologies**, where the emphasis is on obtaining answers to set questions with the primary intention of answering the research question.



Opportunities

- Recognition of culturally similar ways of sharing knowledge
- Bringing our Caribbean ways of knowing into traditional academic spaces
- Fronting the Caribbean
- A more natural way to engage and share knowledge
- Providing a safe space for new knowledge, build relationships, create new friendships
- To acknowledge the real knowledge holders
- Moving forward





Kia Ora

Questions?