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Rethinking Research as Relational Space in the Pacific Pedagogy and Praxis

Cresantia Frances Koya-Vaka'uta

Abstract

This chapter focuses on Pacific island ways of negotiating knowledge. It begins from the premise that the researcher as learner, seeking knowledge (data), needs to learn how to negotiate access to a particular knowledge base in various indigenous contexts. Numerous Pacific island scholars assert that a decolonisation of research is needed to cater for the fact that Pacific indigenous peoples view and engage in the world differently (Meyer, 2001). The Pacific research standpoint asserted here recognises that indigenous researchers bring a unique way of seeing and being in the world that frames questions, prioritises, problematises and engages members of the community in unique ways (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). While a number of Pacific research frameworks have emerged over the last decade, these focus primarily on the broader methodological framings or cultural reinterpretation of the research process, and on methods of data collection. In fact, limited discourse has been generated on Pacific indigenous theories, Pacific research ethics, and Pacific methods of data analysis. As a result, there is still a gap in research literature that prevents a holistic understanding of good research practice or pedagogy. This chapter includes an interrogation of issues of reliability, validity, triangulation and research rigour in indigenous qualitative research. In this process, a number of key questions are flagged: What is Pacific island research and how is it practiced? How do relational spaces play out in Pacific island communities? What are indicators of good research practice in Pacific indigenous approaches? What ethical guidelines ought to guide our work? What might a checklist look like for the novice researcher? How do we cultivate culturally literate/cross-culturally literate researchers (Thaman, 2001; Thomas & Inkson, 2004)? And finally, is it possible to create a community of research practice to begin to theorise and create Pacific island research frameworks and methods that are responsive to the peculiarities of the specific cultural community in which the research will take place?

Situating the Indigenous Research Conversation: Revisiting Linda Tuhiwai-Smith

To situate the discussion on the pedagogy and praxis of Pacific Indigenous Research Approaches, it is useful to revisit Linda Tuhiwai-Smith's introduction to *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, in which she writes:

From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and chose to privilege, the term "research" 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... The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world’s colonized peoples. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity... It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that it is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us. It appalls us that the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things that we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, 1).

Tuhiwai-Smith is succinct and unapologetically brutal in her analysis of the treatment of non-indigenous framings and research encounters of indigenous peoples. The experiences she describes resonate with indigenous Pacific peoples and their communities. The two central running themes in her work are:

1. non-indigenous (or Western) research approaches impose imperialistic paradigms which distort and too often lead to the misrepresentation of indigenous communities and their knowledge;
2. indigenous ways of engaging in research transform research processes and ways of engaging with communities and their knowledge systems.

Tuhiwai-Smith posits that research as a power-driven act imposes ethnocentric frames which de-humanise or disempower the indigenous in their purposeful methodologies that extract indigenous knowledges. This relegates the community for which this knowledge holds value, and the system within which it exists, to the external periphery, rendering the all-too-often non-indigenous researchers as experts in indigenous wisdoms about which they have no real understanding. This results in the objectification of indigenous ideas and the enshrinement of the indigenous as *Other*.

The central thesis in this conversation on *Research as Relational Spaces* is the recognition that the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors shaped by Western Research are imbued with a particular set of values which enforce specific conceptions of space, time, gender, objectivity, subjectivity, knowledge and researcher privilege/power – all of which were/are conceptualised in the Global North (West).

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 (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, 193).

Towards an Indigenous Research Paradigm Agenda

Research, like formal education (schooling), is an imposed system of doing, comprised of imported structures and processes that bring with them specific philosophies and ways of learning and knowing. These are structures and processes which perpetuate the originating knowledge-bases situated in the Global North (West) and locate research within a set of paradigms, each with their own ontological, epistemological, methodological, pedagogical and axiological assumptions about the world and human engagement within that world. A paradigm, as we now understand it, refers to our understandings or knowledge of the world,

and how humans come to know it. This discussion will not expound on the development of the concept of a paradigm, but rather builds on this basic understanding as a framework of human relations with the known world/universe and, by extension, how we learn about this world and the knowledge that exists therein, through institutionalised teaching and learning (formal education) and inquiry into the knowledge systems (research).

In a dated but nonetheless critical piece of writing, Scheurich & Young (1997) provide contextual insight into the hegemonic paradigm within which formal education and research are situated. As they explain it, this is a racist paradigm institutionalised to privilege one set of knowledge and knowers and to disadvantage other social groups. In their article “Colouring Epistemologies: Are our Research Epistemologies Racially Biased,” the authors discuss the idea of epistemological racism, differentiating individual racism, institutional racism and civilisational or epistemological racism – all of which, they assert, disadvantage people of colour who do not ascribe to mainstream Western paradigms of being and doing.

In a very important sense, we, White researchers, are unconsciously promulgating racism on an epistemological level. As we teach and promote epistemologies like positivism to postmodernism, we are, at least implicitly, teaching and promoting the social history of the dominant race at the exclusion of people of color, scholars of color and the possibility of research based on other race/culture epistemologies. We can, however, use our opposition to racism to consider the question of whether our dominant epistemologies are racially biased or not, and if they are, to begin to change this situation (Scheurich & Young, 1997, 11).

They suggest three main strategies to address this racism. Their recommendations are specifically aimed at researchers and writers of textbooks, teachers of research courses, supervisors of graduate research, journal editors and reviewers:

1. Dialogue and debate among scholars and researchers who write methods textbooks and teach methods courses;
2. Support for competent use of these alternative or ‘new’ epistemologies by students ‘of colour’; and,
3. Study, support and solicit journal publication of these discussions (1997, 11).

They conclude with this compelling statement:

It is our contention here, based on the seminal, ground-breaking work of scholars of color, that we, educational researchers are unintentionally involved, at the epistemological heart of our research enterprises, in a racism – epistemological racism – that we generally do not see or understand. Once we see and understand it, though, we cannot continue in our old ways. To do so, would be to betray our fundamental commitment as educators and as educational researchers (1997, 12).

Scheurich & Young’s reflections and call-to-action are directed at the predominant ‘white’ mainstream researchers and academics of their time, and while this intervention took place twenty years ago, the same reality exists in many institutions around the world, and in the Pacific island region itself. Blind epistemological racism is continuously perpetuated. What, then, can indigenous researchers and scholars do to change this mindset in 2017? What can we do within our institutions which have been founded on mainstream knowledge-bases and research paradigms? How can we begin to critique and infiltrate a system which still looks to the Global North (West) for direction and validation?

A first step towards the much needed research reform must begin with the recognition of an Indigenous Research Paradigm as valid and critical to Pacific understandings of contextual places, spaces and knowledges. Pacific scholars and researchers need to begin to flesh this out for themselves and the communities they represent in their own language terms and conceptions, which Manulani Meyer says is a unique way of seeing the world: ‘We simply see, hear, feel, taste and smell the world differently’ (2001, 125). Sanga (2011) takes the discussion further to explore the idea of an indigenous Pacific ethical system in research, in an attempt to address ‘...the inappropriateness of ethical frameworks to capture unstated indigenous knowledge’ (as cited in Sanga, 2014, 149). It is only through this kind of deep investigation into the heart of what research is, and how we ‘learn’ or collect knowledge about the world and human engagement with that world, that Pacific research may be wholly decolonised, re-humanised, and a solid space claimed for alternative indigenous Pacific epistemologies with the global knowledge economy.

Interrogating the *Default Settings* and *Custom Setting* Options in Pacific Research¹

Rethinking research from an indigenous Pacific perspective is necessarily a decolonising project that many will automatically place within post-colonial discourse. A more appropriate standpoint, however, is found in a newer branch of colonial discourse: anti-colonialism. While post-colonialism locates the colonial experience as the reference point, anti-colonialism provides an active space within which the colonial and post-colonial realities are acknowledged but are shifted away from the centre (Shahjahan, 2005; Dei, 2012). Colonialism is merely a descriptor within the broader indigenous knowledge conversation.

Adopting the anti-colonial perspective allows the researcher to center indigenous knowledge, and to resist and engage, *in spite of* colonial histories, rather than in *response to* these histories (Shahjahan, 2005). The active decolonisation of the mind that is nurtured in the anti-colonial response ensures, by prioritising resistance and reclamation, that indigenous self-determination and agency are at the fore. The fight for freedom to liberate research practices and to enculturate the decolonisation process within Pacific institutions must begin from a place of conceptual groundwork and policy reformation. As Stoeck & Mack (2009) remind us, ‘Native self-determination is engaged when people insist on the freedom to access the means to maintain and determine their own concepts and cultural policy’ (85).

If the default setting for research in academia is one of epistemological racism, the indigenous research paradigm must further interrogate the multiple ‘-ologies’ within the indigenous research paradigm. Here we return to the act of research itself, which is understood as an organised, systematic approach to gathering information about something, for the purpose of improving our understanding of that thing (referred to as a phenomenon) within the human experience. In order to do this, we must reclaim our agency as collective communities of knowledge creation and transmission. Dei (2012) states, ‘Our power to define our world on our own terms, is related to the extent to which we understand anti-oppressive theories and practices as essentially inseparable’ (105).

What does it mean to advocate for an Indigenous Pacific Research Paradigm? How do we gather information or come to know about something in any real depth? We are reminded of our collective selves, the communal sense of personhood inherent in indigenous epistemologies, where ‘[c]ommunity is shared space, thought and body. It is a collective more powerful than a sea of individuals. The power of community (however defined) prevails over the

¹ Borrowing from the language of computer technology, the concepts of Default and Custom settings are used to highlight the idea that there are limited ways to conceptualise and engage in quality research.

fragmentation of individuals, each locked in her/his own subjectivity and discursive agency' (108).

The answers lie in our Pacific island ontological positions regarding what defines us as a people and what we see as our place in the world. This relational space is understood to mean relationship or communion with the spiritual self, with the ancestors and gods, other people and the natural environment (land, sky, sea and all the flora and fauna within it) (Tamasese, 2007; Mahina, 2011). The conversation on Pacific Island Indigenous worldviews opens the discussion to sacred relational spaces (e.g., Va in Samoa and Tonga) and what it means to live in balance (e.g., Tauhi Va, Tonga; Tausi le Va, Samoa) and to achieve harmony within the cosmos (e.g., Sautu in Fiji).

Answers are also found in epistemological conceptions of collective communal knowledge – that is, open, closed and negotiated knowledge bases (Bakalevu, 2002; Teaero, 2002). While open knowledge refers to that wide and holistic common-knowledge base transmitted to children within a particular cultural community through indigenous education processes, it is categorised according to age, gender, status and clan. Closed knowledge is taken to mean those restricted knowledge-bases which are privileged and passed on within very specific lines by family and clan, and not transmitted outside of these demarcations. Contrastingly, the grey area between Open and Closed Knowledge allows for some negotiation, and it is here that Negotiated Knowledge resides. It is held to mean those levels of knowledge or degrees of knowing which may be secured by means of traditional requests to the holders of that knowledge. In those instances, where a request for closed knowledge is being negotiated, the prerogative to agree on how much and what knowledge to share remains with the cultural experts (Teaero, 2002).

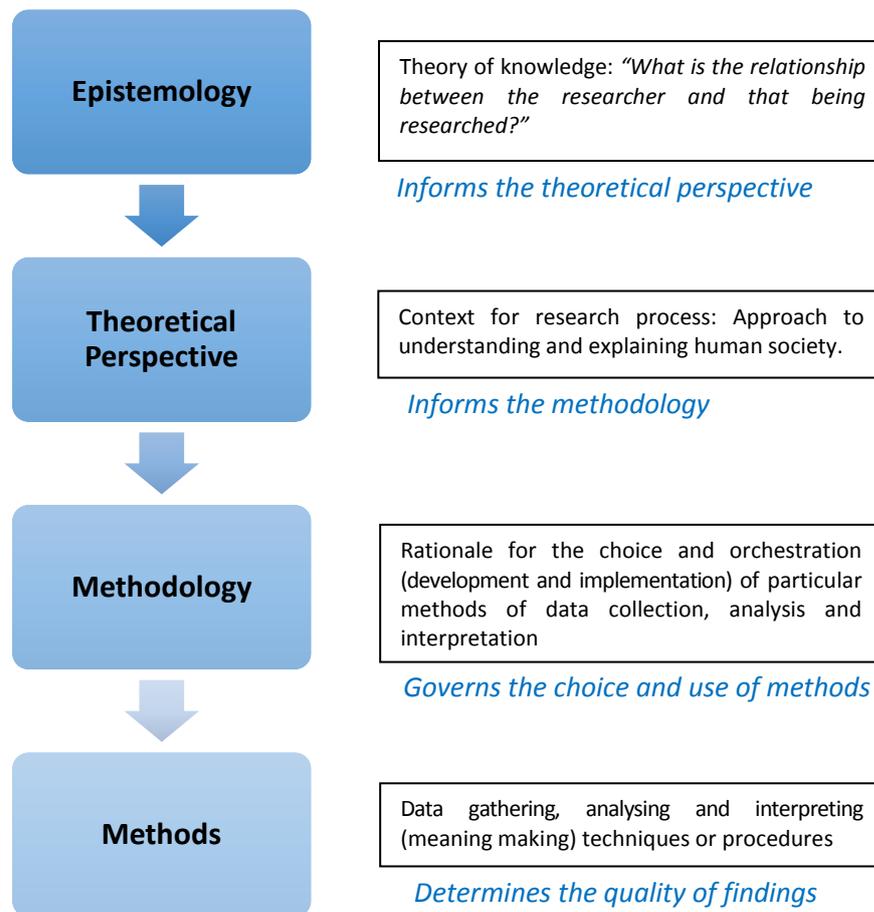
In this context, research, or the request to access information from the indigenous community, is seen as an act of negotiation, rendering the researcher and the researched tied in a relational space determined by the cultural understandings of reciprocity, and governed by the rules of engagement that this negotiation demands. Within this paradigm, the relational 'power' space offered to the researcher in Western research approaches is negated, and power instead rests with the community. Leaders of that community hold the prerogative to establish the extent to which they (the community) will engage based on perceived benefits for the greater good of that community, rather than benefits to the researcher. Understanding Pacific research as negotiating knowledge, therefore, situates the researcher as a learner seeking knowledge (data), and therefore negotiating access to a particular knowledge base.

The Pacific Research Agenda may thus be summarised as the desire to:

1. Find out *what is*, as opposed to what we 'think' or 'assume' is/might be;
2. Respond to imperialist research structures that do not consider cultural contexts;
3. Reclaim a place for Pacific Indigenous Knowledge Systems (PIKS) within the global knowledge economy;
4. Re-assert ownership of PIKS;
5. Re-think notions of accuracy, validity, reliability and ethical standards in context; and,
6. Develop and utilise Pacific frameworks that ensure the above (1-5) (Koya Vaka'uta, 2014).

To begin, we look back at how mainstream discourse conceptualises research, presented in Figure 3.1 below, before beginning to ask some key questions that will guide our framing.

Figure 3.1: Framing Mainstream Research



Ultimately, to assert a Pacific paradigm is to question each of these dimensions of research undertakings and to question the synergies and tensions that may exist between Western Knowledge Systems and Indigenous Knowledge systems, including the limitations and ethical considerations within each system.

Some questions a researcher might ask are:

1. How do people in the community that I have selected conceptualise the world (ontology)?
2. How do they conceptualise knowledge, knowledge creation, knowledge ownership and knowledge sharing (epistemology)?
3. Who is a knower of the knowledge that I am seeking, and how can I access this knowledge? (entry point)
4. Do I have the right to access this knowledge? (negotiability)
5. How might I go about seeking permission to gain this knowledge? (protocol)
6. What are some of the ways that I might go about negotiating my position within this community in order to access this information? (relationships)
7. Would my supervisor have all of this information, or do I need to seek the advice of an insider-local/cultural advisor?
8. Are there local research methods that I might consider? Where would I find these?

9. Are there other students who may have used a Pacific methodology that I might look at?
10. If the goal is to develop positive relationships, how might I do that?
11. How do I then continue to nurture those relationships throughout the research process?
12. What is my responsibility as researcher (a) to the academic undertaking; and (b) to the community I am researching? (researcher-identity/philosophy)
13. What Pacific theories/methodologies are already out there? Can I use or adapt one of these or should I/can I develop my own? (pedagogies)
14. Do I have the cultural competence/intelligence required to go into this community? (self-awareness)
15. What can I do to develop the competencies/skills required to enhance the research experience and add value to the data collection and analysis processes? (research-readiness) (Koya Vaka'uta, 2014).

Efforts to try to *'fit'* indigenous methods within a Western paradigm could be, at best, considered a blended approach to research and, at worst, a cut-and-paste approach to Indigenous Research. If the intention is to apply a blended research approach, then well and good, but if an undertaking is intended as an Indigenous Paradigm or Approach to research, then all core elements of what is considered good quality research and research practice must be interrogated critically to establish new understandings of a particular way of doing research and being researcher. A good starting point for this is to critique the four key goals central to ensuring research rigour. Rigour is an important aspect of all research. It relates to the soundness and quality of the research process and gives credibility to the data and final conclusions. Essentially, research rigor is determined by qualifiers of validity and reliability. Bashir, Afzal, & Azzem (2008) point out that, '[w]ithout rigour, research becomes fiction and loses its worth. The rigour can be ensured only by considering validity and reliability in all kind[s] of research methods' (36). Table 3.1 maps research goals in mainstream academic research and poses a set of critical questions that the indigenous researcher will need to resolve within the research design. It is argued here that the research goals do not change when using an Indigenous Research Paradigm; rather, they are audited using a critical indigenous lens.

Table 3.1: Mapping Research Goals

Key issues to consider	Academic research goals:	Critical questions for Pacific Indigenous Research
<i>Validity</i>	To ensure the accuracy, relevance and effectiveness of the methods/ tools/instruments selected for this project	<i>Are there tried and tested local methods of data collection which may enable a more effective means of gathering, corroborating and analysing data? Are there local methods/approaches to dialoguing and seeking out information/ knowledge that I might use?</i>
<i>Reliability</i>	To ensure that we have selected the most appropriate methods/tools/instruments to measure what we are studying	<i>Are there local methods which may help us to measure what we are studying in context rather than conducting research on people as subjects? What are these local methods/ approaches called, and what are the nuances and subtle unspoken but 'known' rules-of-engagement?</i>
<i>Ethics</i>	That the processes we have chosen will ensure our research adheres to acceptable research standards	<i>Are there local processes and understandings² that may allow participants and researcher to develop a stronger research relationship that will inform and influence the quality of (a) the research experience; and (b) the data collected?</i>
<i>Truth</i>	That the research scope and design will lead to some meaning-making of new truths about the phenomena we are investigating	<i>Will using local processes and methods help to uncover some new contextual truths?</i>

Pacific Methodologies

Bishop & Glynn (1999) argue that ‘... the “verification” and “authority” of a text and how well it represents the experiences and perspectives of the participants is judged by criteria constructed and constituted within the culture’ (65). Responding to this line of thinking, the last twenty-five years have seen the development of numerous Pacific conceptual research frameworks or models of research practice. These have been emerged in the works of Pacific island scholars in the diaspora and in the region. A selection of Melanesian and Polynesian examples³ are presented in Table 3.2 to illustrate the relational thematic running through each of these models, which represent a diversity of cultures within the Pacific region.

² See Sanga (2014) for a reflective critique on indigenous Pacific research ethics.

³ This selection serves as a representation of the numerous research models and frameworks developed and used in Pacific Research. There is a notable absence of information regarding research frameworks from Micronesian scholars, a gap which should be addressed to ensure a more holistic coverage of Pacific epistemological framing in research praxis.

Table 3.2: A Selection of Pacific Frameworks

Framework	Synopsis
Fonofale	Attributed to the initial work by Fuimaono Karl Pulotu-Endermann (1995), it is designed around the physical structure of a Samoan fale (house). This model emerged in the early 1980s in the discussion of effective health practice in Pasifika communities in New Zealand. Built on the metaphor of the traditional house, it reinforces the dual philosophy of holism and continuity, and captures values and beliefs about culture, spirituality, family and community.
Kakala	First attributed to Konai Helu Thaman (1992), it is based on the metaphor of the Tongan garland. This framework has developed from a philosophy of teaching to a research and evaluation framework. It details processes involved in garland-making in alignment with research practice and emphasises the values, ethics and relationships within these processes.
Kura Kaupapa	Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) initially conceptualised the Kaupapa Maori educational paradigm as premised on the Maori life philosophy. It captures the values and practices that reinforce beliefs about connections to land, community and family relationships.
Fa'afaletui	First emerged in the work of Kiwi Tamasese, Carmel Peteru, & Charles Waldergrave (1997) on health discourse in New Zealand. The framework draws on the three perspectives required for effective decision-making in the Samoan context. It includes conceptions of spirituality, holistic wellness and healing. It brings to the fore those values and practices surrounding relational spaces within self-concept/identity, family and community.
Na'auao	Attributed to Manulani Aluli Meyer (1998) and emerging in education discourse, this framework is based on the concept of the cosmic centre or gut in the Hawaiian culture. It draws on indigenous ideas about the sacred self in the context of relational spaces and values/practices therein, which are tied to place, people, environment and the cosmos.
Ta-Va	Developed by 'Okustino Mahina, it is a theoretical contribution from a philosophical examination of Tongan epistemology. Ta-Va is presented as a theory of time and space, providing a framework for intellectual critique and interpretation. It takes into account cultural transformations over time that privilege a focus on relational spaces within this holistic construct.
Vanua	First emerging in the work of Rev. Dr Ilaitia Sevati Tuwera (2002) in contextual theology discourse, it is based on the metaphor of the land from an indigenous perspective. It includes conceptions of place, people as custodians of the land, in relationship with God and the wider cosmos. In educational research, Nabobo-Baba (2006) adapts the framework to encompass a more holistic understanding of spirituality from an indigenous Fijian perspective.
Teu Le Va	Emerged in 2005 in the context of Pacific community-centred health research in New Zealand, and then in 2009 in educational research. Developed by Melani Anae, it is introduced as a philosophical and methodological approach to informed research praxis. It is premised on relational spaces and ways of valuing, negotiating and acting within these spaces.
Manulua	Conceptualised by Timote Vaoleti (2011) around the Tongan Kupesi (design) within contextual pedagogies discourse. This framework draws attention to a holistic human development model that focuses on the self (body/mind/heart), family and place. It emphasises the relational spaces between and within these.

- Ula** Seuli Luama Sauni (2011) presents a model for engagement between the researcher and research participants focusing on maintaining the integrity of relational spaces. It is designed around core values and beliefs that allow for the development of safe dialogic spaces based on gender, institutional status and cultural status.
- 'Iluvatu** Developed by Sereima Naisilisili (2011) around the metaphor of a particular kind of mat, this framework emerged in the context of indigenous Fijian educational research. It highlights guiding principles of respect, inclusivity, cohesiveness and the values and practices surrounding cultural notions of place and spiritual connectedness with family and community.
- Tuli** Initially presented by Cresantia F. Koya Vaka'uta (2013) as a cultural theory for learning, it draws from Samoan and Tongan heritage art symbolism by means of a cultural symbol which references the Tuli/Kiu Bird (Pacific Golden Plover). It highlights the relationship between knowing, learning, being and belonging, and the pedagogical relational spaces between these. The life philosophy of Va (relational spaces) between the self, family, community, environment, cosmos and the gods is emphasised.
- Bu ni Ovalau** Developed by Rosiana Lagi as a research framework, it is based on the metaphor of a particular type of coconut tree endemic to one part of Fiji and significant in the indigenous conception of place. It draws on the Vanua framework and emphasises the relationship between the land and the people as custodians. It highlights the significance of sacred spaces and values of respectful nurturing of relationships to ensure continuity and sustainability.

We return now to the central question in the Indigenous Research line of thinking: *Whose values underpin any given research project or undertaking?* This brings to the fore contextual cultural values which are determined by relational spaces and negotiated rules for engagement. Three cultural examples give us further insight.

Table 3.3: Select Pacific Research Values from Tonga, Samoa and Fiji⁴

<i>Tongan Research Values⁵</i>	<i>Samoaan Research Values⁶</i>	<i>Fijian Research Values⁷</i>
<i>Guided by Faka Tonga (Tongan cultural way of life)</i>	<i>Guided by Fa'a Samoa (Samoaan cultural way of life)</i>	<i>Guided by Bula Vakavanua (Fijian cultural way of life)</i>
'Ofa (love/compassion)	Alofa (love/compassion)	Loloma (love/empathy)
Faka'apa'apa (respect)	Fa'aaloalo (respect)	Veidokai (respect)
Feveikotai'aki (reciprocity)	Fesoa'iaiga/ Fesuaiga (reciprocity)	Veivakarokorokotaki (mutual respect)
Tauhivaha'a (nurturing interpersonal relationships)	VaFealoa'i (relationships: maternal/paternal)	Veivakabauti (trust)
Fakama'uma'u (restrained behavior)	Tautua (service)	Veikauwaitakai (mutual caring)
Lotofakatokilalo (humility)	Feagaiga (covenant)	Veirogorogoci (sustaining respectful relationships)
	Fa'aleagaga (spirituality)	Veivakabekabei (praising/valuing/nurturing)
	meaalofa (gifting)	Yalomalua (humility)
	Gagana (language)	

While each framework contains culturally specific ideals and philosophies, there are notable similarities across the selection presented. Commonalities include the use of metaphor, an emphasis on indigenous life-philosophies conceptualised around place (land) and space (relations); cultural notions of the pedagogic self (self-concept and identity) in relation to family and community; holistic understandings of the human-in-the-world grounded in balance for continuity and survival (sustainability); and spirituality and values. This snapshot may provide an insight into the general discussion of Pacific research frameworks, but they are generally difficult to source in print or online publications, leaving the novice student researcher with a very small resource base to guide them. As a result, there is still a gap in research literature that prevents a holistic understanding of good research practice or pedagogy.

⁴ These lists are not intended to be taken as exhaustive or prescriptive lists, but rather present a select summary of values identified by select indigenous scholars from the three cultural communities identified.

⁵ Thaman (2008); Johansson Fua (2008; 2014).

⁶ Kolone-Collins (2010); Sauni (2011).

⁷ Nabobo-Baba (2008); Nainoca (2011); Sailelea, Tuwere, Ligalevu, McNicholas, Moala, & Tuifagalele, (2012).

Wayfinding: Concluding Remarks

This chapter has sought to illustrate the ways by which Pacific Islanders negotiate knowledge through a focused research paradigm that prioritises indigenous cultural ways of knowing and being. In this paradigm, the Pacific researcher is positioned as a learner, embarking on a learning journey in the search for knowledge. The Indigenous Research Paradigm is a critical anti-colonial response to the hegemonic mainstream paradigms and their ethnocentric research framings.

These mainstream paradigms are seen as the *default settings* of research in academic institutions, which are themselves founded on and guilty of a one-eyed pursuit of Western (Global North) knowledge systems. The Indigenous Research Paradigm provides an entry point to challenge this conception of one-size-fits-all and to provide alternative ways of seeing and being in the world; this is necessary for rigorous discourse on effective and contextual research praxis. The position taken is that Pacific researchers must begin to interrogate these mainstream taken-for-granted goals and agendas, underpinning beliefs, value systems and practices. In so doing, we begin to negotiate *custom settings* which privilege contextual nuances.

While the last three decades have seen many developments in research design and the use of contextual Pacific research frameworks, there is a general lack of discourse critiquing these methodologies and the methods that they espouse. Another important component of this dialogue which is not covered in this chapter is the emergent research methods including Talanoa (Fiji/Samoa/Tonga), Talanga (Tonga) and Nofo (Samoa/Tonga). These, and others, have been utilised in countless qualitative research projects undertaken in academic and community projects. A rigorous discourse necessitates further expansion and discussion of these as well.

The way forward requires intellectual debate on the indicators of good research practice in Pacific indigenous contexts and the ethical guidelines which inform the pedagogy and praxis of this work. It is clear that novice and emerging researchers need to learn about indigenous epistemologies and methodologies within the broader research learning at higher education institutions. It will be important to cultivate cohorts of culturally literate researchers who share the underpinning research philosophy of the Indigenous Research Paradigm. This community of practice, or re-thinkers, will begin to theorise and practice home-grown Pacific methodologies and will establish a new line of critical discourse on reflective Pacific research praxis.

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