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A Reflection on the Special Issue

PACIFIC RESEARCH VIBES: CARING FOR OUR RESEARCH INHERITANCE POST-COVID TALATALANOA

DAVID TAUFUI MIKATO FA'AVAE
Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland

ABSTRACT: The past views of the Pacific region and its Indigenous peoples have often been depicted through the lens of outside "others". This paper is a brief talatalanoa (ongoing conversation) with the insights shared by early-career Pacific scholars. My reflections here on Pacific research are imbued with a sense of "looking ahead and moving forward" whilst simultaneously reflecting on past and present research moments and experiences. As Pacific-heritage researchers, we share intentions to meaningfully care for our inheritance, shaped across our own local communities as well as universities and polytechnics. If Pacific research intentions seek to activate and transform the dominant western academe through the creatively critical ways we know-see-do-feel as Pacific-heritage researchers, then grounding our Indigenous Pacific ways of knowing and becoming is deeply meaningful. In this we require analytical tools that interrogate our existing methodologies and methods, particularly in how we each integrate these across our new contexts in settler-colonial nations. This article is critical post-covid talatalanoa that recognises and honours our places and contexts, place-based research connections and methodological durability and practicalities.

Keywords: Indigenous Pacific research, Pacific-heritage researchers, post-covid talatalanoa, making connections, methodological durability, utilitarian value of Indigenous Pacific research

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> A hallmark of our human existence is our relentless desire to search for things that we believe will enhance our knowledge and understanding of ourselves as human beings, of the meaning of life, and the contextual framework wherein this drama is enacted. … This same impulse is encapsulated in the efforts of our ancestors to discover appropriate and life-giving ways to ensure the survival of our people [including our knowledges and practices]. … In all of these efforts, there is something uniquely prominent and common to all: that those things of value that are being sought are always found in the depths. (Nokise 2017: xiii)

As I pen my reflections, Nokise's words "those things of value that are being sought are always found in the depths" took me back to memories of my late paternal grandmother. One memory was of her spending hours with her daughters removing ngatu (tapa cloth) and fine mats from under

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the mattress of her adopted granddaughter's bed. To access her launima (a lengthy piece of ngatu[1] of high value), her daughters were tasked with the slow unpacking and unfolding of many koloa (articles of material wealth) under which the launima was stored.

I have titled my reflection paper "Pacific Research Vibes: Caring for Our Research Inheritance Post-Covid Talatalanoa". For many Pacific-heritage[2] scholars, doing research involves more than an extractive engagement. For us, it is caring for our ways of knowing, seeing, feeling and becoming in diasporic places and contexts in which our communities have opted to settle. The caring for our Indigenous Pacific ways ensures the next generation will thrive in settler-colonial nations. Indigenous Pacific research is vibin' in the diaspora, evident in the felt intentions of next generation of Pacific-heritage scholars through each research project's sense of being mālie (inspiring) and māfana (heart-warming) (see Manu'atu 2016), creative (Dyck *et al*. 2022; 'Ilaiū Talei 2018; Matapo and Allen 2020; Refiti *et al*. 2022), critical (Fehoko *et al*. 2022; Leenen-Young *et al*. 2021; Pacific Early Career Researchers Collective *et al*. 2022; Rew 2022; Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea 2014; Tecun and Siu'ulua 2022; Uperesa 2021), life-giving (Iosefo *et al.* 2021; Mullane *et al*. 2022; Sanga and Reynolds 2020) or mana-enhancing (Baice *et al.* 2021; Pasisi *et al*. 2022; Sisifā and Fifita 2021) or for its embodied learnings (Lopesi 2021) and transformative potential (Naepi 2019a, 2019b; Thomsen and Brown-Acton 2021).

Thinking by Konai Helu Thaman

you say that you think
therefore you are
but thinking belongs
in the depths of the earth
we simply borrow
what we need to know

these islands the sky
the surrounding sea
the trees the birds
and all that are free
the misty rain
the surging river
pools by the blowholes
a hidden flower
have their own thinking

they are different frames
of mind that cannot fit
in a small selfish world

Konai Helu Thaman's (1999: 15) poem *Thinking* highlights the level of depth and meaning that exists in Oceanian[3] thinking. The materiality of objects defined in western science and research—such as river pools, the earth or the sea—are spiritual entities and have life and spirit of their own in accord within Oceanian knowledge systems. Indigenous Pacific research has the capacity to evoke and invoke these kinds of relational vibes that recognise spirituality and wisdoms that still matter to our Pacific communities in the diaspora.

Pacific research centred on making visible Indigenous Pacific/Pasifika[4] ideas, experiences, voices, philosophies and practices to counter dominant western discourses are often driven by decolonial intentions. Such aims are intentional and deliberate and articulate decolonial work and research priorities as a desire to (re)claim and (re)vive our traditional ways of living together and in balance with the earth, an idea that Vaai (2021) refers to as ecorelationality. There are ethical considerations that we ought to bring to the fore when engaged with Indigenous Pacific/Pasifika thought and practices in the diaspora. Where each Pacific-heritage researcher chooses to do this kind of decolonial work requires a consideration of *place*. For instance, whenua and fonua (the Māori and Tongan words for "land") are critical ideas and concepts that need to be considered, interrogated, unpacked and clearly articulated by Pacific research theoreticians and practitioners to appropriately ground their sense-making of relational connections and meaning-making of ancient and contemporary thought, ideas and analyses both in academia and in wider society. In the same way, fanua, 'enua and vanua (the Samoan, Cook Islands Māori and Fijian words for "land") are central ideas that can provide Samoan, Cook Islands and Fijian researchers support with their unpacking, interrogation and clear articulation of research-related ideas and modes of analysis within and beyond the university setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. We see this, for example, in Radilaite Cammock and Malcolm Andrews's (this issue) positioning of vanua as a contextual source that aids them in their development of iTaukei (Indigenous Fijian) concepts and research frameworks within health and wellbeing studies. Overall, all authors in this special issue tell their stories linked to the use of Māori and Pacific concepts, theories, methods and methodologies against a backdrop of who they are, where their ancestral and heritage affiliations are rooted and how "place" (including modernity) has shaped their thoughts and analyses of research ethics, conduct and decisions. My own Pacific research reflections were sparked and provoked by the early-career Pacific-heritage scholars' insights included in this special issue.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (L. Smith 2012) is a seminal text that all researchers and higher-education postgraduate students must engage with. Her unpacking of the term "research" and how such related colonial activities linked to scientific exploration and western imperialism

have defiled Indigenous peoples and their knowledges is a key fact that we must carry with us as minoritised scholars/researchers. As well, she unpacks how capitalism and its associated ideals and practices (re)construct neocolonial intentions and agendas in research with Indigenous communities. Even for Pacific-heritage researchers, articulating the practical challenges we face when implementing our research tools with our local communities and how we mediate such challenges, both practically and ethically, can provide understanding for those to come. Thinking about our next generation, Inez Fainga'a-Manu Sione's individual paper (this issue) explains her mediation of and choice to adopt multiple approaches in her doctoral research that accommodate multiple perspectives. Consequently, she wove together talanoa (conversation), constructivist grounded theory and Tongan fala (traditional mat) making to appropriately gather and capture the health and wellbeing concerns of Tongan and Samoan families in the Australian context.

My brief reflection contributes to talatalanoa (ongoing conversation), a traditional oral method of engagement and cultural practice rooted in Tongan and Samoan worldviews (see Ka'ili 2017). As a derivative of talanoa practice, talatalanoa is ongoing in nature and is designed to enable further discussion and unfolding of concerns that matter not only to those involved in its practice but to the extended family and village as well. I recognise the post-covid context as a critical moment in our global and local histories that has reshaped the way communities make meaning of relational connections. In this intellectual moment and space, the "post-covid" is not an afterthought but rather is symbolic of an ontological and epistemic turn, shaping the way we construct the "self" and what it means to know-see-do-feel across research contexts (see Fa'avae *et al*. 2022).

MAKING CONNECTIONS: TU'UFONUA, TULAGĀVAE AND TŪRANGAWAEWAE AS MEANING-MAKING PLACE-BASED RESEARCH

This special issue of *Waka Kuaka: The Journal of the Polynesian Society* is a deliberate act to make space for early-career Pacific-heritage voices and stories from Oceania. The stories told, and the provocations made, echo sincere care for their inheritance, through the sharing of research-related thoughts, tensions, actions, cautions and negotiations with our next generation of Pacific-heritage (and even to some extent non-Pacific-heritage) researchers. Although I have treated Māori and Pacific as two large social groupings, within each are an array of diversities, distinct subgroupings in the form of hapū (subtribes), iwi (tribes), ha'a (descendants; tribe), gafa (lineage; genealogy) and more. At the same time, despite the specificities that distinguish between Māori and Pacific, there are shared connections and stories, often forgotten and invisible in the thoughts and conversations of early-career scholars. Alice Te Punga Somerville's (2012) text *Once Were*

Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania is a useful source to draw clarity and understanding. Knowing our shared ancestral histories and connections is significant because more and more of our Pasifika/Pacific young people in Aotearoa New Zealand now also have close blood and kinship ties to Māori through their parents and grandparents (Vaka'uta 2021).

Place-based research enables a critical space for researchers to closely probe into their connections to and responsibilities toward the environment, people and research communities and their knowledge systems. Doing place-based research well can call into question our taken-for-granted privileges and the associated tensions of power we carry into Pacific research undertakings in Aotearoa New Zealand. As a response to the tensions of power, the concepts of manaakitanga (respect; generosity; care), kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and tino rangatiratanga (self-determination; sovereignty) are key ideas and ideals that draw attention to who benefits more from research and whose voices and stories are consequently sidelined.

Tu'ufonua is a concept that enables Tongan-heritage scholars' understanding of self and their connections to other people and places. The literal translation of tu'ufonua is "to stand on land". Figuratively, however, tu'ufonua refers to one's sense of affinity or belonging. It symbolises one's sense of Tonganness (Ka'ili 2017). Māori use the notion of tūrangawaewae (Brown Pulu 2002) and Samoan people refer to tulagāvae as descriptors of their identities and feelings of Māoriness or Samoanness, connections or belonging (Efi 2005). Tu'ufonua, for Tongan people, is also used to define one's sense of Indigeneity, because fonua as a concept can have physical, symbolic, sacred and spiritual meanings (Ka'ili 2017; Manu'atu 2016). Fonua can also be attributed to the fa'ē (mother earth), a provider and giver of life. The baby's placenta is also called fonua. The fonua feeds and nourishes the unborn child and, at birth, is returned to the land. In death, she/he is returned to the fonua, often through the family's fonua loto (family burial site). Across the stages of a Tongan person's life cycle, the fonua is central to our understanding of life and death being deeply interwoven and interconnected. From a Cook Islands ontological and epistemological understanding, Emma Ngakuravaru Powell, in her contribution, positions the 'enua (which she defines as islands, lands and waters) and te akau roa (the long reef) as powerful metaphors that symbolise Cook Islands people's lived realities and ways of relational meaning-making. She unpacks in her paper how the Cook Islands metaphors have inspired the methodological innovations and theorisations within academic research. Making connections to land (and moana or ocean) is our grounding as Indigenous Oceanian researchers.

Still, Indigeneity/Indigenous as an identity construct is not always visible or named and articulated by Pacific-heritage researchers. During my doctoral studies in 2014, being located/housed in Te Puna Wānanga (School of Māori

and Indigenous Studies) at the Faculty of Education and Social Work enabled a deep engagement with the idea of Indigeneity and the implications of being a Pacific-heritage researcher in relation to Māori within settler-colonial Aotearoa New Zealand. There were moments in which I felt at odds with my attempts to dive deep into Tongan knowledge systems in search of appropriate ways to ensure the continuity of our people, language and culture in a whenua not Indigenous to us, a whenua tied to long colonial histories and politics of resistance that are ongoing for tangata whenua (lit. people of the land; Māori, the Indigenous people of Aotearoa) on their motu (island; for Māori, their country).[5] This tension was a consequence of me not giving time to critically engage with, unpack and clearly articulate the genealogical tracing back of the histories, connections, struggles and lived stories faced by Māori and Pacific in the region and by Māori and Pasifika within Aotearoa.

Recognising historically why and how contemporary Pacific peoples came to "settle" in Aotearoa New Zealand can highlight our connections with tangata whenua. Melani Anae (2020) described the 1950s and 1960s as decades that "witnessed a large wave of Pacific migration to New Zealand—especially by Samoans, followed by Tongans [who] tended to take up residence in low-cost areas, and Ponsonby and Grey Lynn were two such suburbs. By the 1970s, Pacific migrant workers, along with other ethnic groups, had created a distinct culture in the area" (p. 32). Today, being on other people's land carries complicated dynamics associated with "settler" becoming in Aotearoa New Zealand. Recognising "connections" for Pacific-heritage people in settler nations continues to be a complex and complicated task. In her contribution Sam Iti Prendergast reminds early-career researchers to critically engage in deeper probing and unpacking of our Pacific Indigenous relationality as settlers on other people's land.

Our Pacific migrant stories in settler nations are imbued with hope and struggle. The historical and political accounts of the 1970s dawn raids[6] is evidence of the unjust ways in which Pacific/Pasifika peoples were treated by the nation's government (Anae 2020). As a response, the naming of *Pasifika peoples* was one way that our communities at the time strived for self-determination, seeking to create a critical space that collectivised our shared struggles and motivations (Samu 2020; Si'ilata *et al*. 2017). The shift in research to include "with Pacific" (as evidenced by the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for and by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP)[7]) is a move toward a for-by-with Pacific objective. This provides space for the critical exploration of who counts as Pacific, and what constitutes a Pacific person on land whereby both Pacific and non-Pacific are positioned as tangata tiriti (people of the treaty (of Waitangi) as well as tauiwi (anyone not of Māori descent) (Huygens 2016), both migrants and settlers, on Aotearoa New Zealand whenua.

Indigenous Pacific knowledge systems are built on relational philosophies that centre deep relational meaning-making. Nanise J. Young Okotai, in her contribution, articulates a tension in her research when, despite her attempts to hold back the Fijian Vanua Research Framework (FVRF) because of her own internal grappling with whether she was Fijian enough and suspicions of the framework's capacity to recognise diverse worldviews, the vanua itself and its people determined FVRF's place and Okotai's responsibilities within her ethnographic fieldwork. By nature of Fijian relationality and the cultural protocols expected of her as a researcher of Fijian heritage, she could no longer avoid implementing FVRF. Such relational philosophies privilege the intimate interconnections between the human and non-human worlds and the physical and spiritual worlds (Efi 2005). As such, vā (relational space) provides a relational theory that makes meaning of the interconnections between people and other entities in the world (Ka'ili 2017). When considering architectural design, procurement, and building and project management, in this issue Charmaine 'Ilaiū Talei positions vā as a disruptive but innovative educational praxis. Vā offers a theoretical lens that enables sociospatial and sociorelational analysis between people and their environment, including architectural structures.

The Struggles of Diving Deep into Indigenous Oceanian Knowledge Systems

Digging down into the roots of Indigenous Oceanian knowledge systems within Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (the Pacific Ocean) often requires getting our hands dirty in the struggle. For Kaupapa Māori research, Graham Hingangaroa Smith (G. Smith 2012) argues that action and analysis (i.e., praxis) are at the heart of its political-cultural intentions. He reminds us that as we seek to unfold our Indigenous and cultural ideas and reinvigorate them in our research work, neglecting the associated economic power and historical analyses of doing such work and their "related actions of economic self-development" (p. 13) can deter our progress. The deep dive into the roots of Indigenous Oceanian knowledge, concepts and theories will test our capacity to withstand the struggles, and grappling with them involves grit, patience and courage.

Many of us born and raised in the diaspora of the USA, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand struggle with the deep dive into our Indigenous knowledge systems. Although being open about our struggles can leave us feeling vulnerable, even within our own local communities, articulating the ways in which we grapple with Indigenous Oceanian concepts, theories and approaches would be useful to many others (Fa'avae *et al*. 2016). I continue to grapple with the appropriate application of Tongan concepts and frameworks in my own research and teaching. These tensions linked to grappling with the "appropriate implementation" of Indigenous Oceanian knowledges and

practices are necessary because, whether we like it or not, they are evolving in the diaspora, and so are we. The key for us is to continue being "present" and to remain with(in) community. This matters to our Pacific communities.

As a matter of identity negotiation and affirmation, Sanga and Reynolds (2017) argue that naming is claiming. Naming Pacific/Moana/Oceania/Pasifika without the researcher grounding their whakapapa (genealogy) and origin story continues to be a concern. Similarly, the clear articulation of how each name/notion/identifier is utilised within Pacific-heritage scholars' disciplinary contexts are often absent from their academic papers. Consequently, we are more likely to do more harm for the next generation of researchers coming through when we ignore such grounding and unpacking of positionality in our own writings.

The authors in this special issue value positionality. Research positionality is a practice of acknowledging, honouring and reconnecting with our whenua, fonua, fanua, vanua, ʻenua, knowledge systems and language. Not only is positioning ourselves, our identities and our aspirations within a research project (including teaching) necessary, but by doing so we ground ourselves ancestrally to our homelands and provide meaningful reasons for our decisions, desires and efforts that are aligned to our community's survival and sense of thriving in the diaspora. Joseph Houghton articulates in this special issue how his positionalities as an educator of Cook Islands, Tahitian and European descent living in Christchurch helped shape his research methodology choices and empower the Pasifika voice in an academic space largely dominated by non-Pasifika voices. For him, ʻenua and place matter when positioning one's mixed identities. Similarly, based on Melanesian practice and relational positionality, Catherina Bolinga grounds her use of yumi tok stori in this special issue as a method linked to one-to-one and group meetings and conversations with Papua New Guinean communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. My fonua is buried on the island of Niue, a coral atoll often referred to as "the Rock". My ancestral lineage can be traced back to Tonga and Sāmoa. Vagahau Niue (the Niuean language) was my first oral mode of communication. Alongside my older sister and younger brother, we learnt Tongan after my parents made the decision to migrate to Aotearoa in the late 1980s, when I was 8 years of age. Articulating our positionalities and connections to our ancestral fonua, vanua and ʻenua helps us and others understand our meaningful connections and our ethical responsibilities within research to make decisions that benefit and uplift our local Pacific communities.

Additionally, intergenerational knowledge-sharing has always been a priority for our Pacific communities. This way of communal living is how we learn to work through our shared struggles. Tauhi vā (nurturing respectful

relations), teu le va (maintaining reciprocal relationships), veitokoni (reciprocity; sharing) and vakarokoroko (respect) (see Cammock and Andrews, this issue) have been identified as useful cultural values employed by Pacific communities to work through their struggles in the diaspora. In the settler-nation context of Australia, Inez Fainga'a-Manu Sione, Glenda Stanley and Dion Enari shine a light on how the talanoa method aided them in the co-development of their SSAVI Collective-Individual framework, an approach that explores how their communities affirm their sense of thriving and flourishing in a new land and, in turn, how such collective learnings influence their own individual becomings as Indigenous Pacific researchers. Their experiences provide examples of how collective struggle and Indigenous Pacific knowledge and practices equipped them with the spirit and cultural values to counter deficit narratives of Pacific people in the Australian context.

METHODOLOGICAL DURABILITY: THE PRACTICALITIES OF PACIFIC RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS

The practicalities of Pacific research methodologies and methods are not always openly discussed in literature. And even when they are, there is little critical unpacking of their durability when implemented and adapted across diverse contexts. Durability is a methodological quality that frames whether Indigenous Pacific methodologies and methods, approaches and frameworks are fit for purpose based on the communities involved, the purpose and intentions of the project (i.e., research questions, variables researched and phenomenon of interest) and the settings/places/contexts in which the investigation is to take place. Another aspect to consider is whether the theoretical or analytical frames also align well with the ways Pacific methodologies and methods are implemented and adapted in new contexts. Fleshing out the challenges and ways researchers grapple with the practicalities of implementation is the practice of decluttering (Efi 2005), a necessary responsibility so that those of the next generation are aware of how Indigenous knowledges, theories, ideas and practices have morphed over time, places and spaces.

Analysis of Our Indigenous Pacific Research Analytical Tools

The *Pacific research thought space* requires a review of its analytical tools. Even though I am somewhat uncomfortable with the naming of our Indigenous Pacific theories and frameworks as "research tools", doing so has provided me with a lens through which to consider their utilitarian value and interdisciplinarity (see the next section for more). Yet, it also allows me to maintain an overall ethical approach to the project of ensuring that Indigenous Pacific ideas, theories and frameworks are sustained for cultural

continuity. Of significance too is that when our research focus is mainly on cultural reinvigoration agendas but ignores the historical economic and political struggles, tensions and implications for communities and place, the agentic and transformative aspects of our research thinking and on-the-ground work with communities can become stagnant and somewhat contained and limited (G. Smith 2012). Developing analytical tools to interrogate our existing research tools can move our thinking and work ahead.

Talanoa, for instance, is a popular Pacific method used in both qualitative and mixed-methods studies across the diaspora. Despite its early development in Pacific coup negotiations by the late Sitiveni Halapua (2002) and in the field of education research by Timote Vaioleti (2006), the talanoa method (and methodology) has crossed into other disciplinary fields. However, only a few studies have critiqued the talanoa method and methodology and their contextual relevance (or conditions of ontological and cultural validity) and practical challenges in their fields (see Fa'avae *et al.* 2016; Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea 2014; Tunufa'i 2016). To move our thinking forward as to talanoa's possibilities, Wanda Ieremia-Allan's paper provides us with a glimpse into talanoa's role and function in engagements with written text, particularly in how talanoa captures her family's transgenerational feau (messages) and conversations across time and space. By positioning the talanoa method in archival research, Ieremia-Allan provides concepts and contexts that can be employed as points and moments of analysis.

At this point in time, across universities mainly, there are research centres that focus on the development of research tools—frameworks, methodologies and methods—centred on Indigenous Pacific philosophies, epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, former head of state of Samoa, states:

> With the migration of Samoan and other Pacific peoples to the metropolitan centres of the world, the methodologies for preserving and enhancing our indigenous knowledges and histories in these centres must similarly migrate. Hence working alongside indigenous institutes and initiatives at home and abroad is critical to restoring culture, bridging knowledge gaps and enhancing ethnic identity, security and health. (Efi 2005: 68)

Pacific-centric or Indigenous research centres have the capacity to bring forth Indigenous/traditional customs and rituals, and by doing so ethically, provide a tūrangawaewae, tu'ufonua or tulagāvae—a place, a residence—whereby our sense of Tonganness or Samoanness and residencies as settlers can appropriately stand and affirm its grounding. It is within such research centres that analytical approaches can be developed to refine existing Indigenous Pacific research tools.

Utilitarian Value of Indigenous Pacific Research Tools: Practical and Decorative

> The task of living in modern New Zealand—and especially in modern Auckland—is not just to understand how to live with different peoples, but how to adapt to the future that has already happened. (Salesa 2017: 28)

The utilitarian value of Pacific research tools can be found in the ways Indigenous concepts, methodologies, methods and frameworks find relevance and usefulness beyond just being decorative, and this can be seen in engagements with the digital world. Digital technology and tools have aided Pacific peoples' cultural practices, modes of communication and engagement. Beyond engagement, Salesa (2017) encourages Pacific innovation, calling forth Pacific people to become generators of innovative initiatives within the digital world in Aotearoa New Zealand and across the globe. Within research contexts, Pacific/Pasifika are urged to go beyond just being consumers to being critical producers of knowledge. Interrogating the future-focused drivers and directions contributes to decluttering the utility or practicalities of Pacific research tools in the academy (Sisifā and Fifita 2021). E-talanoa, as an example, has been named as such to highlight the integration of our Indigenous Pacific methods into online spaces because of the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic (Fa'avae *et al*. 2022). In this special issue, Ruth Faleolo encourages us to revise and revision the ways we engage and connect with our research informants/participants, while ensuring that cultural protocols and value systems are at the heart of our meaningful and respectful communication. She indicates the significance of vā in mediating Samoan and Tongan peoples' understanding of meaningful and respectful connections online. The relevance of digital tools when conducting research is a significant shift in how Pacific research acknowledges the post-covid context and its impacts on our ways of learning, communicating and expressing our understanding online (Fa'avae *et al*. 2022).

The ethical considerations required when implementing Indigenous Pacific research tools, both online and face to face, can be best understood in their practicalities within research practice/conduct across diverse contexts. Being mindful of the utilitarian value of Indigenous Pacific research tools, our responsibility is to carefully consider how such apparatuses carry struggles of power between "the researcher" and the "communities researched" (Mafile'o *et al*. 2022). Research approaches underpinned by positivism, based on a reliance on "what is to be counted, measured, and tested—what can be 'known'" (p. 547), often do not always bring out the most useful outcomes for Pacific peoples in their diverse settings. The practicalities linked to such challenges need to be shared and articulated clearly for others to talatalanoa and sense-make.

Indigenous Oceanian concepts, frameworks, methodologies and methods are deep in meaning. Building strong communities for critical research inspired by Indigenous Pacific philosophising and scholarly interrogations, rooted in the values of generosity, care, safety and intergenerational sense-making between the more experienced and early-career scholars, is useful for us moving ahead. Even though many of us are born and raised outside of our ancestral homelands and are encouraged to learn the language and culture because within such practices are the deep-rooted meanings that can only be understood well when we are present in and part of our communities, the reality is that those collective spaces may not always feel safe. For current Pacific-heritage researchers who are second-to-third-generation-born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the USA, their experiences reflect the marginalised within the already marginalised in the diaspora. Caleb Panapa Edward Marsters highlights the need to enable Pacific research methods that empower rather than alienate Pacific young people living abroad whose realities do not reflect the traditional Indigenous ways back in their parents' and grandparents' homelands. He affirms that Indigenous Pacific knowledge and research methods are useful platforms for the revisioning of Pacific research practices that directly reflect the lived realities of today's Pacific young people. He provokes thinking as to whether our existing research tools and approaches accurately capture Pacific young peoples' realities, whether such methods enable our young to recognise themselves and their ways.

ONGOING TALATALANOA

As ongoing talatalanoa, my research-related reflections were not intended to end in the traditional way of concluding an academic paper. Instead, my objectives were to engage with the insights of the early-career Pacific-heritage scholars in this *Waka Kuaka* special issue and the key themes identified by the guest editors. Pacific research vibes refer to the creatively critical ways in which our Indigenous Pacific knowledges continue to challenge, confront, inspire, empower and transform our communities' lived realities in the diaspora. To move us forward, the authors have articulated key learnings of research moments and experiences within the post-covid context that require further unpacking. My reflections within this talatalanoa highlight the vibes and rhythms that provoke and sustain my own academic research thinking and theorising (Fa'avae *et al*. 2022; Ng Shiu *et al*. 2023).

NOTES

1. The length of a ngatu is measured in langanga, with 1 langanga measuring 45–60 cm. Fifty langanga equals 1 launima, or 25–30 m. This ngatu measured 1 launima. Its length suggests it was made for an important occasion. See the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa website for a description of the ngatu launima: https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/95519
2. Pacific-heritage peoples is a notion Samoan educator and researcher Tanya Wendt Samu (2020) uses when making reference to people whose ethnicities/ancestral ties are rooted in small Pacific Island states and who now reside in the diaspora.
3. Although the term Pacific is often used to refer to the region, I have opted to use Oceania at times in this reflection because it feels more inclusive and conducive to theorising possibilities, though not ignoring the colonial struggles and histories associated with the name "Pacific".
4. Pacific and Pasifika do not mean the same thing in this paper. Si'ilata *et al*. (2017) note that both terms are significant because they show the evolution of how Pacific peoples are referred to in Aotearoa New Zealand whenua. The Ministry of Education in the past used "Pasifika peoples". This has now evolved into "Pacific peoples", a common name also used today by the Ministry of Pacific Peoples. I utilise Pasifika as a term to acknowledge New Zealand-born and -raised researchers and community members of Pacific heritages who continue to struggle with their affiliation to their ancestral homelands. I utilise Pacific as well in this paper as a way to include communities from Melanesia and Micronesia who do not identify with the term Pasifika.
5. The use of motu here is a reference to Aotearoa: Te Ika-a-Māui (North Island), Te Waipounamu (South Island) and Rakiura (Stewart Island).
6. The dawn raids of the 1970s were government-sanctioned and racially driven raids on Pacific peoples by police in the early hours of the morning to search for people they believed had overstayed their immigration permits.
7. RPEIPP was initiated by local Indigenous Pacific education leaders in 2001. The movement was a deliberate intention to not only recognise but also prioritise local Pacific people and their knowledge systems in donor-funded education research decisions. Māori were also involved in the deliberations (Penetito 2002). Kabini Sanga, Konai Helu Thaman and 'Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki were key leaders in bringing together well-respected local educators who were also educated and trained in universities outside of their small island states (Pene *et al*. 2002). A key component of Sanga's, Thaman's and Taufe'ulungaki's stories told to the few who prioritised the genealogical tracing and history of RPEIPP was the role a Papālangi (person of European heritage) woman, Trisha Nelly, played in supporting these leaders' desires and intentions to take matters into their own hands rather than rely solely on donor funding agencies to dictate how their education systems would operate (Taufe'ulungaki 2014).

GLOSSARY

ʻenua	land (Cook Islands Māori)
faʻē	mother earth (Tongan)
fala	traditional mat (Tongan)
fanua	land (Samoan)
feau	messages (Samoan)
fonua	land; placenta (Niuean, Tongan)
fonua loto	gravesite; family burial site (Tongan)
gafa	lineage; genealogy (Samoan)
haʻa	descendants; tribe (Tongan)
hapū	subtribe (Māori)
iwi	tribe (Māori)
kaitiakitanga	guardianship (Māori)
koloa	articles of material wealth (Tongan)
langanga	distance between two consecutive transverse stripes on a piece of tapa cloth, usually 45–60 cm (Tongan)
launima	a lengthy piece of ngatu measuring 50 langanga (25–30 m) (Tongan)
māfana	heart-warming (Tongan)
mālie	inspiring (Tongan)
manaakitanga	respect; generosity; care (Māori)
moana	ocean (wide usage across the Pacific)
motu	island; country (Māori)
ngatu	tapa cloth, made from the bark of the mulberry tree (Tongan)
Papālangi	person of European heritage (Tongan)
talanoa	conversation (Tongan)
talatalanoa	ongoing conversation (Tongan)
tangata tiriti	people of the treaty (of Waitangi) (Māori)
tangata whenua	lit. people of the land; Māori, the Indigenous people of Aotearoa (Māori)
tauhi vā	nurturing respectful relations (Tongan)
tauiwi	anyone not of Māori descent (Māori)
te akau roa	the long reef (Cook Islands Māori)
teu le va	maintaining reciprocal relationships (Samoan)
tino rangatiratanga	self-determination; sovereignty (Māori)
tuʻufonua	lit. to stand on land; one's sense of affinity or belonging; Tonganness (Tongan)
tulagāvae	Samoanness; connections; belonging (Samoan)
tūrangawaewae	sense of affinity or belonging; Māoriness (Māori)

vā	relational space (Tongan, Samoan)
vakarokoroko	respect (Fijian)
vanua	place; land (Fijian)
veitokoni	reciprocity; sharing (Fijian)
whakapapa	genealogy (Māori)
whenua	land (Māori)

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AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

David Taufui Mikato Fa'avae, Critical Studies in Education (CRSTIE), Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland, 74 Epsom Ave., Epsom, Auckland 1023, New Zealand. d.faavae@auckland.ac.nz | https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6141-961X