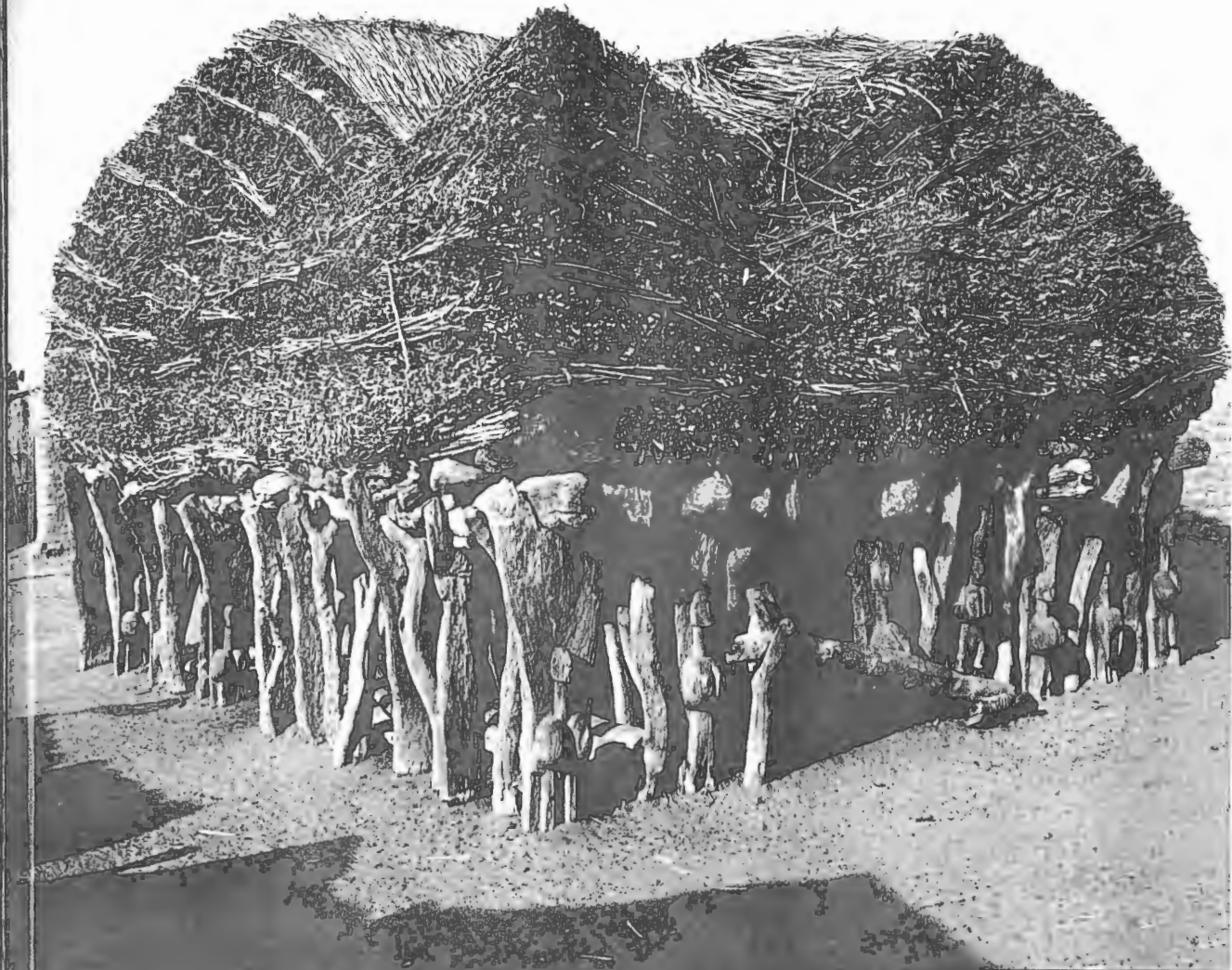


EDITORS
NORMAN K. DENZIN
YVONNA S. LINCOLN
LINDA TUHIWAI SMITH



HANDBOOK OF
CRITICAL AND INDIGENOUS
METHODOLOGIES



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For information:



SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
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E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
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SAGE Publications Ltd.
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5

CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND INDIGENOUS METHODOLOGIES

Christopher Dunbar Jr.

Carter G. Woodson (1933/2000) posed the query, “What different method of approach or what sort of appeal would one make to the Negro that cannot be made just as well by a white teacher?” “To be honest,” he said, “There is no particular body of facts that Negro teachers can impart to children of their own race that may not be just as easily presented by persons of another race if they have the same attitude as Negro teachers; but in most cases, tradition, race hate, segregation and terrorism make such a thing impossible” (pp. 27–28).

John Hope Franklin (1963) pointed out that many White scholars had begun to concede, “Negroes had peculiar talents that fitted them to study themselves and their problems. To the extent that this concession was made, defeated a basic principle of scholarship—namely that given the materials and techniques of scholarship and given the mental capacity any person could engage in the study of any particular field” (p. 69). In other words, scholarship could be conducted regardless of mitigating circumstances that may shroud the conditions under which the study is

conducted, which ultimately influence how one perceives a situation. However, Woodson (1933/2000) would argue that shared life experiences between researcher and the researched lend themselves to greater understanding of life’s conditions and circumstances, therefore rendering the “Negro’s” seeming propensity to conduct research and scholarship about like kind more accurate and necessary.

There was a downside to this concession, however. Negro scholarship “had become victim to the view that there was some ‘mystique’ about Negro studies similar to the view that there was some mystique about Negro spirituals, which requires that a person possess a black skin in order to sing them” (p. 69). This was not scholarship; it was folklore, it was voodoo. Ladson-Billings (2000) raised the same concern when she states, “Some works are called literature whereas other works are termed folklore. Not surprisingly, the literature of people of color is more likely to fall into the folklore category” (p. 258). This notion fed the belief that Negroes did not have the intellectual capacity to conduct valued research.

While Franklin (1963) viewed this interpretation (by Whites) of research conducted by Negroes as “tragic,” stating, “Negro scholarship had foundered on the rocks of racism” (p. 69), other scholars of color positioned themselves differently, embracing a position that everything about race is subjective, hence challenging the notion of objectivity and the perception that given the same materials and resources, anyone could conduct research and arrive at the same findings—that is, the belief that life experiences and/or power relationships have no impact on research outcomes.

■ DOMINANT CULTURAL MODEL

Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2005), however, suggest that power relationships (in fact) influence how research is collected and interpreted. That is, the sociocultural, political, and economic position of the researcher and the researched plays an acute role in how research is presented and therefore interpreted. In this instance, the researched is positioned or excluded from the mainstream or dominant culture. The researched is the object/other/subject whose existence is described/prescribed by members of the dominant culture model of knowing. They occupy a “liminal status/space” as people of color (Wynter, 1992, as cited in Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005). That is, there exists one “center” composed of those whose way of knowing determines how those outside the center are viewed. Therefore, what there is to know revolves around the center’s interpretation of that which is perceived as outside the center. Thus, there are those who comprise the center and those who work their way around it, suggesting a dualistic position. The relationship between the knower and the object is regulated by the rules established by those in the center; consequently, the dominant cultural model became the standard by which all research is assessed. This dominant model sets up prescriptive rules and canons for regulating thought and action in society. Thus, the issue is about the “nature of human knowing of the social reality utilizing a model in which the

knower is already a socialized subject” (Wynter, 1992, as cited by Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005).

Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2005) are careful to note that this liminal positioning is not necessarily a “place of degradation and disadvantage.” On the contrary, Wynter (1992, as cited in Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005) suggests that this place of alterity provides a “wide angle advantage.” The advantage is a result of the “dialectical nature of constructed otherness that prescribes the liminal status of people of color as beyond the normative boundary of the conception of Self/Other” (King, 1995, as cited in Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005). The advantage to scholars of color results from the opportunity/obligation to transcend the either/or way of knowing. Scholars included in this chapter argue against dualistic positioning. They provide multiple positions/lenses that challenge the dominant cultural model that they contend distorts their realities and has served only to sustain power relations that continue to place them at a disadvantage. This dichotomy is the focus of this chapter.

I began this chapter with quotes from Woodson (1933/2000) and Franklin (1963) because they speak in a profound way to issues concerned with critical race theory and Indigenous inquiries and methodologies. I contend that Woodson’s insights lend support for the need and the strength of Indigenous methodologies. I concur with Woodson’s belief that race (hate), de facto segregation, and terrorism continue to have a profound impact on one’s way of knowing (epistemology) and one’s relationship to what there is to know (ontology). Ladson-Billings (2000) suggests that epistemology is more than a way of knowing. She describes it as a “system of knowing that has both an internal logic and external validity” (p. 257). In this instance, a distinction is made between a way of knowing and a system of knowing. In the former, every individual has a relationship to what there is to know (and obviously, the relationships differ), while in the latter case, some ways of knowing are valued and validated while others are not dependent on one’s position to the center. What there is to know is inextricably linked to an individual’s past, present, and future. It is shaped by historical, social, political, and economic

experiences. "I am my past, present and future" (Minh-ha, 1989). My reality suggests that race matters. Franklin's analysis of traditional research methods questioned the notion that legitimate research had to be conducted by White scholars.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents an overview/critique of critical race theory. The second section explores the imperative of both Indigenous scholars and scholars of color to provide alternative modes of inquiry that accurately represent/reflect and critique their experiences.

Understanding Critical Race: No Balcony Seats

The construction of racism from the "perpetrator perspective," according to Alan Freeman (1995), "restrictively conceived racism as an intentional, irrational deviation by a conscious wrongdoer from otherwise neutral rational and just ways of distributing jobs, power, prestige, and wealth. The adoption of this perspective allowed a broad cultural mainstream both explicitly to acknowledge the fact of racism and to simultaneously insist on its irregular occurrence and limited significance" (p. xiv). Freeman concludes that liberal race reform thus served to legitimize the basic myths of American meritocracy.

According to Freeman (1995), "Critical race theory (CRT) embraces a movement of left scholars, mostly scholars of color situated in law schools, whose works challenged the ways in which race and racial power are constructed and represented in America legal culture and more generally in American Society as a whole" (p. xiii). Two common interests unify critical race scholarship. The first is to understand how a regime of White supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America, and the second is a particular examination of the relationship between that social structure and professed ideas such as the rule of law and "equal protection" (Freeman, 1995, p. xiii).

Critical race theory is an outgrowth of and is often allied with critical legal studies (CLS).

The critical legal studies group, of whom the most prominent associates are Patricia Williams, Richard Delgado, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Derrick Bell, is marked by their utilization of developments in postmodern poststructural scholarship, especially the focus on "liminal" or "marginalized" communities and the use of alternative methodology in the expression of theoretical work. Most notable is their use of "narratives" and other literary techniques. They reject the prevailing orthodoxy that scholarship could or should be "neutral" and "objective" (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). These scholars believe that scholarship about race in America could never be written distanced from or with an attitude of objectivity. There is no scholarly perch outside the social dynamics of racial power from which to merely observe and analyze (Crenshaw et al., 1995). The formal selection process, collection, analyses, and organization of what is called knowledge are inevitably political (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

"Critical race theory aims to reexamine the terms by which race and racism have been negotiated in American consciousness and to recover the radical tradition of race consciousness among African Americans and other people of color" (Freeman, 1995, p. xiv). This race consciousness tradition was abandoned when integration, assimilation, and the idea of color blindness became the official norms of racial enlightenment.

Eleanor Marie Brown (1995) writes that CRT's reliance on narrative is explicitly pragmatic. "First, critical race theorists use narrative in a self-conscious effort to include the voices of people of color who have traditionally been excluded from conventionally 'appropriate' legal scholarship. Second, the use of narrative challenges the traditional meritocratic paradigm of the academy by attempting to subvert what are viewed as pretenses of 'objectivity,' 'neutrality,' 'meritocracy,' and 'color-blindness'" (Brown, cited in Shuford, 2001). To the extent that one writes in the conventional mode, one glorifies these traditional meritocratic standards that were conceptualized in a "raced" world.

Racelessness/Consciousness

John Shuford (2001) provides an analysis of W. E. B. DuBois's contributions to critical race theory through an essay penned *The DuBoisian Legacy to Critical Race Theory: The Impossibility of Racelessness and Whiteness as an Ontological Condition of Moral Indebtness?* In his essay, Shuford writes,

Du Bois provided complex insights into racialization and racial identity formation as he simultaneously described the impossibility of racelessness, the inevitability of race-consciousness, and the worth of races toward liberatory culture-making. From all stages of his theorizing, Du Bois emphasized the ongoing relevance of racialization of certain morphological traits and genealogies (and how these were used as a basis for subordination or allocation of privilege; the social and cognitive freedoms and constraints individuals and groups face within racial identity formation; and how racialization practices could be put to greater liberatory use by and for racially oppressed people than could practices of racelessness).

■ REJECTION OF RACE CONCEPT

While DuBois argued that the concept of racelessness is impossible, others such as Kwame A. Appiah and Naomi Zack argue that race is scientifically meaningless. That is, it is a socially constructed concept. "Antirace" and so-called mixed-race theorists have encouraged African Americans, Black Africans, multiracial people, and Whites alike to reject all race concepts on strategic, scientific, conceptual, sociohistorical, and existential grounds (Shuford, 2001). Proponents of this philosophy encourage all people to embrace racelessness toward the goals of individual and group inclusion, deconstruction of racial oppression and racial privilege, more holistic identity formation, and critical empowerment within massive scientific, social, and discursive shifts (Shuford, 2001).

Zack (2001), a philosopher and of mixed-race heritage, postulates,

The main problem with "race" in common sense is a failure to recognize that there is no biological basis for racial categories. But, since such common sense illusions about race exist (that is, race is a social fact, socially constructed and practiced and subsequently normalized), it is important to note that they have been accompanied by a general denial of official recognition of mixed-race identity. This denial has supported ungrounded notions of racial purity. If race is (falsely) believed to be real, then mixed race ought to enjoy the same social status. Therefore, so long as beliefs in pure races persist in society, there would seem to be a need for a theoretical foundation that could be used for political and policy arguments that allow for the recognition of mixed-race identities.

Divergent Views

Brown (1995), author of "The Tower of Babel," argues, "Whether or not we realize we are raced necessarily implicates the extent to which we are raced. Some of us are raced, others of us are de-raced, and there is a continuum in between" (cited in Shuford, 2001). In recent years, Brown has postulated that "antirace" and so-called mixed-race theorists have been at the forefront of discursive shifts to problematize, transform, or even obliterate practices of racialization. Their methods toward "antirace" or "mixed-race" ontologies and identities have included development of autobiographically based multiracial and "borderline" identity theories, refutations of biological essentialism, and identification of historical and conceptual underpinnings of White racism (cited in Shuford, 2001).

Luscious Outlaw (1996) provides a different perspective. He suggests,

Lest we move too fast on this [on moving beyond racism in a pluralistic democracy] there is still to be explored the "other side" of "race": namely, the lived experiences of those within racial groups (e.g., blacks for whom Black nationalism, in many ways, is fundamental). That "race" is without a scientific basis in biological terms does not mean, thereby, that it is without any social value, racism notwithstanding. The exploration of "race" from this "other side" is required before we will have an adequate critical theory, one that truly contributes

to enlightenment and emancipation, in part by appreciating the integrity of those who see themselves through the prism of "race." We must not err yet again in thinking that "race thinking" must be completely eliminated on the way to emancipated society.

Living in a "Raced" Society

Issues of race have been the backdrop in all my lived experiences. That includes occasions when I was acutely aware that my race was an issue and instances when it was not so obvious. However, the question of race was/is always something I consider/ed, if not immediately, certainly soon after I left a situation. Race is a constant in my life. It may be the only constant. I am outside "the center" that Ladson-Billings (2000; Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005) posits and therefore have been positioned as a scholar of color and trained/directed to embrace the "dominant cultural model" of conducting research. Beginning with my academic training, I always wanted to begin with the story. As Bryant Alexander (2006) aptly posits, "There is always a story that frames the nature of research" (p. 34). Hence, my research inclination or my way of knowing was directly/indirectly related to my position in the story. "What's the story in there?" are words my father would ask upon hearing my siblings and me quibbling in an adjacent room. It was the launching of an investigation. There was no notion of objectivity except my response, "I didn't do it!"

However, in my academic training, I was often discouraged because this modality did not fit in the model of research that was imposed. The notion of objectivity when I describe the plight of people who look like me was never my first thought. Fact is, the requirement for me to remove my experience as a "raced" object from my work as an academic scholar was undesirable. For as long as I can remember, my race has been my "center." Acknowledgment of this positionality has dictated my behavior/research in this "raced society." Indeed, "I am my past, present and future" (Minh-ha, 1989).

I have framed much of my research in story form because I, too, agree that a story frames my

research. For example, when I approached a young student attending an alternative school to introduce myself, he immediately responded, "Are you the 'poleece?'" (Dunbar, 2001). His "lived experience" concerned with people asking questions about his life told him to be suspicious of anyone making such inquiries. It did not matter that I was a person who looked like him. The fact that (I said) I was a student researcher at the university did not prompt him to ask about the university or even why (because of my age) I was a still in school. *Researcher*, for this young African American man, was synonymous with *interrogator* or *investigator*. Hence, it was quite logical for him to pose this question. He had taken an appropriate cultural stance. To some, his cultural performance would have been anticipated and deemed authentic. Posing this question in front of his classmates rendered him an endeared and legitimate member of his peers.

Perhaps his response was predicated on the fact that most of the children interviewed were ordered by a judge not to be on the university campus unless they were accompanied by an adult. You see, most of the students in the study had previous encounters with the law (see Dunbar, 2001). Indeed, there existed borders and boundaries for these children (that were not imagined), and I had crossed the line. For me, it was necessary to share my apprehensiveness about police and my understanding of the necessity to build a border between those whom I suspected did not have my best interests in mind. My success was predicated on my capacity to understand and to convey that I, too, had similar lived experiences.

Significance of "Lived Experiences"

Woodson (1933/2000) argued that there is a distinct body of facts that one can only impart as a result of having shared experiences. He posits that particular insights provide entrance into a situation that might be otherwise misunderstood, viewed as insignificant or completely missed about the "lived experiences" of oppressed/colonized people. Woodson is explicit when he states that White teachers (and I would also argue researchers) may be able to do some work "better

than the Negro and there is no objection to such service" (p. 28). However, there exist other intangibles/nuances that are best transmitted and understood when shared experiences, epistemologies, and the relationship to both are evident between the observer and the observed—that is, when the subject and the object have shared struggles not unlike experiences shared (stories) among recovering alcoholics. In both situations, there is a common experience/understanding between those who ask and those who are being asked. The subjects and the audience are not disconnected. They have similar lived experiences. Similar insights provide a window with which to share views without speaking, where a sound, seemingly inaudible to the unprepared ear, speaks volumes to a knowing listener, where the expression on one's face tells the whole story or a simple nod says, "I know where you're coming from."

Woodson (1933/2000) adds, "That if the Negro is to be forced to live in the ghetto, he can more easily develop out of it under his own leadership than under that which is super-imposed. The Negro will never be able to show his originality as long as his efforts are directed from without by those who socially proscribe him" (p. 28). That is, Woodson contends that the Negro will never be able to progress as long as the tools used for such progress serve more to condemn him than to uplift him. Similarly stated by Black feminist Audre Lorde (1984), "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Hence the need for scholars of color to adopt critical methodologies toward the transformation and liberation of oppressed people. DuBois indicated that leadership of such a movement must come from the ranks of the "talented tenth" of the Negro population.

Talented Tenth

DuBois (1903/2003) espoused that a talented tenth of the African American population must take responsibility to lead. He posed the following question:

Can the masses of the Negro people be in any possible way more quickly raised than by the effort and example of this aristocracy of talent and character?

Was there ever a nation on God's fair earth civilized from the bottom upward? Never, it is, ever was and ever will be from the top downward that culture filters. This is the history of human progress. (p. 45)

DuBois (1903/2003) further explains how the most capable youth must be trained to take on this responsibility:

The best and most capable of their youth must be schooled in the colleges and universities of the land. We will not quarrel as to just what the university of the Negro should teach or how it should teach it—I willingly admit that each soul and each race-soul needs its own peculiar curriculum. But this is true: A university is a human invention for the transmission of knowledge and culture from generation to generation, through the training of quick minds and pure hearts, and for this work no other human invention will suffice, not even trade and industrial schools. (p. 45)

DuBois (1903/2003) suggests, "Each soul and each race-soul needs its own peculiar curriculum." That is, each race-soul has needs that are particular to its set of experiences. In the case of the Negro, the set of experiences is peculiarly different from that of Euro-Americans. These experiences affect their relationship to what there is to know. Therefore, a curriculum that takes into account this unique set of experiences "is required before we will have an adequate critical theory, one that truly contributes to enlightenment and emancipation, in part by appreciating the integrity of those who see themselves through the prism of 'race'" (cited in Shuford, 2001).

Taking DuBois's assessment a step further, I would argue that the peculiar set of experiences of African Americans necessitates a methodological approach of inquiry that also differs from a Euro/Western approach to uncover and discover the lived experiences of disenfranchised, colonized, and Indigenous people. That is, there are (and need to be) multiple ways of inquiry/knowing.

Stories From an Indigenous Perspective

Stories provide data that have a focus on ways in which cultural and social constraints act upon

individuals. They are a powerful tool for reflection. The language used is an act of epistemology. Bruner (1990) suggests that storytellers take meaning from the historical circumstances that gave shape to the culture of which they are an expression.

Impact of Colonialism on Knowing: First Nations' Viewpoint

Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (in Bennett & Blackstock, 2002) argue that the creation of knowledge is based on what they refer to as Eurocentricism. They explain that Eurocentricism supports the belief in the superiority of European people over non-European (Indigenous) peoples and extends to the lack of recognition (or ignorance) of Indigenous knowledge systems, ways of knowing and doing. Other Indigenous scholars postulate that to understand the impact of colonialism on research methods, one only has to look at the way First Nations are indoctrinated by Canadian universities (Cajete, 2000; Hampton, 1995). They explain that they are not from homogeneous cultures and backgrounds, yet in Western universities, they are expected to fit into "one-size-fits-all" institutions (Bailey, 2000).

"The unwritten rule of the dominant society requires that we all speak English, write research papers and exams assessed on specific criteria outside of our Indigenous worldviews, and learn what others decide we need to know. Nor does what we learn in these institutions assist us in reaffirming and legitimizing our own ways of knowing and doing. Further, the language in which knowledge is imparted is not ours by birth" (Bailey, 2000; see also Cajete, 2000; Hampton, 1995; Martin, 2001).

Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) indicate that these kinds of activities establish the dominant group's knowledge, experience, culture, and language as the universal norm. In addition, this educational experience of Aboriginal people exemplifies the continued colonization where the dominant culture (university educators) expects students to conform to their expectations. Members of the dominant society control the

structure, content, processes, and staff within these institutions, and they consciously or unconsciously reinforce the marginalization of Indigenous knowledge systems.

Martin (2001) asserts that too often, research about Aboriginals (Canada) has been done by outsiders who have dissected, labeled, and dehumanized Indigenous people, acting as helpers in the colonial disposition of Indigenous land and cultural heritage. Volumes of research have been generated about Aboriginals, but there is little research that Aboriginal people have been able to define for themselves. Bennett and Blackstock (2002) cite the daunting task of decolonizing the research process to legitimize their own way of generating Indigenous knowledge that is controlled, owned, and protected by First Nations peoples collectively. They further assert that they have an ethical responsibility to support initiatives that create opportunities for First Nations people to conduct research that is congruent with Indigenous values and priorities.

"Every Time Research Is Done a Piece of My Culture Is Erased . . ."

Aboriginals shared this perspective during an Indigenous Research Forum held at the University of Newcastle, Australia (2004). Participants addressed a variety of concerns that surround research methods that include ethics, feedback, interpretations, and outcomes. The prevailing consensus reported that research is conducted to benefit the researcher, interpretations are often incorrect, there is little feedback after the research is completed, and outcomes often create more harm than good for those studied. "We've been studied to death. . . . If you want something dead . . . research it" (see <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/aborig-studies/index.html>).

Umuliko: To Create, To Make, To Do in the Language of the Awabakai People

The Umulliko Indigenous Higher Education Research Center at the University of Newcastle takes on the challenges of increasing Indigenous control of research practice and outcome through

the development of high-quality Indigenous student research education and practice. They espouse a holistic and culturally appropriate approach to research and education. The preeminent need of the Indigenous research agenda is for research that is conducted according to the concept of Indigenous worldview (IWV). This will usually be from Australian Indigenous perspectives, but on occasions of research with an international focus, the worldview has to be that of the Indigenous community in the country and community in question. The Indigenous worldview places Indigenous peoples at the center of the research environment and is cognizant of Indigenous values, beliefs, paradigms, social practices, ethical protocols, and pedagogies. The IWV identifies both Indigenous and non-Indigenous research voices and perspectives, but these will be filtered and framed by Indigenous worldview. The knowledge framework will be one that is holistic and integrated, and this will further inform the view of research and research training and its impact on peoples and cultures (see <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/aborig-studies/index.html>).

Consensus: Need for Alternative/ Indigenous Research Methodologies

More academics of color have questioned the Eurocentric or Western methodological approach to conducting research, particularly research on people of color. As Woodson (1933/2000) points out (in his example of teaching "Negro" children), there exists a difference in conducting research on people who do not share like lived experiences. There is a difference when the researcher is viewed as the colonizer/perpetrator and the subject is the colonized or the object of subjugation. The purpose of the research is often different in goals and sometimes its outcome. Dr. Howard Fuller (2000), chair of the Black Alliance of Educational Options (BAEO), once told an audience of educators that "some folk do research for the sake of doing research while black folk do research to save the lives of black children." Indigenous researchers such as Smith (2005) assert that Indigenous

research is about changing and improving conditions. They are driven by a purposeful dream and not a prescription. Their subjects are not merely objects to be studied objectively (allegedly); rather, the desired outcome is that which challenges the worldview of Indigenous people based on a Eurocentric perspective.

■ NARRATIVES AND STORYTELLING: "OTHERWISE IT'S WESTERN WORK DONE BY ABORIGINALS AND THE DISENFRANCHISED"

Daddy, Tell Me It Ain't So

My five-year-old son awakened us in his
fashioned way

yellin' to the top of his lungs "Time to
wake-up!"

In one motion, I covered my vitals (as he
leapt onto our bed), rolled over,

grabbed the remote, and invited the *Today
Show* into our room—

I must admit, this scene is a constant in my
morning ritual.

Matt Lauer began the morning news with a
story about a Black woman stopped by the
police on her way to the hospital believing
she was having a miscarriage.

Despite her plea to be taken to the hospital
she was taken into custody.

She was released the next morning and taken
to the hospital.

Baby was delivered six months premature,
lived one minute and died.

Hearing moans of discuss and despair from
Mom and Dad over this story

Son asked, "What's the matter?" Now
silenced, Mom and Dad respond, "Let's get
ready for school."

The Ideal Black Man Jumps Off the Page of Biden's Storybook Into the Public Eye. And, He Can Talk, Too!

U.S. Senator Joe Biden declares that Barack Obama is *the first "mainstream African American [candidate] who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy. I mean, that's a storybook, man."* Ole' Joe is just being himself, a news story read—you know, like the time he *managed* to offend Asian Indians by saying you must have an *Indian accent to patronize a 7-Eleven or Dunkin' Donuts*. I can hear him now attempting to *mimic* an accent. Biden authored this script as well. When you author a script, often more about you is revealed than is revealed about the person(s) about whom it is written. Taking a page from America's storybook reflects the quintessential fabric of Western culture. It reveals that "race" is at the center and, depending on what side of the "page" you're situated, determines how the story is told. Will someone turn the page? This script is old yet still lives!

I tell this story because in the words of Ladson-Billings (1994), "It diminishes the primacy of objectivity." In this instance, I write about my story that both challenges and reduces the dominance of the Western scholarly tradition. In addition, it provides a critique of the positionality of race in this dominant culture. It is an integration of my culture and my lived experiences. It is an effort to provide the reader lessons from my experiences with the intention to provide insights from the experiences of "others." They provide an illustration of continued subjugation of people of color in Western civilization.

Storytelling and Critiques of the Dominant Social Order

Laurence Parker (1998) suggests that CRT legitimates and promotes the voices of people of color by using storytelling to integrate the experiential knowledge drawn from history of the "other" into critiques of the dominant social order. He further states, "The critical centering of race (together with race, gender, sexual orientation, and other areas of difference) at the location

where the research is conducted and discussions are held can serve as a major link between fully understanding the historical vestiges of discrimination and the present day manifestation of that discrimination" (p. 46).

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) suggest that storytelling from marginalized people of color provides powerful counterstories challenging the majoritarian stories that make White privilege appear natural. Bernal (2002) states that CRT is about learning to listen to other people's stories and finding ways to make them matter within the education system and within education research. Struthers and Peden-McAlpine (2005) suggest that "narratives assist Indigenous people in reproducing through narrative communication features of the past, present, future. The narrative process elicits significant implicit meaning of indigenous culture." A product of narrative storytelling is the capacity to reflect on change that will enhance in a holistic and culturally manner. The goal is social justice.

Brown (1995) writes, "Poor people write stories. I hear their stories daily. I have heard them in the words of a cousin who came dangerously close to losing a daughter in gang warfare. I have heard them in the words of an inmate as he explained just how a black man from the projects had ended up on death row" (p. 513).

I have also heard stories from poor children who had been displaced from public school. Bobby exclaimed how difficult it was to be a Black man. "You got to fight to get an education, you got to fight to have freedom, you got to fight to stay out of jail. For a white man you don't got to do nothing" (Dunbar, 2001, p. 39). The realities of race and its manifestations left an indelible impression on this 14-year-old adolescent. Bobby was critically aware that race mattered.

Brown (1995) further writes, "Disenfranchised black people also write poetry too. I have heard poems in the words of the aspiring rap artists who frequent my hairdresser's parlor. I have heard poetry in the Negro spirituals that my grandmother sings as she braided my hair" (p. 513).

"He may float like a butterfly and sting like a bee but I'm still gonna' call him Cassius. That's what his

Mama called him.” Just one of a million stories (I heard as a child) bantered about on Saturday mornings at Coley’s Barbershop. Stories are often accompanied with pain, tension, or fear. Stories are riddled with political and social implications. Often the messages are so clear they can be heard above the roar. “You can call me colored, you can call me Negro, you can call me pecan tan. Just don’t call me black,” said the preacher from the pulpit, struggling with what the dominant society deemed appropriate to refer to him as—and thinking he had made a conscious choice. The dominant society and its damning depiction of disenfranchised and Indigenous people—some of whom were/are so ensconced in their “place” in life—has resulted in confusion and disdain (about what we are to be called) from those whose very existence and dignity are at stake. This story is an effort to right/rewrite a narrative about a disenfranchised people desiring to make sense of the world we live in!

To write personal narratives involves the work of reflection and telling. This work produces visible, often painful moments. It is both a historical and political process that places people of color in control of their story. Stories often trace the path/history of the person telling the story.

Understanding From the Bottom

Brown (1995) challenges the exclusion of voices from the bottom. The use of narratives provides a “venue that privileges the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin.” Maria Matsuda (1993) writes, “From the namelessness of the slave, from the broken treaties of the indigenous Americans, the desire to know history from the bottom has forced scholars to sources often ignored: poems, oral histories, and stories from their own experiences” (p. 19).

Challenges to Critical Race Theory

Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) has emerged as a field of study that is grounded in the belief that “much of the national dialogue on race relations takes place in the context of education” (Roithmayr, 1991, cited in Darder & Torres, 2004,

p. 98). African American scholars and Latino scholars such as Parker (1998), Ladson-Billings (1994, 2000), and Solorzano and Bernal (2001) began to infuse their arguments in educational policy and critical-race theory. These scholars argue that “racial liberation was the most important objective of any emancipatory vision of education and the larger society” (Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 98).

However, a recent shift from the view that race should be the center of any emancipatory vision of change for Indigenous people and people of color has emerged. That is, Latino critical race theorists challenge the use of race as the central unit of analysis. They argue that the use of race as the focus of analysis lends itself to the underdevelopment and a systematic analysis of class and subsequently ignores a substantive critique of capitalism. Darder and Torres (2004) indicate, “Much of critical race theory is informed by ‘ambiguous ideas of’ institutional racism or structural racism.” These scholars find this notion problematic because of the potential of “conceptual inflation” (p. 99). Hence, the use of social theorist language and ideas on race is problematic. Race as the central unit of analysis in the absence of a clearly theorized conception renders little to the emancipation of colonized people (Darder & Torres, 2004).

In addition, Latino critical race theorists argue that critical race theory has provided little understanding of the political economy of racism and racialization. Darder and Torres (2004, p. 100) argue that the process of racialization is at work in all relations in a capitalist society. Consequently, LatCrit scholars begin their analysis of racism in contemporary society with the capitalist mode of production, classes, and class struggle. They argue that race was birthed by racism and subsequently has been used as a tool to justify the way jobs, power, prestige, and wealth are distributed.

LatCrit and Storytelling

Latino critical race theory scholars provide a critical view of the use of narratives and storytelling, positing that this method, though useful in its own respect, tends to essentialize the plight of a disenfranchised people. More specifically,

they argue that the narrative approach often “fails to challenge the underlying socioeconomic, political and cultural structures that have excluded these groups to begin with and have sustained the illusion of choice” (Watts, cited in Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 102). In problematizing the use of storytelling, these scholars point to three additional concerns. The first concern is a perceived tendency to romanticize the experiences of marginalized groups based on their experiences of oppression. The second is (again) a perception that there is a tendency to “overhomogenize” both White and people of color respecting questions of voice and political representation. The third issue is the perceived inevitable “exaggerations, excesses and ideological trends for which the only possible name is chauvinism” (Lemme, cited in Darder & Torres, 2004, pp.104–105).

Exclusionary Forces and Not Race

LatCrit theorists argue that exclusionary forces rather than race sustain inequality (Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 32). They espouse a reconceptualization of race to racism. To do so will necessarily provide an “ideological context to engage the structures of inequalities in a capitalist society” (Darder & Torres, 2004, p. 32). They acknowledge the utility of storytelling and narratives. However, the effort toward the liberation of disenfranchised people requires moving race from the center of emancipatory efforts and placing the capitalist economy paradigm as the focus toward social and economic equality.

The Utility of Voices From the Bottom

Matsuda (1995) posits, “Those who experienced discrimination speak with a special voice to which we should listen” (p. 63). She further espouses “looking to the bottom—adopting the perspective of those who have seen and thought the falsity of the liberal promise can assist critical scholars in the task of fathoming the phenomenology of law and defining the elements of justice” (p. 63). One cannot create the experience of life on the bottom (p. 63). Matsuda refers to what

Gramsci calls the “organic intellectual” or grassroots philosopher (p. 63). Matsuda suggests that to imagine being poor and Black is less effective than actually learning from those who have experienced these realities. When seeking to understand “notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice from groups who have suffered throughout history, moral relativism recedes and identifiable normative priorities emerge” (p. 63). Matsuda postulates a new epistemological source for critical scholars: the actual experience, history, and cultural and intellectual tradition of people of color in America (p. 63).

Freedom to Design, Organize, and Define Indigenous Research

New Zealand Māori scholars such as Linda T. Smith (2005) employ the term *Kaupapa Māori* or *Māori research* as opposed to *Indigenous research*. Naming their research method was purposeful. Their struggle, as Smith expounds, is viewed as a conflict over “Māori language and the ability by Māori as Māori to name the world, to theorize the world and to research back to power” (p. 90). The Māori approach to research employs a set of arguments, principles, and frameworks that relate to the purpose, ethics, analyses, and outcomes of research. Its purpose is to serve as a model of social change and transformation that privileges Māori knowledge and ways of being. More specifically, Māori research is an approach that actively seeks to build capacity and a research infrastructure that supports community aspirations and development (Smith, 2005).

Conclusion

Reflecting on what I have written over these several pages has served to solidify my belief that an understanding and utilization of critical race theory as a method of inquiry is essential to understanding the impact of racism and the ongoing struggle of Indigenous and people of color not only in the United States but in other countries around the world. Critical race theorists and Indigenous methodologists speak to the

necessity of writing their own script. They note that storytelling is a sacred act shared from the heart that relives/recounts their history and culture. It is their story—stories that bring back life.

Ladson-Billings (1994) discusses the significance of storytelling as culturally relevant pedagogy. She explains how she reflected on how her schooling experiences and the memory of it allowed her to persevere and prevail. Her recounting helped her to understand current classroom practices. She points to culturally relevant stories as being critical to the creation of appropriate strategies and techniques for current classrooms composed of African American children, stories of how she “got over.”

Indigenous scholars suggest that stories illustrate ways to reconnect and identify with the past, which has its own script to record history. These scholars acknowledge the difficulty in applying Western theories or assumptions about their stories, but there is not any particular desire to do so. The stories are a source of cultural history that connects cultural traditions, worldviews, and ideas about a people.

Benham (2007) suggests that the focus of Native/Indigenous scholars is “to relate the narratives of indigenous people and communities that describe the social, cultural, political organizational patterns that reveal ontological and epistemological dilemmas through authentic indigenous perspectives” (p. 518). Aluli-Meyers (cited in Benham, 2007) “asserts that transforming the root of (indigenous) work challenges the way indigenous scholars think and do narrative inquiry with respect to the description of cultural and social phenomena” (p. 518). Aluli-Meyers argues that the relationships among/between Indigenous people are relevant, sophisticated, and radically context specific. Benham asserts that “it moves us to the telling of stories in the field as opposed to telling Van Maanen’s (1988) stories of the field” (p. 518).

Indigenous people have been scripted by colonists, imperialists, and voyeurs, whose vision is tainted by their sense of superiority and their belief that they are the creators of knowledge. Their anointed position as inventors, discoverers, and researchers places them at the center of what

there is to know and situates their (former) captives and Indigenous people somewhere outside the focal point, to be scripted based on a dominant culture model that suggests there is one truth and that truth positions them in the center.

Indigenous scholars and critical race theorists reject the notion of one truth. They argue that there are multiple ways of knowing, depending on whose lens is used. The notion of objectivity as evidence of truth is deemed invalid. They challenge the immorality of subjugation and the concept that a “racelessness” society can exist. They contend that where there is a void in morality, justice cannot exist. The dominant culture framework that espouses truth and objectivity is at the center of untruth and subjectivity. Indigenous scholars argue they have their “own way of doing things”—their own set of what constitutes knowledge. They argue that the dominant cultural model continues to marginalize the Indigenous knowledge systems model.

Stories From the Field

My stories of the field (see Dunbar, 2001) tell of the plight of too many African American male adolescents who had become disconnected from traditional public schools and, as a result, had been placed in alternative school environments. To the broader society, these students were disposable. And the students sensed this. They had come to know and understand the system under which they were subjugated. They had been rejected by the traditional public schools system and placed in an environment meant to contain their rage. I recognized it because the same rage ran through my veins.

These males were not unlike many that I had faced while a classroom teacher. Many had been incarcerated, placed in foster care, and/or grew up in abject poverty. The world simply did not appear a place accepting of “kids” like them. A problem for the majority of them was, “I speak but no one listens.”

In telling the stories of these students, a venue was provided for which to say anything they wanted to say. Despite the fact that I “looked like

them," they were indeed guarded when I first approached them. They were guarded for good reason. Few had shown an interest in their lives beyond taking whatever they could and in turn used what they learned against them. In presenting their stories, I carefully considered the context—in this case, an alternative school, a juvenile detention center, and a courthouse. In these entire instances, the message to these students was clear . . . you are disposable! I presented their stories the way I heard them; so sometimes there was a subject-verb disagreement, words were spelled as I heard them, and accent for the significance of their point was indicated.

Some readers (of the work) suggested that perhaps I should have spelled their words correctly instead of the phonetic form in which I had heard them—that I had (in some way) depicted/represented them as (dumb) students. If those readers had listened to the message rather than focus on the spelling of what I heard, their stories would have been heard. Perhaps this interpretation is a result of the Western way of knowing, that is, correct spelling and enunciation. These stories are about students who have struggled in traditional public schools narrowly and more about their positionality in society in a broader sense. It is not so much predicated on what these students should know academically but rather their story of their circumstances. Their stories are about their being misunderstood, their confusion about their plight, or rather their sense of reality governing their situation. These students were making sense of their reality!

My Own Sense Making

I have experienced this struggle growing up in the sixties as I cheered on rebellious "Negroes" as they ran past our house with goods taken from a store on the corner of the street where I was raised. I experienced the struggle while being spat upon as I absorbed a battery of racial epithets in an effort to desegregate a predominantly White high school.

I have been made to read text that depicted African Americans as slaves rather than captured

Africans who were treated as "slaves" and told that this was the reason for my existence. I remember playing "cowboys and Indians" as an adolescent, never wanting to be an Indian. Racism has been the bane of my existence. I remember the assassination of President Kennedy while in the fourth grade, and the class was instructed to put our heads on the desk in a moment of silence. In my moment of silence, I remember experiencing a sense of despair because I had come to believe that President Kennedy was our only chance of being treated equal. I also remember running home after hearing about the assassination of Dr. King (some 5 years later) as I ran into the house, crying to my mother, "They're going to kill us all." As early as 9 years old, notions of race and racism have been as much a part of my existence as opening my eyes each morning.

My stories are systematically pulled from my memory; I dare say that these notions/acts of racism continue to permeate my life today—hence the necessity to shield my son (to some extent) but to also share stories like these when the time is write/right!

■ LATCRIT SCHOLARS

LatCrit scholars propose moving race from the center of analysis and replacing it with a better understanding of exclusionary practices that give rise to structural inequalities (i.e., capitalism). Other scholars point to their "indigeness" as the centerpiece for their scholarship. This proposal—though interesting—does not address the multiple injustices that have occurred in history and continue to occur daily in the lives of people of color and Indigenous people. To move race from the center would mean the dominant cultural model would have to surrender its positionality and hence power and domination. I know of no instances where power was willingly surrendered. To suggest that people of color remove race from their center would mean to ignore the injustices that have occurred throughout history. It would mean ignoring the truth and exposing social inequities that give rise to

continued social injustice. Race gives rise to exclusionary practices and not the other way around. I see your face and hear your voice long before I see your bank account! Mary Weems (2003, p. 111) writes,

Race is so personal
If it was a carcass
The stench would block
The nose of the world
And everybody would die

(Reprinted with the permission
of Peter Lang Publishers.)

Parker (1998) articulates a sentiment I share when he posits that “the critical centering of race (together with race, gender, sexual orientation, and other areas of difference) at the location where the research is conducted and discussions are held can serve as a major link between fully understanding the historical vestiges of discrimination and the present day manifestation of that discrimination” (p. 46). Matsuda (1995) suggests that it is less effective to imagine being poor and Black than it is to ask someone to tell what he experienced.

It is critical that Indigenous scholars and scholars of color take the lead in framing their stories. Benham (2007) reveals that the telling of memory can be both difficult and painful. She further argues that it takes work to access and release these stories. In addition, scholars must honor the process of telling these stories. The story is important because it has the capacity to tell the truth about history.

Indigenous scholars, in challenging traditional research methods, have adopted methods of their own. Their methods consider the whole person, that is, the religion, culture, language, nuances, spirituality, and other values shared by their people. It is Indigenous research practices for and conducted by Indigenous scholars. It is an effort to accurately depict, portray, and, most important, understand the lives (stories) of a culture of people whose story has been misrepresented, misunderstood, and, in some instances, vilified in an effort to provide justification and rationalization

for the injustices acted on them. The methods have a primary purpose to liberate and transform the lives of colonized/oppressed people. These scholars have to undo the dehumanizing practices of colonization. They do so using their own language instead of “killing” it off. The research is intended to revive their people as opposed to researching them to “death.”

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