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THE FALA METHODOLOGY

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ABSTRACT: “Fofola e fala, kae talanoa ‘a e kāinga” is a Tongan proverb meaning “to respectfully unravel the fala (traditional mat) for the family to talk”. It emphasises the significance of the fala in enabling robust talanoa (conversations) to occur. My doctoral research explored the factors influencing health choices of Pasifika peoples in South East Queensland, where I developed a Tongan-centred methodology for research using ten stages of the fala-making process. It is recognised that Pasifika peoples experience disproportionate rates of obesity and diabetes-related conditions, reducing quality of life and resulting in premature death. My research explored the health perspectives of elders, parents and teenagers, as this influences their health choices. I began with talanoa and constructivist grounded theory methodologies, but cultural tensions and significantly differing perspectives between Island-born elders and New Zealand-born parents, in contrast with Australian-born Pasifika teenagers, led me to search for a resolution. The fala-making process offered a way of weaving the divide between three generations’ perspectives of health. Visual illustrations provided by Her Royal Highness Princess Angelika Lātūfuipeka Tuku‘aho and her Tongan weavers are used and credited for their Indigenous knowledge of fala making. By applying the fala-making process in my research, I developed the Fala methodology, which is grounded in Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing.

Keywords: Pasifika, Pacific methodologies, Indigenous, wellness, health, talanoa, constructivist grounded theory

The purpose of my doctoral study was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence health choices of three generations of Pasifika peoples, as they continue to experience disproportionately higher rates of obesity and diabetes-related conditions, reducing their quality of life (Matenga-Ikihele *et al.* 2021; Ndwiga *et al.* 2018; Tin *et al.* 2021). Data shows that the rate of these preventable diseases affecting Pasifika communities continues to increase, with diagnoses in younger patients becoming more prevalent (Faletau *et al.* 2020; O’Dea and Dibley 2014).

My research had three aims: (i) to explore the perspectives of Pasifika peoples regarding what health means to them, (ii) to gain insight into how and why these perspectives influence their health choices, and (iii) to identify a response that ensures healthier lives and greater longevity

in Pasifika communities. Twenty-nine participants informed the research, which included individual talanoa (conversations) with 12 elders of varying Pasifika ethnicities from communities and churches across Queensland. Gender- and age-specific group talanoa with parents and teenagers from one Pasifika church, predominantly Samoan, were also held with five families.

The findings revealed conflicting perspectives regarding the definition of the term health, instead emphasising cultural terms which predominantly translated to wellness. The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity (World Health Organization 1993: 1). Elders and some parents perceived health as a western term that they were “divorced from” (Māori Elder Mary), as it was deemed as being critical of their bodies and a term devoid of the spirit. This influenced choices with a preference for familiar spiritual and Indigenous healing practices such as prayer, fasting, food, herbal treatments and cultural massage. Factors influencing health choices included their Christian faith and church priorities, which determined where resources were invested. Commitment to family, cultural beliefs regarding food and the quest for prosperity took precedence. These findings informed the development in this project of the Dominant Pasifika Perspectives of Wellness model, capturing the interaction of core factors influencing health choices.

Another significant finding was that some participants challenged these dominant Pasifika perspectives of wellness in efforts to improve their quality of life. This change did not result from an external intervention working on participants from the outside in. Changes occurred after a near-death experience or a significant incident which catapulted the individual, and selected others, into a state of readiness. As a result, wellness priorities were redefined and pursued through collective-individual agency. This means the individual working alone could not withstand the dominant cultural environment that influences wellness choices, particularly regarding financial priorities: a cohort of like-minded people, otherwise known as the collective, was required to rally around the individual’s needs to obtain wellness. Within the pressures of the dominant cultural factors, the collective-individuals were at work to improve wellness, resulting in the development of an Alternative Pasifika Perspective of Wellness model.

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Vaiioleti (2006) introduced talanoa as a Pacific methodology, extending upon Halapua (2000, 2013), who used talanoa as unconcealed storytelling for conflict resolution. Talanoa is rooted in Polynesian languages and worldviews (Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea 2014). Tala means to relate or talk informally or formally (Vaiioleti 2006), while noa means reaching harmony

or balance between equal or opposite forces to establish an equilibrium (Tecun *et al.* 2018: 157). Whilst talanoa has been widely used in research, this has not been without challenges. Tunufa'i (2016) suggests that talanoa lacks a logical process for how to collect, analyse and disseminate data. Others argue talanoa is not about analysis but rather is a holistic interaction inclusive of the environment concerned with forging relationships (Anae 2019; Matapo and Enari 2021) and co-constructing meaning through conversations (Matapo and Enari 2021). Cammock *et al.* (2021) defines the lack of structure in talanoa as a strength, providing flexibility and vā (space) to navigate complex cultural systems and nuances.

Critiquing Pacific methodologies and methods facilitates the development of Pacific research and knowledge creation (Baice *et al.* 2021; Koya-Vaka'uta 2017; Sanga and Reynolds 2017; Tualaulelei and McFall-McCaffery 2019). However, this can be challenging given the cultural notions of respect, humility and maintaining the vā (Tualaulelei and McFall-McCaffery 2019). As a result of these diverse opinions, Tualaulelei and McFall-McCaffery advocate for the use of multiple perspectives, as no single approach "carries the monopoly on truth and knowledge" (p. 197). It is this multiplicity of perspectives that resulted in the decision to combine talanoa, constructivist grounded theory and Tongan fala (traditional mat) making as the methodology in my PhD project. Weaving together a Pasifika and western methodology finds precedence in the Lālānga (weaving) methodology that combined constructivist grounded theory and the Kakala framework (Malungahu *et al.* 2017). Goodyear-Smith and 'Ofanoa (2022) identify how Fa'afaletui, a Samoan philosophical paradigm meaning ways of (fa'a) weaving together (tui) the deliberations of different groups, enables the mixing of methodologies. This mixing adds breadth and depth, as each covers the limitations of the other (p. 39). In the following section, I present a brief overview of constructivist grounded theory and its use in the research project.

Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) was developed by Kathy Charmaz, a student of Glaser and Strauss, in the mid-1990s (Charmaz 2014). Charmaz accepted constructivism as a social scientific perspective seeking to understand how realities are created, and accepting that people create their own realities (Charmaz 2014; Lauridsen and Higginbottom 2014). Differentiating from Glaser and Strauss, Charmaz proposed a CGT methodology founded on a relativist epistemology that included the researcher as a subjective interpreter who weaves into the data their own lifelong interactions with people, places, knowledge and learnings (Charmaz 2014). Charmaz (2020) emphasised the importance of the researcher following what participants reveal by privileging the voices and perspectives of the participants. A theory is then developed from the ground up. In the context of this research project, what emerged was a fala of knowledge I have referred to as the Pasifika Perspectives of

Wellness. This focus on voice presented various challenges given the research was conducted with three generations. There were three complexities that instigated the search for something more, as talanoa and CGT could not address these cultural tensions.

The Complexities Giving Rise to the Fala Methodology

There were three core challenges that arose during the research project. The first was the tensions regarding how to weave together the perspectives of three Pasifika generations from various communities, which differed between Island-born, New Zealand-born and Australian-born participants. Furthermore, the divide between the dominant Pasifika cultural perspective in contrast to the western cultural context was significant. Finally, the cultural hierarchy privileges the voice of elders and parents over that of teenagers, as the teenager's role is to offer tautua (service) (Fa'aea and Enari 2021: 96). These three tensions affected my capacity to hear the voices of the young people without being tainted by the amplified stories of elders and parents who were strongly aligned in their perspectives of wellness. As a result of these dilemmas, I was drawn to the Tongan fala-making process after facilitating an event as the master of ceremonies for Her Royal Highness Princess Angelika Lātūfuipeka Tuku'aho where she presented on the ta'ovala (traditional mat worn wrapped around the waist) and fala making. As I observed this process, I could identify significant stages which I could adapt and use in my research to reconcile these numerous tensions, particularly the stage where the kie (pandanus) leaves soak in the ocean, devoid of human manipulation. I did not realise the power of this soaking-in-the-ocean process until I applied it to my research. I made the deliberate choice to cease analysing, note-taking and interacting with the data due to the irreconcilable tensions. I allowed for a time of soaking in the ocean. After weeks of completely disengaging from the research, I returned to the data and applied the unveiling stage of fala making. The tensions were resolved and I was able to weave together the three differing perspectives. Indigenous epistemological ways of producing knowledge (Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea 2014) were intrinsic to this study given it was conducted by, with and for Pasifika people. The fala-making process will now be discussed, identifying how it guided the research and filled the gaps that were missing from the talanoa and CGT methodologies.

FALA MAKING

Fala is a Tongan and Samoan word for a traditional mat, also known as ibe in Fijian. Fala are highly valued cultural artefacts passed through generations of Tongan, Samoan and Fijian peoples. They are gifted at significant events such as weddings, funerals or birthdays. The fala has also become a commodity

which is bartered or sold to serve the financial needs of families ('Ilaiu Talei and Memmott 2014). In Samoan culture the fine mats are called 'ie toga. For Samoans, Tongans and Fijians, the fala is a measure of traditional wealth for families (Goodyear-Smith and 'Ofanoa 2022). Importantly, weaving a fala takes time, requiring the right people and the right skills. The next section will identify each stage of the fala-making process and how these were applied to the research project.

All images that appear in this article are owned by Her Royal Highness Princess Angelika Lātūfuipeka and her Tongan weavers.

Tā 'o e lau'i kie (Selecting the Right Kie Leaves)

When making the fala, certain leaves are selected depending on the occasion and the type of fala being woven (Fig. 1). Kie leaves are renowned for being difficult to work with. There are particular ways in which the leaves must be handled, and failing to do so will render the leaves unusable. To create the fala of Pasifika wellness, it was imperative to have the right people as opposed to selecting random participants solely based on cultural heritage and age. Pasifika informants sourced from the communities recommended particular elders best placed to participate in the research, based on their reputable, selfless service to others and integrity. This community knowledge informed the development of a criterion that the elders were born and raised in the islands for their insight they would have gained into Pasifika ways of being prior to migration to New Zealand and Australia. Parents born in the



Figure 1. Tā 'o e lau'i kie (selecting the right leaves). Making the fala requires selecting the right leaves, as not all leaves can be used to weave a fala. The occasion will determine which leaves are used.

islands and New Zealand were sought after for their lived experiences in the islands, New Zealand and Australia. Australian-born Pasifika teenagers were recruited to gain their Pasifika-Australian perspective and experience. This criterion aimed to identify who would be the “right people” to inform this work as defined by the informants and participants. A person’s character traits, capacity to serve others, and presence, engagement and reciprocal relationships within the community, family and/or church were crucial for their local place-based knowledge. These were the consistent traits that were of importance to them as the criterion for selecting the right people was founded upon long-standing relationships established by these individuals through their service amongst family, community and church. This resulted in the development of three phases of data collection: Phase 1 was individual talanoa with elders; Phase 2 involved talanoa groups with families; and Phase 3 included observations. The need to carefully select participants is symbolised in the tā ‘o e lau’i kie process.

Charmaz (2014) defined this process in CGT as purposive sampling; however, the fala-making selection process is distinguished by the need for awareness of the cultural and hierarchical context to select the right participants.

To‘o e tala (Cutting Off Sharp Edges)

To‘o e tala involves removing the sharp edges of the leaves (Fig. 2). The literature review identified sharp edges or key areas of strengths and concerns regarding the health of Pasifika people locally and globally. Cutting off sharp edges of the kie leaf was conducted through one-on-one talanoa with elders followed by gender-specific group talanoa with parents and young people. It was important that the literature did not drown out the lived experiences of the participants and their perspectives. This meant privileging the voices and perspectives of participants, identifying their strength and power, as opposed to the issues which were emphasised in the literature. In cutting off the sharp edges, the most prominent issue identified by participants was the differences between western perspectives of health versus Pasifika perspectives of wellness. This was reflected in the fala-making stage referred to as to‘o e tala.

Takai (Coiling)

Once the sharp edges have been removed, the kie leaves are coiled together into bundles (Fig. 3). The research phase involved decisions about how to group families to ensure all members can speak freely. For example, teenagers may be restricted by cultural protocols privileging the voice of elders or those in senior positions. Teenagers are required to respect elders and their authority, whilst growing in service to the family, church and community (Fa‘aea and Enari 2021). There are cultural taboos and gender-sensitive



Figure 2. To'o e tala (preparing the leaves). The sharp edge of each leaf is sliced off from the sides and in the middle.



Figure 3. Takai e lau'i kie (coiling the kie leaves). The kie leaves are coiled after their spikes have been removed.

topics that cannot be discussed between males and females (Anae 2016). The coiling process involves grouping participants based on advice from elders and Pasifika informants and according to age and gender, in an attempt to ensure the environment is conducive for the participation of all (Anae 2016). Charmaz (2014) emphasised the importance of ensuring the multiple standpoints and realities of each participant are given space to have voice.

Haka (Boiling)

This stage reflects the talanoa process with participants which is integral to establishing an environment conducive to depth of conversation. The kie leaves are boiled over an open fire in a pot, which takes time to heat (Fig. 4). As the water boils, the kie leaves begin to change in form. In the same way, the talanoa must allow for unconcealed conversations to occur, including deep listening to hear and understand the context of each participant. Some of these talanoa processes took up to seven hours, consisting of light-hearted conversations about our lives, families and projects of interest. Such discussions evoked varied emotions of laughter, tears and frustration. Key elements were used to move through a process of change.

The first type of talanoa was informal, light-hearted fun, defined as talanoa usu (Vaiotei 2014: 200), which includes humour. It is māfana (warm emotions) and mālīe (energising; infused with the spirit; creating positive enlightenment) (Fa'avae *et al.* 2016: 148). Talanoa needs to be generationally adjusted. For elders, cultural protocols of respect are reflected through sharing traditional foods such as taro, raw fish, pork and palusami (spinach or taro leaves in coconut cream), and allowing for silence and space. As the researcher, I tailored my dress code to the generations, wearing a conservative long dress, namely a puletasi (traditional two-piece dress worn by women) with a sarong, when meeting with Samoan elders. With the young people, wearing casual street wear and providing pizzas and a speaker to blast music allowed for conducive talanoa. Generationally tailoring talanoa enabled a



Figure 4. Haka 'o e lau'i kie (boiling the kie leaves). Boiling the kie leaves reflects a process of change and the need for the right elements within the talanoa to be present. This includes the dress code, traditional or modern foods, humour and fun to soften the kie leaves that are symbolic of the participants.

process of change as parties delved deeper into understanding one another through their mutual exchanges (Anae 2019). Anae (p. 1) defines *vā* as the sacred, spiritual, social space and relationship between parties. As the researcher I too am positioned within the boiling pot as a participant who receives and who gives to the *talanoa* exchange (Charmaz 2017: 2).

DATA ANALYSIS

Tatala (Unveil)

Tatala refers to the unveiling of each kie leaf where they are split in two for the purpose of using the upper layer, which is soft and pliable (Fig. 5). In the research context, the tatala process involved reading through every transcript, line by line, or each sentence, to identify themes. The transcripts were placed into NVivo and individually coded. Tatala is a meticulous process that explicitly unveils the Pasifika ways of being, knowing and doing, which are intrinsic to how we conduct *talanoa*. Each kie leaf or sentence required a macro and micro perspective of what categories were being presented from



Figure 5. La'i kie kotoa pe kuo pau ke tatala (every kie leaf must be split in two). Each leaf is split in two to use the upper layer that is soft and manageable. This can be likened to the line-by-line coding found in grounded theory (Charmaz 2020).

the talanoa. This mirrored Charmaz's (2008) line-by-line coding of the raw data identifying concepts and categories as they arose, rather than forcing preconceived ideas upon the data. The distinction, however, between the tatala process and the line-by-line coding of CGT was the identification of the cultural practices followed as a Pasifika researcher. Each sentence required an awareness and perspective of the Pasifika paradigm, cultural protocols and nuances, which are often inherently used; however, the tatala process required explicit identification and defining of these cultural protocols. This process proved fruitful for my three non-Pacific supervisors, who were not aware of the distinct Pasifika cultural nuances. For example, with two Samoan elders, I purposely began with light-hearted humour, uplifting the elders by emphasising their service and faithfulness and thanking them for their leadership in the church. As I conducted the tatala process of unveiling, I identified this Pasifika way of being. The tatala phase shone a light on these Indigenous ways which are of great benefit to informing best practice when working with Pasifika communities. It also empowered the participants by enabling their voice to define their cultural protocols in conducting talanoa which informs outsiders.

When the participants' own words provided the best explanation of concepts, this was captured in NVivo software during the coding process to preserve speech and meanings (Charmaz 2014). Analysis and coding of each talanoa included comparing data with data. Comparisons were also made between categories, for example, defining "health" with the "holistic wellness" category (pp. 42–63). The frequent mention of words or categories contributed to the development of the fala of (k)new knowledge. This means that these knowledges have always been known by Indigenous communities and whilst they are not new to them, they are new to western society (Edwards 2009). As the data was analysed, questions were raised simultaneously about connections with and distinctions from other categories (Charmaz 2014). This process would include an ongoing talanoa with participants and Pasifika community leaders.

The analysis is built from the ground up, meaning the participants' talanoa create the initial codes. Similar to the process of unveiling each kie leaf, Charmaz (2020) recommended an openness to possibilities during the initial process. Further data was sought for categories that were thin in detail (Charmaz 2020). The literature and discussions with participants, Pasifika researchers and Pasifika community members continually informed the categories until they were fully developed and explained (p. 166). Regular meetings with stakeholders to ensure the accuracy of findings, perspectives and frames of reference were important processes (Charmaz 2017, 2020). Phase three, the observation phase, also confirmed emerging categories. Each kie leaf is split in two as the process of unveiling, which is reflective of the tatala and analysis phase.

Ngaohi e maea (Making a Rope)

After the kie leaves are split, they are bundled together in groups to create a rope (Fig. 6). This mirrors the process of grouping line-by-line codes into key concepts, allowing for the theory to emerge from the data as the research narrative begins to form (Charmaz 2014; Chun Tie *et al.* 2019). Whilst there were interesting findings, such as the extent of the historical impact of missionaries, the comparative process of emerging categories must be considered in terms of the research questions. The fala, despite being made of many kie leaves, forms one design. This process of ngaohi e maea (making a rope) groups the codes into categories.

This focused coding process allows for unnecessary data to be omitted. As a result, core categories emerge. To understand the relationships between categories produced from the tatala phase, diagrams serve as visual aids representing the core categories and including variations (Charmaz 2014; Chun Tie *et al.* 2019). This process continued until saturation, after exploring and considering the categories carefully (Charmaz 2014; Chun Tie *et al.* 2019). Ongoing consultation with willing participants, community leaders, pastors, Pasifika researchers and the supervisory team to review the categories for accuracy is imperative. This is best captured in the fala making where the kie leaves are bundled together to gether.

Tuku 'i tahi (Soaking in the Ocean)

Tuku 'i tahi (soaking in the ocean) differs from the CGT process, revealing an Indigenous way of creating new knowledge which is unique to the Fala methodology. It is also not part of the Talanoa methodology. Once the kie leaves are bundled together they are soaked in the ocean for three to four



Figure 6. Ngaohi e maea mei he tu'a kie (plait a rope from the lower layer of the kie). After splitting the kie to extract the soft upper layer, the leaves are bundled together. Grouping the kie leaves occurs in partnership with other weavers, which reflects an Indigenous way of knowing and being in a collective manner as opposed to an individualistic process.

weeks for the purpose of changing the colour and texture of the leaves (Fig. 7). Soaking in the ocean presented a process to use in the analysis phase given the ongoing cultural tensions I was grappling with. I found that I was too deeply connected to the knowledge and cultural insight from the elders because they offered understanding into Pasifika ways of being, knowing and doing that I had never been privy to until the research journey. I was given sacred cultural knowledge about the ways of wellness practised by our ancestors in the islands. This depth of insight was abruptly disrupted by the talanoa with young people, some of whom identified as plastic islanders, that is, people not familiar with their ancestral island culture. Such tensions created barriers within my own perceptions that became a blockage to my ability to hear and give voice to the young participants. Detaching completely from the data for three to four weeks allowed for time and space; however, it also created further challenges when failing to meet writing deadlines set by supervisors. Despite these issues, the persistence in upholding the soaking phase proved fruitful. Tuku 'i tahi is devoid of human manipulation, allowing the ocean and environment to play a part. It differs from the ongoing analysis and note-taking phase that Charmaz (2014) advocates for in CGT. It also differs from talanoa as this was no longer about talanoa. As the researcher, I completely ceased interacting with the research project in order to listen.

Here I digress to draw from my Yolngu (a First Nations people of Australia) heritage growing up in the Northern Territory on an Aboriginal mission called Yirrkala. The Ngangikurungkurr people of the Northern Territory have an Indigenous practice known as dadirri (inner deep listening and quiet still awareness) (Ungunmerr 2017; West *et al.* 2012: 1582–90). It encompasses spirituality in Yolngu culture that is centred upon listening, not asking questions, but listening, waiting and then acting (West *et al.* 2012: 1582–90). Ungunmerr (2017) defines dadirri as the deep spring that is inside us and the strong connection Yolngu people have to nature, which has informed the listening process for over 60,000 years. Ungunmerr explains: “We cannot hurry the river. We have to move with its current and understand its ways” (p. 14).

Hau'ofa (2008) also emphasised the connection Pasifika people have with nature through our connectivity to the ocean and it being in our blood. Tuku 'i tahi required a deliberate choice to step back from the research project to create a space, devoid of human manipulation, acknowledging the connection Indigenous peoples have with the land and environment as part of the whole fala-making process. After weeks of not reviewing, note taking or analysing, going against what is fundamental to CGT (Charmaz 2017), I returned to the data to continue the analysis process. Time and space away created a fresh lens for analysis. I reviewed the talanoa of the young people and repeated the tatala process. This time a new category was created under the “voices of young people”. Whilst they are at the bottom of the cultural and social hierarchy (Fa'aea and Enari 2021), their voices



Figure 7. Tuku 'i tahi (soaking in the ocean). Soaking the kie leaves in the ocean for three to four weeks results in the ocean changing the colour of the leaves from green to cream. The texture and form of the leaves also change.

are still significant. Like the kie leaves, every leaf matters. New categories emerged which were previously invisible due to the prominence of the elders' voices. Categories such as obesity, aspirations for health, takeaway food and personal laziness were new codes. Given the revelation of such findings, I repeated the tatala process for parents. Tuku 'i tahi enabled me to develop clarity on the differing perspectives of three generations. The time and space of soaking created an opportunity for the talanoa in this research to be transformed, resulting in a fala of (k)new knowledge.

Ha'alo (Straighten or Smooth Out)

The ha'alo stage involves an ongoing process of scraping each kie leaf with a sharp instrument until the leaf is smooth and able to be woven (Fig. 8). In the context of the research process it required a deep probing of each talanoa to analyse what is happening. Further questions were developed in light of the research objectives, such as: Are changes occurring? If yes, what and how, and if not, why not? The answers to each of these questions were collated into a spreadsheet to create an overview, revealing the conditions that are present, acting as catalysts causing individuals to change, despite their dominant cultural environment. It also highlighted factors that were preventing change. Ongoing talanoa with participants, Pasifika academics, leaders, pastors, community stakeholders and young people continue during this process. Drawing pictures that visually capture the fala of knowledge being developed is also a key component. Writing notes and recording reflections regarding the core themes also simultaneously occurred.

Lālānga (Weaving)

Lālānga is the weaving together of the kie leaves into the fala (Fig. 9). In this research it is the weaving together of the talanoa to create the fala



Figure 8. Ha'alo (straightening). Each kie leaf is scraped to ensure a smooth texture for weaving.

of new knowledge. This is not an individual task. It involves the input of many. Teams of people are involved in weaving the final fala that best represents the people (Malungahu *et al.* 2017: 49). In the research context, this meant that the participants, community leaders and Pasifika peoples from the wider community were consulted regularly to check themes and gain ongoing input throughout the process of weaving together the fala. As a result, the fala of new knowledge was developed, namely the Dominant and Alternative Pasifika Perspectives of Wellness models, which were both represented visually. For the models, the five core themes identified by all three generations were stated, analysed and discussed, including the generational differences that were unique to each group.

The final phase is foaki, meaning to give away. The gifting of the fala occurs at a significant occasion. For this research project, the gifting has been in the work I currently do with the families involved in this research, their local church and their community. This work has continued beyond the doctoral studies into a community research fellowship in partnership with my university and the Pathways in Place project, which is philanthropically funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation. The purpose is to establish Pasifika wellness through pathways and opportunities centred upon the social determinants of health. This work is defined by the Pasifika community based on the primary needs of the people, which include opportunities into training and education. As a result the development of a Pasifika Registered Training Organisation is being established in partnership with Griffith University.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

This research project began in 2013 and was completed in 2022 as part of the fulfilment of my doctoral candidature. As an early researcher, I urgently sought a Pasifika methodology that would guide me through the research



Figure 9. Lālanga (weaving). The weaving of the kie leaves begins in collaboration with others.

phase, from the literature review to identifying gaps in knowledge, recruiting participants, collecting, analysing and presenting data, and lastly, giving back to the people. Unfortunately, at the time I was unable to find a methodology that had capacity to meet all of these needs. As a result, the weaving of talanoa, CGT and the fala-making process occurred. This research project has thus demonstrated that the fala-making process has the capacity to function as a methodology in its own right as it is rooted in Pasifika philosophical and cultural values (Goodyear-Smith and 'Ofanoa 2022: 34).

During the research project, while I followed closely the processes defined by CGT, at each stage I was constantly reflecting on the Pasifika ways of being, knowing and doing to further inform the process. CGT offered a data analysis process that was missing from the Talanoa methodology. CGT also emphasised the importance of the knowledge and theory development being drawn from the ground up, meaning the participants, whilst also including the researcher, being woven into this process of knowledge creation (Charmaz 2014). However, when applying Pasifika cultural protocol, elders and parents are privileged with the responsibility and voice to speak on behalf of families, while young people are not. These are cultural tensions which could not be ignored, and CGT and Talanoa did not offer a solution. It was upon observing the fala-making phase, particularly the *tuku 'i tahi* (soaking in the ocean) process, that I was encouraged to also take time to “soak in the ocean”, given my ongoing lack of resolve during the analysis phase. This

soaking proved highly beneficial once I returned to analyse the talanoa of each young person. Suddenly, like the kie leaves being transformed by the ocean in colour and form, I too had been transformed. I had detached from all the voices, in particular those of the elders. I could finally hear the young people clearly, and the tatala (unveiling) phase was repeated to give voice to the young people's perspectives and context.

Decolonisation challenges the unspoken hierarchies of knowledge that are deeply ingrained in Eurocentric systems (Leenen-Young *et al.* 2021). Sacred knowledge is restricted and privileged information within families, which is passed on to share with others. It is done so with the trust and willingness of the expert cultural knowledge holders (Koya-Vaka'uta 2017; Nabobo-Baba 2008; Teaero 2002). The fala-making process is knowledge that has been practised by ancestors and Tongans for centuries. This knowledge was generously shared by Her Royal Highness Princess Lātūfuipeka and her Tongan weavers, which I adapted and developed into a research methodology.

The Fala methodology is an alternative to western methodologies as it is grounded in Pasifika philosophical and cultural tenets of spirituality, collectivity and holistic connectivity, which includes the environment (Goodyear-Smith and 'Ofanoa 2022). A Pacific Indigenous research paradigm is founded upon cultural protocols, spirituality, relationships, language and metaphors that are reciprocal, environmental and intergenerational (Anae 2019).

Focusing on Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies creates a space and voice to challenge western research paradigms that have misinterpreted Pasifika communities and their knowledge (Leenen-Young *et al.* 2021). As a result, three Pasifika generations presented a fala of (k)new knowledge, meaning that this insight has always been with the Indigenous participants regarding what it means to them to be well. These perspectives refute the narrative that often emphasises the health disparities spotlighted by mainstream services to unravel Pasifika wellness defined by Pasifika participants. The Tongan proverb "Fofola e fala, kae talanoa 'a e kāinga" (to respectfully unravel the fala for the family to talk) emphasises the importance of the fala in creating a space for robust talanoa. Future implications for the Fala methodology is that it will be of service to others seeking to conduct research with Pasifika communities that are grounded in Pasifika ways of being, knowing and doing.

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GLOSSARY

The terms included in this glossary Tongan unless otherwise stated.

dadirri	inner deep listening and quiet still awareness (Ngangikurungkurr (Aboriginal Australian, Northern Territory))
fa'afaletui	Samoan philosophical paradigm meaning ways of (fa'a) weaving together (tui)
fala	traditional mat (Samoan, Tongan)
foaki	to give away
ha'alo	straightening; smoothing
haka	boiling
ibe	traditional mat (Fijian)
'ie toga	fine mat (Samoan)
kie	pandanus
lālanga	weaving
ngaohi e maca	making a rope
māfana	warm emotions
mālie	energising; infused with the spirit; creating positive enlightenment
palusami	spinach or taro leaves in coconut cream (Samoan)
puleitasi	traditional two-piece dress worn by women (Samoan)
takai	coiling
talanoa	sharing of ideas or conversations based on histories, realities and aspirations
talanoa usu	informal, light-hearted, fun conversation
ta'ovala	traditional mat wrapped around the waist
tatala	unveil
tautua	service (Samoan)
tuku 'i tahi	soaking in the ocean
vā	the sacred, spiritual, social space (Samoan)

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