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# The Door Opens Inward: Meeting Linda Tuhiwai Smith

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## The Door Opens Inward: Meeting Linda Tuhiwai Smith

**Purpose**: This article demonstrates the reach of Tuhiwai Smith's ideas across Pacific research. It discusses the theoretical and practical influence of her seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* through 'holographic epistemology', an indigenous way of viewing knowledge.

**Design/methodology/approach**: The authors present a *talanoa* (Pacific-style relational conversation) to explore Tuhiwai Smith's legacy for Pacific Islander researchers and research. The *talanoa* between two academics at different career stages draws upon personal and professional research experiences and peer-reviewed published sources to explore the expansive and enduring legacy of Tuhiwai Smith's life and ideas.

**Findings**: *Decolonizing Methodologies* has helped Pacific Islander researchers flourish and Pacific Island research approaches gain legitimacy in higher education. Its epistemological influence can be seen in research which utilises knowledge of body, mind *and* spirit – holographic epistemology – and in indigenous innovations to qualitative research.

**Originality/value**: This article has value for those seeking to understand the epistemological underpinnings of indigenous approaches to research. It has originality in its presentation as a *talanoa* between two researchers who have found affirmation and academic freedom with Tuhiwai Smith's ideas. It is also original in offering a Pacific perspective from a Hawaiian and a Samoan academic about the immense *koha* (gift) they have received from a Māori *tuahine* (sister).

Keywords: holographic epistemology; Pacific research, Pacific researchers; *talanoa*; indigenous epistemology

Aloha mai kākou a pau. Greetings from the cool winds of warm Hawai'i. I am [removed for peer review] from [removed for peer review]. I met Linda Smith by cosmic design (accident) while visiting Aotearoa in 2003. I came as a team member of WINHEC, the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium. We were there to affirm the work, vision, and creativity of three

Wānanga (Māori institutions of higher learning): Raukawa, Awanuiarangi and Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. Linda was standing with my book in her hands. I asked her: "Who are you?" She replied: "I'm Linda Smith" and then I said: "Why am I meeting you?" She replied: "Because you're coming here for your sabbatical." That is how I met Linda Tuhiwai Smith. I then came for a one-year sabbatical two years later and my life has been fully and forever changed.

Talofa lava! Malo le soifua maua ma le lagi e mama. Greetings and good health. I a'm [removed for peer review] from [removed for peer review]. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work has inspired me personally and professionally ever since I read her first edition of *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Her book spoke to me across place and time and it taught me to trust our indigenous knowledges to understand ourselves and the world around us. In this *talanoa*, I hope we can convey the nature and extent of Tuhiwai Smith's influence on Pacific educators and researchers such as ourselves.

*Talanoa* is style of discussion used by many Pacific Islanders for its cultural responsiveness and narrative-sharing possibilities (Vaioleti, 2006; Fa'avae *et al.*, 2021). The *talanoa* that follows is interspersed with explanations of holographic epistemology which originally emerged from indigenous Hawaiian scholarship ([removed for peer review]).

Author 2: [removed for peer review], you once wrote about Linda that "She, by the very nature of her being, supported our collective evolution." Can you tell us a bit more about what you meant by this?

Author 1: What this means is that Linda opens doors for us all, both through her ideas, and through her no-nonsense style of mentoring. She invited me to come to the University of Auckland where she was working to produce and support 500 Māori PhDs as the director of *Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga* - Māori Center of Research Excellence. I wanted to see if that was something we should do in Hawai'i. So, I went.

Author 2: From Hawai'i to New Zealand. That is one end of Polynesia to the other. Not many people know that our peoples are spread over a region that covers over quarter of the earth's surface, much of that open seas, yet our Pacific cultural connections have always been quite strong. Was there anything that stood out for you in this experience?

Author 1: What I appreciated most was Linda's mentoring style. She gave me a wide-open field to play in. I was invited to all the PhD Writing Retreats and Indigenous Research gatherings, and I recall the dinners as posh events I always felt under-dressed in. That is what I remembered – how well dressed everyone was. Aotearoa is quite the hub of European fashion! But she kept inviting me, nonetheless. I felt she was an older sister watching me as I made friends and found my way into the *taonga* (cultural treasures) making field of renowned practitioner, Dante Botticelli. Right there outside *Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga*, I learned to shape *pounamu* (greenstone), roll *muka* (flax fibre) into string to secure hand carved *toki* (adze) and how to make a *tuwiri* (cord drill). Creating material culture became my research practice.

Author 2: The way you describe Linda's strong mentoring style brings to mind the Māori term *wāhine toa* (strong woman) and it reminds me of the integral role that Pacific women have played and continue to play in the development of Pacific societies, including in the diaspora. Within research, some of our most innovative Pacific research methodologies such as *Kakala* (Thaman, 2003) which uses flower garland-making as a metaphor for research, *Vanua* (Nabobo-Baba, 2008) based upon Fijian village protocols, and *Tivaevae* (Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges, 2019) which likens research to *Kuki Airani* (Cook Islands) quilt-making have been spearheaded by women. What was it like when you worked with Linda directly?

Author 1: *Kaupapa Māori* research methods were deepening, her book on decolonizing research was being read around the world, and hundreds of Māori PhDs were also on her schedule. Linda was busy. We met on specific occasions to go over two requests she asked from me: to evaluate a Fijian thesis focusing on epistemology which I deeply loved, and to write something

for a global book on Indigenous research methods she was helping edit. As I was just coming to understand the expansive potential of the field, her encouragement was a game-changer.

Author 2: So around about the time you were working with Linda, I had not even started my Masters degree and I remember looking for inspiration for my methodology, for a way of doing research that aligned with Pacific axiology. Of course, this was before I even knew what the term 'axiology' meant, but reading *Decolonizing Methodologies* confirmed for me that indigenous knowledges were as valid as any other. Our knowledges might have been packaged differently to the books and articles I was familiar with in academia, but Linda's work helped me realize that our traditional chants, stories, songs, dances, ceremonies, cultural artifacts and so on were a repository of knowledge that could be used to guide research. Where did Linda's encouragement lead you?

Author 1: Linda's encouragement gave me the time and privacy to envision and formulate the "Triangulation of Meaning" – an integrated way to look at the simultaneity of body, mind, spirit with regard to knowledge acquisition. What our own Indigenous knowing helped me see is that all ideas that endure share a similar essence, even though the form is forever changing. It was during that one-year sabbatical in Aotearoa that the essence of knowing started to become clear. This idea eventually became "Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense", but back then in 2005, it felt risky to speak or write in this way. Her support was real and even though the ideas were unfamiliar to her, she supported them. I wi'll never forget that meeting when she told me they agreed to publish my submission – as is. Here is where our collective evolution was upheld – because Linda Tuhiwai Smith encouraged an interior self to be expressed in the world. That courage was instructive and healing. I am forever grateful.

### Holographic epistemology

Holographic epistemology is the idea that knowledge, at its enduring essence, occurs simultaneously as three facets of life:

(1) via the objective, physical, outside world, the world of science and measurement, density and force; (2) via the inside subjective world, the space of thought, mind, idea and interiority that helps us understand meaning and our linkages with phenomenon; and finally (3) via the quantum world shaped by transpatial descriptors and intersections, a spiritual dimension unlinked to religious dogma, described in ethereal, mystic, and yet experiential terms. ([removed for peer review])

These ideas are found globally and within every discipline, and can be interpreted as knowledge experienced through body, mind and spirit. The ancient knowledge systems of the Pacific express these in our own terms. For Hawaiians this epistemologic trilogy is known as: mana 'o i 'o, mana 'olana, and aloha and for Fijians, it is vuku, kilaka and yalomatua. Although embedded in the cultures from which they originated, these ideas are also universal. They describe enduring principles that create quality human relationships with each other and with the world, and thus ways to live harmoniously and in a culturally and environmentally sustaining way.

This kind of epistemology, or philosophy of knowledge, is described as holographic for practical and metaphoric reasons. A hologram is a three-dimensional image created by illuminating an object from three different directions and capturing the reflections and interactions of light into a glass plate. The image can be viewed from different angles, and even when broken or shattered, each part of the hologram contains the whole image. In a similar way, holographic epistemology asks us to remember that knowledge too holds a trilogy of physical, mental and spiritual data, with each part resonating wholeness. These three aspects of its own agency, life/mind/joy as one example, are thus hidden features of knowledge production. In short, knowledge is a quantum process that animates an interconnected field of wholeness, whether we know it or not. In this way, enduring knowledge systems remain for a reason and thus cumulative knowledge is valued. Here is the beauty and function of culture in its process of evolution. Here is the gift of native common sense in this time of radical change.

Wisdom from the past can thus help solve contemporary challenges if we are able to articulate what that wisdom is. This epistemology does not privilege one way of knowing over another; people know the world differently and all are genuine interpretations of experience. Everyone, from the powerful to the powerless, are potential sources of knowledge. Importantly, holographic epistemology helps to animate meaning found across and within all three sources of knowledge ([removed for peer review]). It challenges the separation of mind, body and spirit and the Cartesian dualism that has fragmented research for so long ([removed for peer review]). Further, holographic epistemology challenges what universities have traditionally defined as acceptable research approaches and methodologies, and it pushes the boundaries of what can be known and what can be accepted as knowledge ([removed for peer review]).

Author 1: Oh my goodness! Reading this summary has made me want to be clear about the purpose of my life and how this has and will always link with others. A holographic way of describing knowledge has helped me know myself. It became the clearest way to detail the richly textured world we live in beyond simple 2-D rationality. We are entering a post-quantum world where AI - Artificial Intelligence - ironically, is not a tool as much as a thinking companion. We human beings now need to up our game.

Author 2: We certainly do. With qualitative research, one of the first tasks a new research student undertakes is to identify their epistemology (ideas of knowing and knowledge) and ontology (ideas of reality and being) which helps them refine their research approach and leads them to their methodology or methods. Students will often draw upon their own lived experiences for these philosophies. Many Pacific Islander students, for example, enter university with lived experiences of spirituality – not to be confused with Religion - and relationality within their families and communities, and they will often identify these as part of their philosophical approach to research, their motivations or their goals. Holographic epistemology offers these researchers, and any other researchers seeking a holistic approach to research, a way of bringing their whole selves to the research process. They can centre their and their

community's concerns, ethics and well-being in projects. They can conduct research responsibly in ways that align with community values which often include respect, protocols for communication and reciprocity (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). In contrast with positivistic and empiricist approaches, a holographic approach to knowledge allows researchers to value and include the wholeness of knowledge found in measuring, reflecting and witnessing data. Here is the physical, mental and spiritual potential of all research processes that inspires a kind of integrity we all recognize. Relationality then becomes a positive aspect of research, not a negative. These ideas are fundamentally denied in research or in one's researcher identity. Most Pacific researchers here in Australia are driven by a strong sense of community which suggests, even if it is not explicitly stated, that they are taking a holographic approach to research (e.g., Ravulo, 2016; Stanley and Kearney, 2017; Pale *et al.*, 2024; Faleolo, 2021).

### Holographic epistemology: Body

Within holographic epistemology, the objective dimension represents knowledge extracted from the physical world and experienced through our five senses. This knowledge is at the heart of positivism and forms the foundation of the hard sciences. It is a knowledge that prioritises measurement, observation, replication and verification ([removed for peer review]), allowing causality to be understood, predictions to be made, and control exerted. In the everyday world, we recognise this knowledge through our own physical experiences, such as living in villages on Kiribati that are disappearing from rising oceans (Cauchi et al., 2021). We recognize it in statistics, for example, "The Pacific region contributes as little as 1.3% of global plastic pollution, yet . . . the highest recorded quantity of floating plastics are in the South Pacific subtropical gyre" (United Nations Pacific, 2022). This knowledge, which comes from direct physical experience, is integral to holographic epistemology; it is embodied knowledge, "encountered, registered and remembered in bone and muscle" ([removed for peer review]). However, as holographic epistemology reminds us, this knowledge is not divorced from knowledge gained through mind and spirit. Hawaiian indigenous scholarship ([removed for peer review]) prompts us to remember that objective knowledge is not the whole picture; it is and

always has been contextualised and place-based, indelibly linked to a subjective and transempirical world.

Author 1: It is a subtle art to describe life beyond what can be seen or measured, but we all know it exists, and we value it with our lives. This is why Linda's support was a gift so long ago. She read the beginning iterations of this hologram and recognized something. We could\_not really see its implications but we were sensing it everywhere – this collapse of the "One-Truth" epistemology academia was burdened to defend. Advancing this idea that we have an external, internal and transpatial reality is non't easy to grasp, but it was how I healed. And because the world really is inter-connected, my healing helps yours, and yours helps others, ad infinitum.

Author 2: For some researchers, this involves a process of unlearning. The positivistic view of knowledge has been privileged in the social sciences since Durkheim (Monk-Turner, 2020), and its influence is obvious in educational research which lauds 'evidence-based' teaching practices (really 'evidenceinformed') and large-scale analyses of data and research such as Hattie (2023). Its influence can further be seen in regimes of standardised testing, teaching standards and quality frameworks that are ostensibly aimed at improving education but have led instead, to widening student achievement gaps and teacher shortages. Objective knowledge has value for measuring and monitoring progress, but the experience of the Aotearoa New Zealand Ministry of Education is instructive. The Ministry has long collected quantitative data to help guide its strategies and actions for Aotearoa's Pacific Islander learners (Ministry of Education, 2014; Tongati'o, 2010), but in the 2023 refresh of its Action Plan for Pasifika Education they stated, "Pacific learners, families and communities told us that how we measure success and progress does not reflect what matters to them" (Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 24). This affirms that objective knowledge must be supplemented by other knowledge types to be of value to Pacific communities.

Holographic epistemology: Mind

The subjective dimension of holographic epistemology is represented by the awakening mind. It is evolving consciousness, thought and awareness, self-reflection, conscientization (Freire, 2000), inner agency and feeling, *aromatawai* in Māori, and *na 'au* in Hawaiian ([removed for peer review]). Knowledge that understands the rigor of mind steps beyond mundane empiricism toward a more truthful and simultaneous knowing of its impact on the external world.

The mind beam in our hologram is about insideness, about the richness and infinity of difference found in our own humanity. Mind illuminates experience and brings forth meta-conscious awareness and purpose to detail meaning and interconnection. It is the maturing agency of collective and individual thinking. ([removed for peer review])

In the everyday world, knowledge of mind is recognized in dialogues such as those between rural villagers in the Solomon islands (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001), and those between nursing faculty members in a university in Samoa seeking to build research and researcher capacity (Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). It is recognized in the self-reflection and critique of Pacific scholars on the development and direction of indigenous research approaches (Devine, 2013; Amituanai-Toloa, 2006; Amituanai-Toloa, 2009; Passells, 2010; [removed for peer review]). We should not be lulled, however, into philosophical or cultural navel-gazing because holographic epistemology reminds us that knowledge of mind is but one laser light beam in a family of three. "It is no less valuable, no more valuable than any of the other beams. It is what Indigenous scholarship brings forward as a segue to spirituality" ([removed for peer review]).

Author 1: I am enjoying this dialogue as trying to bring forth the function of this holographic way to view knowledge has been challenging. Not because it it's difficult to understand, but because we need to support each other in its application. This is helping, *mahalo*.

Author 2: Support is crucial. I have had several research students who have wanted to do qualitative research but they do not trust it to be 'enough', so they

try to legitimise it by combining it with a quantitative method such as a Likertscaled survey or questionnaire or an experiment. This evidences the enduring impact that positivism has on what is perceived to be legitimate and rigorous research. As I guide them through their thinking, I always encourage them to reach within, to draw from knowledges that they may have absorbed from culture and community but not seen as 'academic' or 'objective' enough for university research ([removed for peer review]). I also challenge them to question the received knowledge gained from formal education. Received paradigms have, at the same time, expanded and limited our understanding (Kuhn, 1970). We can fall into a trap of confusing the logic of practice for the practice of logic (Bourdieu, 1990). That is, we become so enamoured of one or the other types of knowledge, that we start to believe that this is knowledge, and that over there is not. The evolution of knowledge depends on researchers understanding the foundations of research and then pushing it outwards and upwards or even back into itself. This, for me, has been the exciting potential of holographic epistemology.

### Holographic epistemology: Spirit

Spirituality with regard to knowledge acquisition describes a knowing that across indigenous cultures "is basic common sense" ([removed for peer review]). It includes ideas of interrelatedness, interdependence and complimentarity because for many indigenous peoples, humans existed within a cosmos of interdependent entities, in environments that shaped them and were shaped by them, communing in unity (community) with sentient and non-sentient beings. Knowledge of the spirit finds its expression in the Hawaiian saying "He 'ike kai hohonu—here is deep ocean knowing" ([removed for peer review]). It is spiritual, but not religious. It is guiding, but not dogmatic. "It's the third laser beam that makes sense of the other two" ([removed for peer review]). What a holographic epistemology challenges researchers to do is to engage with the unfamiliar, the "transpatial, contemplative, intuitive, loving, mystic, still, and joyful dimension" of life and research ([removed for peer review]). Everyday examples include Māori recognition of rivers, mountains and whales as kin (Charpleix, 2017; Morris, 2022) and Hawaiian respect for

sacred sites such as Mauna Kea (Brown, 2016). There are also plenty of examples in research where scholars infuse their research methodologies with cultural interpretations of Pacific spirituality (e.g., Naufahu, 2018; Sauni, 2011; Nabobo-Baba, 2008), and emerging indigenous Pacific scholars boldly experimenting with knowledge of spirit in their dissertations (e.g., Kodama, 2021; Baker, 2018). "What Native intelligence as an enduring pattern of thinking is putting forth with the aid of quantum sciences is the notion that a realm of unseen connecting patterns exist and we are the causal linkages that alter its capacity" ([removed for peer review]).

Author 1: Well, that about sums it up, does it notn't it? I have finally come out to simplify this spiritual dimension of knowledge production to include the function, purpose, and life found in loving. I know, a bit odd in a research journal, but there it is nonetheless. We have to teach ourselves the animating purpose of our lives and to step from the shadows of what *really* matters. And what really, truly matters is how we love. Here is a spiritual dimension that animates all others – even this amazing field of Research that is filled with "fake rules". This idea and recognition of a spiritual dimension of life actually begins to activate our own awareness of it. It is not a flippant realization of our own distinct realities; it is a rigorous and evolving engagement with them.

Author 2: The confidence with which Pacific Islander researchers can today draw from their 'spiritual beam' is perhaps one of the greatest butterfly effects of Linda's work. Her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) was not a bashful request from the margins of academia. It was a front-and-centre demand for recognition and respect for indigenous ways, a clarion call which opened the doors for all Pacific researchers who came after to elevate our community knowledges and make research our own. In this way, although I never had the opportunity to meet or work with her, I experienced a little of what you described earlier, Linda's no-nonsense, strong style of leadership.

Holographic epistemology: Indigenous worldviews

If we recall that each part of a hologram carries the whole, then it is easier to understand that research from an Indigenous worldview always involves knowledge of body, mind *and* spirit.

Native Science practitioners do not separate mind from body, nor do they separate that from the quantum world. We are neither wistful about their union. Sensual cues, coupled with imagination and emotional awareness sharpens one's sense of rational empiricism, it does not diminish it. ([removed for peer review])

A holographic epistemology is reverent, caring, and humble ([removed for peer review]), and it finds meaning in *aloha* or "the intelligence with which we meet life" ([removed for peer review]). It is inclusive, intentional, creative and universal, able to be used by indigenous and non-indigenous researchers alike. Recent examples of the value of holographic epistemology can be found in Peters and Lord (2023) where the indigenous-led research team revealed how Native Hawaiian students utilised their cultural knowledges in engineering education. Similarly, Gardner (2021) used this approach to offer an "epistemic reorientation" (p. 323) that challenges dualistic understandings of conflict studies to 'reclaim the sacred'.

Author 1: This is why introducing a holographic understanding into the world was coupled with the idea of "native common sense". It is basic to us that Spirit is real and the ineffable universe is now wanting our Minds to express that into Physical realms. We do this in our rituals, our dreams, our ways we make gifts and offer salutations to each other and the natural world. We do this in how we plan meetings, feed each other, create music, and heal our soils. Meaning making is a shared phenomenon and it animates purpose. This shared purpose then transforms the world – or does\_not. It remains our choice, a frequency and energy, and this is what *aloha* has become for me. After all this intellectual machination, it has boiled down to loving. *Aloha* is the primal source of our collective emergence. Linda Tuhiwai Smith knows this.

Author 2: She wrote about it in the most recent version of *Decolonising* 

methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021) which includes a chapter about love and loving. These ideas are fully compatible with research being a rigorous, comprehensive and meaningful endeavour. In Linda's own words, "A lot of the work that we do has to be driven from a place of love. We have to see what we're doing as a project that demonstrates love and that is loving. We have to be loving as researchers and scholars" (Shringarpure, 2021, para. 16). This may sound idealistic to some, but to act from a place of love, aloha (Hawaiian), aroha (Māori), alofa (Samoan), 'ofa (Tongan) and all its manifestations and interpretations is intuitive for many Pacific researchers. I see love in the motivation behind the In our language Pacific Research Journal which publishes relevant academic articles in indigenous Pacific languages so that Pacific readers who want this information can access it (University of Waikato, 2021). I see love in the research topics scholars pursue that aim to improve and uplift our communities. I also see love in the holographic epistemology which allows Pacific researchers to claim space in the academy without giving up their identities, their values and their beliefs. As you shared at the turn of this century, "We have what we need. We are who we need" ([removed for peer review]).

Ngā mihi maioha, Linda.

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### The Door Opens Inward: Meeting Linda Tuhiwai Smith

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### The Door Opens Inward: Meeting Linda Tuhiwai Smith

**Purpose**: This article demonstrates the reach of Tuhiwai Smith's ideas across Pacific research. It discusses the theoretical and practical influence of her seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* through 'holographic epistemology', an indigenous way of viewing knowledge.

**Design/methodology/approach**: The authors present a *talanoa* (Pacific-style relational conversation) to explore Tuhiwai Smith's legacy for Pacific Islander researchers and research. The *talanoa* between two academics at different career stages draws upon personal and professional research experiences and peer-reviewed published sources to explore the expansive and enduring legacy of Tuhiwai Smith's life and ideas.

**Findings**: *Decolonizing Methodologies* has helped Pacific Islander researchers flourish and Pacific Island research approaches gain legitimacy in higher education. Its epistemological influence can be seen in research which utilises knowledge of body, mind *and* spirit – holographic epistemology – and in indigenous innovations to qualitative research.

**Originality/value**: This article has value for those seeking to understand the epistemological underpinnings of indigenous approaches to research. It has originality in its presentation as a *talanoa* between two researchers who have found affirmation and academic freedom with Tuhiwai Smith's ideas. It is also original in offering a Pacific perspective from a Hawaiian and a Samoan academic about the immense *koha* (gift) they have received from a Māori *tuahine* (sister).

Keywords: holographic epistemology; Pacific research, Pacific researchers; *talanoa*; indigenous epistemology

Aloha mai kākou a pau. Greetings from the cool winds of warm Hawai'i. I am Manulani Aluli Meyer, fifth daughter of Emma Aluli and Harry Meyer from the sands of Mokapu, Kailua and the rainy shoreline of Hilo Palikū. I met Linda Smith by cosmic design (accident) while visiting Aotearoa in 2003. I came as a team member of WINHEC, the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education

Consortium. We were there to affirm the work, vision, and creativity of three *Wānanga* (Māori institutions of higher learning): *Raukawa*, *Awanuiarangi* and *Te Wānanga o Aotearoa*. Linda was standing with my book in her hands. I asked her: "Who are you?" She replied: "I'm Linda Smith" and then I said: "Why am I meeting you?" She replied: "Because you're coming here for your sabbatical." That is how I met Linda Tuhiwai Smith. I then came for a one-year sabbatical two years later and my life has been fully and forever changed.

Talofa lava! Malo le soifua maua ma le lagi e mama. Greetings and good health. I'm Eseta, second daughter of Tualaulelei Malaga Tualaulelei from Vailoa, Palauli and Luisa Tualaulelei from Leauva'a, Upolu, Samoa. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work has inspired me personally and professionally ever since I read her first edition of *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Her book spoke to me across place and time and it taught me to trust our indigenous knowledges to understand ourselves and the world around us. In this *talanoa*, I hope we can convey the nature and extent of Tuhiwai Smith's influence on Pacific educators and researchers such as ourselves.

*Talanoa* is style of discussion used by many Pacific Islanders for its cultural responsiveness and narrative-sharing possibilities (Vaioleti, 2006; Fa'avae *et al.*, 2021). The *talanoa* that follows is interspersed with explanations of holographic epistemology which originally emerged from indigenous Hawaiian scholarship (Meyer, 2022; Meyer, 2013; Meyer, 2001).

Eseta: Professor Meyer, you once wrote about Linda that "She, by the very nature of her being, supported our collective evolution." Can you tell us a bit more about what you meant by this?

Manu: What this means is that Linda opens doors for us all, both through her ideas, and through her no-nonsense style of mentoring. She invited me to come to the University of Auckland where she was working to produce and support 500 Māori PhDs as the director of *Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga* - Māori Center of Research Excellence. I wanted to see if that was something we should do in Hawai'i. So, I went.

Eseta: From Hawai'i to New Zealand. That is one end of Polynesia to the other. Not many people know that our peoples are spread over a region that covers over quarter of the earth's surface, much of that open seas, yet our Pacific cultural connections have always been quite strong. Was there anything that stood out for you in this experience?

Manu: What I appreciated most was Linda's mentoring style. She gave me a wide-open field to play in. I was invited to all the PhD Writing Retreats and Indigenous Research gatherings, and I recall the dinners as posh events I always felt under-dressed in. That's what I remembered – how well dressed everyone was. Aotearoa is quite the hub of European fashion! But she kept inviting me, nonetheless. I felt she was an older sister watching me as I made friends and found my way into the *taonga* (cultural treasures) making field of renowned practitioner, Dante Botticelli. Right there outside *Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga*, I learned to shape *pounamu* (greenstone), roll *muka* (flax fibre) into string to secure hand carved *toki* (adze) and how to make a *tuwiri* (cord drill). Creating material culture became my research practice.

Eseta: The way you describe Linda's strong mentoring style brings to mind the Māori term *wāhine toa* (strong woman) and it reminds me of the integral role that Pacific women have played and continue to play in the development of Pacific societies, including in the diaspora. Within research, some of our most innovative Pacific research methodologies such as *Kakala* (Thaman, 2003) which uses flower garland-making as a metaphor for research, *Vanua* (Nabobo-Baba, 2008) based upon Fijian village protocols, and *Tivaevae* (Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges, 2019) which likens research to *Kuki Airani* (Cook Islands) quilt-making have been spearheaded by women. What was it like when you worked with Linda directly?

Manu: *Kaupapa Māori* research methods were deepening, her book on decolonizing research was being read around the world, and hundreds of Māori PhDs were also on her schedule. Linda was busy. We met on specific occasions to go over two requests she asked from me: to evaluate a Fijian

thesis focusing on epistemology which I deeply loved, and to write something for a global book on Indigenous research methods she was helping edit. As I was just coming to understand the expansive potential of the field, her encouragement was a game-changer.

Eseta: So around about the time you were working with Linda, I had not even started my Masters degree and I remember looking for inspiration for my methodology, for a way of doing research that aligned with Pacific axiology. Of course, this was before I even knew what the term 'axiology' meant, but reading *Decolonizing Methodologies* confirmed for me that indigenous knowledges were as valid as any other. Our knowledges might have been packaged differently to the books and articles I was familiar with in academia, but Linda's work helped me realize that our traditional chants, stories, songs, dances, ceremonies, cultural artifacts and so on were a repository of knowledge that could be used to guide research. Where did Linda's encouragement lead you?

Manu: Linda's encouragement gave me the time and privacy to envision and formulate the "Triangulation of Meaning" – an integrated way to look at the simultaneity of body, mind, spirit with regard to knowledge acquisition. What our own Indigenous knowing helped me see is that all ideas that endure share a similar essence, even though the form is forever changing. It was during that one-year sabbatical in Aotearoa that the essence of knowing started to become clear. This idea eventually became "Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense", but back then in 2005, it felt risky to speak or write in this way. Her support was real and even though the ideas were unfamiliar to her, she supported them. I will never forget that meeting when she told me they agreed to publish my submission – as is. Here is where our collective evolution was upheld – because Linda Tuhiwai Smith encouraged an interior self to be expressed in the world. That courage was instructive and healing. I am forever grateful.

### Holographic epistemology

Holographic epistemology is the idea that knowledge, at its enduring essence, occurs simultaneously as three facets of life:

(1) via the objective, physical, outside world, the world of science and measurement, density and force; (2) via the inside subjective world, the space of thought, mind, idea and interiority that helps us understand meaning and our linkages with phenomenon; and finally (3) via the quantum world shaped by transpatial descriptors and intersections, a spiritual dimension unlinked to religious dogma, described in ethereal, mystic, and yet experiential terms. (Meyer, 2013, p. 94)

These ideas are found globally and within every discipline, and can be interpreted as knowledge experienced through body, mind and spirit. The ancient knowledge systems of the Pacific express these in our own terms. For Hawaiians this epistemologic trilogy is known as: mana 'o i 'o, mana 'olana, and aloha and for Fijians, it is vuku, kilaka and yalomatua. Although embedded in the cultures from which they originated, these ideas are also universal. They describe enduring principles that create quality human relationships with each other and with the world, and thus ways to live harmoniously and in a culturally and environmentally sustaining way.

This kind of epistemology, or philosophy of knowledge, is described as holographic for practical and metaphoric reasons. A hologram is a three-dimensional image created by illuminating an object from three different directions and capturing the reflections and interactions of light into a glass plate. The image can be viewed from different angles, and even when broken or shattered, each part of the hologram contains the whole image. In a similar way, holographic epistemology asks us to remember that knowledge too holds a trilogy of physical, mental and spiritual data, with each part resonating wholeness. These three aspects of its own agency, life/mind/joy as one example, are thus hidden features of knowledge production. In short, knowledge is a quantum process that animates an interconnected field of wholeness, whether we know it or not. In this way, enduring knowledge systems remain for a reason and thus cumulative knowledge is valued. Here is the beauty and function of culture

in its process of evolution. Here is the gift of native common sense in this time of radical change.

Wisdom from the past can thus help solve contemporary challenges if we are able to articulate what that wisdom is. This epistemology does not privilege one way of knowing over another; people know the world differently and all are genuine interpretations of experience. Everyone, from the powerful to the powerless, are potential sources of knowledge. Importantly, holographic epistemology helps to animate meaning found across and within all three sources of knowledge (Meyer, 2013). It challenges the separation of mind, body and spirit and the Cartesian dualism that has fragmented research for so long (Meyer, 1998). Further, holographic epistemology challenges what universities have traditionally defined as acceptable research approaches and methodologies, and it pushes the boundaries of what can be known and what can be accepted as knowledge (Meyer, 2022).

Manu: Oh my goodness! Reading this summary has made me want to be clear about the purpose of my life and how this has and will always link with others. A holographic way of describing knowledge has helped me know myself. It became the clearest way to detail the richly textured world we live in beyond simple 2-D rationality. We are entering a post-quantum world where AI - Artificial Intelligence - ironically, is not a tool as much as a thinking companion. We human beings now need to up our game.

Eseta: We certainly do. With qualitative research, one of the first tasks a new research student undertakes is to identify their epistemology (ideas of knowing and knowledge) and ontology (ideas of reality and being) which helps them refine their research approach and leads them to their methodology or methods. Students will often draw upon their own lived experiences for these philosophies. Many Pacific Islander students, for example, enter university with lived experiences of spirituality – not to be confused with Religion - and relationality within their families and communities, and they will often identify these as part of their philosophical approach to research, their motivations or their goals. Holographic epistemology offers these researchers, and any other

researchers seeking a holistic approach to research, a way of bringing their whole selves to the research process. They can centre their and their community's concerns, ethics and well-being in projects. They can conduct research responsibly in ways that align with community values which often include respect, protocols for communication and reciprocity (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). In contrast with positivistic and empiricist approaches, a holographic approach to knowledge allows researchers to value and include the wholeness of knowledge found in measuring, reflecting and witnessing data. Here is the physical, mental and spiritual potential of all research processes that inspires a kind of integrity we all recognize. Relationality then becomes a positive aspect of research, not a negative. These ideas are fundamentally denied in research or in one's researcher identity. Most Pacific researchers here in Australia are driven by a strong sense of community which suggests, even if it is not explicitly stated, that they are taking a holographic approach to research (e.g., Ravulo, 2016; Stanley and Kearney, 2017; Pale et al., 2024; Faleolo, 2021).

### Holographic epistemology: Body

Within holographic epistemology, the objective dimension represents knowledge extracted from the physical world and experienced through our five senses. This knowledge is at the heart of positivism and forms the foundation of the hard sciences. It is a knowledge that prioritises measurement, observation, replication and verification (Meyer, 2013), allowing causality to be understood, predictions to be made, and control exerted. In the everyday world, we recognise this knowledge through our own physical experiences, such as living in villages on Kiribati that are disappearing from rising oceans (Cauchi et al., 2021). We recognize it in statistics, for example, "The Pacific region contributes as little as 1.3% of global plastic pollution, yet . . . the highest recorded quantity of floating plastics are in the South Pacific subtropical gyre" (United Nations Pacific, 2022). This knowledge, which comes from direct physical experience, is integral to holographic epistemology; it is embodied knowledge, "encountered, registered and remembered in bone and muscle" (Meyer, 2013, p. 96). However, as holographic epistemology reminds us, this knowledge is not divorced from knowledge gained through mind and spirit. Hawaiian indigenous scholarship

(Meyer, 1998; Meyer, 2013; Meyer, 2022) prompts us to remember that objective knowledge is not the whole picture; it is and always has been contextualised and place-based, indelibly linked to a subjective and transempirical world.

Manu: It is a subtle art to describe life beyond what can be seen or measured, but we all know it exists, and we value it with our lives. This is why Linda's support was a gift so long ago. She read the beginning iterations of this hologram and recognized something. We could not really see its implications but we were sensing it everywhere – this collapse of the "One-Truth" epistemology academia was burdened to defend. Advancing this idea that we have an external, internal and transpatial reality is not easy to grasp, but it was how I healed. And because the world really is inter-connected, my healing helps yours, and yours helps others, ad infinitum.

Eseta: For some researchers, this involves a process of unlearning. The positivistic view of knowledge has been privileged in the social sciences since Durkheim (Monk-Turner, 2020), and its influence is obvious in educational research which lauds 'evidence-based' teaching practices (really 'evidenceinformed') and large-scale analyses of data and research such as Hattie (2023). Its influence can further be seen in regimes of standardised testing, teaching standards and quality frameworks that are ostensibly aimed at improving education but have led instead, to widening student achievement gaps and teacher shortages. Objective knowledge has value for measuring and monitoring progress, but the experience of the Aotearoa New Zealand Ministry of Education is instructive. The Ministry has long collected quantitative data to help guide its strategies and actions for Aotearoa's Pacific Islander learners (Ministry of Education, 2014; Tongati'o, 2010), but in the 2023 refresh of its Action Plan for Pasifika Education they stated, "Pacific learners, families and communities told us that how we measure success and progress does not reflect what matters to them" (Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 24). This affirms that objective knowledge must be supplemented by other knowledge types to be of value to Pacific communities.

### Holographic epistemology: Mind

The subjective dimension of holographic epistemology is represented by the awakening mind. It is evolving consciousness, thought and awareness, self-reflection, conscientization (Freire, 2000), inner agency and feeling, *aromatawai* in Māori, and *na 'au* in Hawaiian (Meyer, 2022). Knowledge that understands the rigor of mind steps beyond mundane empiricism toward a more truthful and simultaneous knowing of its impact on the external world.

The mind beam in our hologram is about insideness, about the richness and infinity of difference found in our own humanity. Mind illuminates experience and brings forth meta-conscious awareness and purpose to detail meaning and interconnection. It is the maturing agency of collective and individual thinking. (Meyer, 2013, p. 96)

In the everyday world, knowledge of mind is recognized in dialogues such as those between rural villagers in the Solomon islands (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001), and those between nursing faculty members in a university in Samoa seeking to build research and researcher capacity (Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). It is recognized in the self-reflection and critique of Pacific scholars on the development and direction of indigenous research approaches (Devine, 2013; Amituanai-Toloa, 2006; Amituanai-Toloa, 2009; Passells, 2010; Tualaulelei and McFall-McCaffery, 2019). We should not be lulled, however, into philosophical or cultural navel-gazing because holographic epistemology reminds us that knowledge of mind is but one laser light beam in a family of three. "It is no less valuable, no more valuable than any of the other beams. It is what Indigenous scholarship brings forward as a segue to spirituality" (Meyer, 2013, p. 97).

Manu: I am enjoying this dialogue as trying to bring forth the function of this holographic way to view knowledge has been challenging. Not because it is difficult to understand, but because we need to support each other in its application. This is helping, *mahalo*.

Eseta: Support is crucial. I have had several research students who have wanted to do qualitative research but they do not trust it to be 'enough', so they try to legitimise it by combining it with a quantitative method such as a Likertscaled survey or questionnaire or an experiment. This evidences the enduring impact that positivism has on what is perceived to be legitimate and rigorous research. As I guide them through their thinking, I always encourage them to reach within, to draw from knowledges that they may have absorbed from culture and community but not seen as 'academic' or 'objective' enough for university research (Tualaulelei and McFall-McCaffery, 2019). I also challenge them to question the received knowledge gained from formal education. Received paradigms have, at the same time, expanded and limited our understanding (Kuhn, 1970). We can fall into a trap of confusing the logic of practice for the practice of logic (Bourdieu, 1990). That is, we become so enamoured of one or the other types of knowledge, that we start to believe that this is knowledge, and that over there is not. The evolution of knowledge depends on researchers understanding the foundations of research and then pushing it outwards and upwards or even back into itself. This, for me, has been the exciting potential of holographic epistemology.

### Holographic epistemology: Spirit

Spirituality with regard to knowledge acquisition describes a knowing that across indigenous cultures "is basic common sense" (Meyer, 2013, p. 97). It includes ideas of interrelatedness, interdependence and complimentarity because for many indigenous peoples, humans existed within a cosmos of interdependent entities, in environments that shaped them and were shaped by them, communing in unity (community) with sentient and non-sentient beings.

Knowledge of the spirit finds its expression in the Hawaiian saying "He 'ike kai hohonu—here is deep ocean knowing" (Meyer, 2013, p. 97). It is spiritual, but not religious. It is guiding, but not dogmatic. "It's the third laser beam that makes sense of the other two" (Meyer, 2013, p. 97). What a holographic epistemology challenges researchers to do is to engage with the unfamiliar, the "transpatial, contemplative, intuitive, loving, mystic, still, and joyful dimension" of life and research (Meyer, 2013, p. 97). Everyday examples include Māori

recognition of rivers, mountains and whales as kin (Charpleix, 2017; Morris, 2022) and Hawaiian respect for sacred sites such as Mauna Kea (Brown, 2016). There are also plenty of examples in research where scholars infuse their research methodologies with cultural interpretations of Pacific spirituality (e.g., Naufahu, 2018; Sauni, 2011; Nabobo-Baba, 2008), and emerging indigenous Pacific scholars boldly experimenting with knowledge of spirit in their dissertations (e.g., Kodama, 2021; Baker, 2018). "What Native intelligence as an enduring pattern of thinking is putting forth with the aid of quantum sciences is the notion that a realm of unseen connecting patterns exist and we are the causal linkages that alter its capacity" (Meyer, 2013, p. 97).

Manu: Well, that about sums it up, does it not? I have finally come out to simplify this spiritual dimension of knowledge production to include the function, purpose, and life found in loving. I know, a bit odd in a research journal, but there it is nonetheless. We have to teach ourselves the animating purpose of our lives and to step from the shadows of what *really* matters. And what really, truly matters is how we love. Here is a spiritual dimension that animates all others – even this amazing field of Research that is filled with "fake rules". This idea and recognition of a spiritual dimension of life actually begins to activate our own awareness of it. It is not a flippant realization of our own distinct realities; it is a rigorous and evolving engagement with them.

Eseta: The confidence with which Pacific Islander researchers can today draw from their 'spiritual beam' is perhaps one of the greatest butterfly effects of Linda's work. Her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) was not a bashful request from the margins of academia. It was a front-and-centre demand for recognition and respect for indigenous ways, a clarion call which opened the doors for all Pacific researchers who came after to elevate our community knowledges and make research our own. In this way, although I never had the opportunity to meet or work with her, I experienced a little of what you described earlier, Linda's no-nonsense, strong style of leadership.

Holographic epistemology: Indigenous worldviews

If we recall that each part of a hologram carries the whole, then it is easier to understand that research from an Indigenous worldview always involves knowledge of body, mind *and* spirit.

Native Science practitioners do not separate mind from body, nor do they separate that from the quantum world. We are neither wistful about their union. Sensual cues, coupled with imagination and emotional awareness sharpens one's sense of rational empiricism, it does not diminish it. (Meyer, 2013, p. 99)

A holographic epistemology is reverent, caring, and humble (Meyer, 2022), and it finds meaning in *aloha* or "the intelligence with which we meet life" (Olana Kaipo Ai, as cited in Meyer, 2013, p. 94). It is inclusive, intentional, creative and universal, able to be used by indigenous and non-indigenous researchers alike. Recent examples of the value of holographic epistemology can be found in Peters and Lord (2023) where the indigenous-led research team revealed how Native Hawaiian students utilised their cultural knowledges in engineering education. Similarly, Gardner (2021) used this approach to offer an "epistemic reorientation" (p. 323) that challenges dualistic understandings of conflict studies to 'reclaim the sacred'.

Manu: This is why introducing a holographic understanding into the world was coupled with the idea of "native common sense". It is basic to us that Spirit is real and the ineffable universe is now wanting our Minds to express that into Physical realms. We do this in our rituals, our dreams, our ways we make gifts and offer salutations to each other and the natural world. We do this in how we plan meetings, feed each other, create music, and heal our soils. Meaning making is a shared phenomenon and it animates purpose. This shared purpose then transforms the world – or does not. It remains our choice, a frequency and energy, and this is what *aloha* has become for me. After all this intellectual machination, it has boiled down to loving. *Aloha* is the primal source of our collective emergence. Linda Tuhiwai Smith knows this.

Eseta: She wrote about it in the most recent version of *Decolonising methodologies* (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021) which includes a chapter about love and

loving. These ideas are fully compatible with research being a rigorous, comprehensive and meaningful endeavour. In Linda's own words, "A lot of the work that we do has to be driven from a place of love. We have to see what we're doing as a project that demonstrates love and that is loving. We have to be loving as researchers and scholars" (Shringarpure, 2021, para. 16). This may sound idealistic to some, but to act from a place of love, aloha (Hawaiian). aroha (Māori), alofa (Samoan), 'ofa (Tongan) and all its manifestations and interpretations is intuitive for many Pacific researchers. I see love in the motivation behind the In our language Pacific Research Journal which publishes relevant academic articles in indigenous Pacific languages so that Pacific readers who want this information can access it (University of Waikato, 2021). I see love in the research topics scholars pursue that aim to improve and uplift our communities. I also see love in the holographic epistemology which allows Pacific researchers to claim space in the academy without giving up their identities, their values and their beliefs. As you shared at the turn of this century, "We have what we need. We are who we need" (Meyer, 2001, p. 146).

Ngā mihi maioha, Linda.

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