# Tagata o le Moana – The people of Moana: Traversing Pacific Indigenous philosophy in Pasifika education research

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# Abstract

This thesis, exploring past and potential of Pasifika education research challenges both traditional notions of Pacific Island cultures as immutable and European assumptions regarding subjectivity, knowledge and ethical relationships. The study brings both Pacific Indigenous philosophies and Posthuman theory into conversation, confronting the Eurocentric individualistic universal human subject position that has permeated research processes and practices within the academy. The unique transnational position of Pasifika is conceptualised and considered within the context of New Zealand, affirming tuakana-teina, teina-tuakana relations between Pacific peoples and Māori as tangata whenua. The nomadic mobility of Pacific Indigenous philosophy is explored, recognising specific tensions for Pasifika education research in engaging Pacific Indigenous knowledge systems from a location away from ancestral lands. The study examines Pasifika education research paradigms and proposes an altogether different way of reimagining Pasifika education research to move beyond conventional critical-inquiry paradigms. In doing so, this thesis argues for a radical shift in the way the research assemblage is considered, calling for new ways of thinking onto-epistemologies, including non-human worlds as co-agentic and co-existent within knowledge exchange and co-creation. The thesis argues that by mobilising Pacific Indigenous philosophy within Pasifika education research, new and emergent opportunities may arise demonstrating the valuable contribution Pacific Indigenous philosophy provides education research. Furthermore, from this strength-based position, the thesis argues that Pasifika engagement in education must do more than focus on equity provision and notions of academic success. Through Pacific Indigenous philosophy, the ontologies, epistemologies and ethical relations are taken seriously within education research, thus affirming collective intersubjectiviteis that constitute the realities of Pasifika peoples.

# Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 09.02.2021

"Let our ancestors right into our world, come and dance with them in our world. We learn from them, through the continuity between us and them and also more importantly our distinct identity within the world system. With the depth of our history, we will bring our ancestors to us, carry our spirits, bring them forward to our world, willingly […]"

(Hau'ofa, 1999, cited in Hau'ofa & Juniper, 2001, p 24.).

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# List of Abbreviations

BES – Best Evidence Synthesis

ECE – Early Childhood Education

MoE – Ministry of Education

PEAP – Pacific Education Action Plan

PEP – Pasifika/Pacific Education Plan

PIKS – Pacific Indigenous Knowledge Systems

PIP – Pacific Indigenous Philosophy

PMP – Pule Ma'ata Pasifika (Pasifika Advisory role in the Ministry of Education)

RPEIPP - Re-Thinking Pacific Education Initiative by Pacific Peoples

RUPIE - Research Unit of Pacific and International Education

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USP – The University of the South Pacific

# Glossary of Pacific terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Cook Islands Māori** | |
| Tivaevae | Cook Islands traditional quilt. Unique to each district and family and are often gifted during significant life milestones such as birth, marriage and birthdays (Küchler & Eimke, 2009). |
| Vaerua | spirit or spirituality. |
| **Fijian** | |
| Vanua | Concept of land (relational) |
| **Hawaiian** | |
| Aloha | Love (breath, vibration) |
| Pa'a ka waha | To shut one's mouth – in the context of learning suggests caution (not to jump to conclusions). Careful reflection. |
| **Māori – Indigenous New Zealand** | |
| Hapu | Kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe - section of a large kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society |
| Iwi | Extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race - often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory. |
| Kaupapa Māori | Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary practice, Māori institution, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology - a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society. |
| Korero tawhito | Talking, discussing history |
| Mana | Mana in a traditional Māori sense entails power, status, influence, dignity, respect, status and influence which are derived from atua/God (Mutu, 2011). |
| Mauri | Life principle, vital essence, special nature, a material symbol of a life principle, source of emotions - the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity. Also used for a physical object, individual, ecosystem or social group in which this essence is located. |
| Moana Nui a Kiwa | Māori for the great ocean (Pacific). |
| Mokopuna | Grandchild - child or grandchild of a son, daughter, nephew, niece, etc. Descendant |
| Oriori | Traditional song related to genealogy sung to the child in the mother's womb |
| Pūrākau | Māori stories |
| Reo | Voice, language |
| Tangata whenua | First peoples of the land – Indigenous to New Zealand |
| Tapu | Sacred or forbidden space |
| Tauiwi | Non-Indigenous New Zealanders (peoples who are not Māori). |
| Tūpuna | Ancestor, grandparent |
| Tūrangawaewae | Domicile, standing, place where one has the right to stand - place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and *whakapapa*. |
| Wairua | spirit, soul - spirit of a person which exists beyond death. It is the non-physical spirit, distinct from the body and the *mauri*. To some, the *wairua* resides in the heart or mind of someone while others believe it is part of the whole person and is not located at any particular part of the body. |
| Whakatauki | Māori proverb |
| Whānau | Extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people - the primary economic unit of traditional Māori society. In the modern context the term is sometimes used to include friends who may not have any kinship ties to other members. |
| **Samoan** | |
| Aiga | Family – includes extended family |
| Aoga | School |
| Atua | God(s) |
| Fa'a matai | Samoan chiefly system |
| Fagogo | Samoan story (and storytelling) |
| Fanua | Concept of land (relational), the placenta |
| Fono | Meeting or gathering |

| | |
|---|---|
| Gafa | Genealogy (includes people and place) |
| Ma’a ta’i fe’e | The Samoan story about the octopus and the rat |
| Musumusu | Whisper (verb and noun) |
| Palagi | Term for fair-skinned or European. |
| Siapo | Cloth made from Mulberry bark, highly regarded in Samoan custom |
| Tala tu'umusumusu | Affirmative whispers, such as intergenerational knowledge exchange |
| Taumusumusu | Destructive whispers, hinted towards competing value systems. |
| Tina | Mother |
| Vaivai | Watery, fluid |
| **Tongan** | |
| Fonua | Concept of land (relational), the placenta |
| Ofa | Love (relational practice) |
| Tauhi vā | The nurturing of socio-spatial ties and relationship |
| **Pan-Pacific terms** | |
| Mana | the life energy or flow that sustains life (a concept shared across various Pacific Islands nations). |
| Moana | The great waters of the Pacific |
| Noa | The void and potentiality, opening up of sacred knowledges |
| Vā | The relational space (spatiotemporal). Space between and space that connects. |

# Chapter one: Setting the scene and framing researcher considerations

This chapter introduces the key theoretical concepts and tensions that frame the thesis, bringing into conversation both Pacific Indigenous philosophy and posthuman philosophy. The significance of Pacific Indigenous philosophy and its contribution to contemporary education research studies are discussed. The rationale for entering into the research from this onto-epistemological position is detailed, as well as researcher considerations navigating the writing-theorising-research-assemblage. The research aims and research questions underpinning the study are also detailed, including key concepts and debates that are explored in later chapters.

## Research(er) ontological position: Entering the research study

I open this section by presenting my *pēpeha* (customary Māori introduction inclusive of specific ties to mountain, rivers, waters and tribes) to introduce myself and honour the relational *vā*[1] (relational space) into which I am entering with you, the reader. The significance of my geographical, ancestral, collective and genealogical ties is integral to who I am and constitute my way of being, thinking, connecting, and knowing the world. Ko Tiavi tōku maunga, ko e Loloa tōku awa, ko Samoa tōku iwi, ko Siumu tōku hapū, ko Jacoba Matapo tōku ingoa. I am a Samoan, New Zealand-born Pasifika academic in Pasifika Early Childhood Education (ECE) teacher education. I intentionally share my pēpeha, in the *reo* (language) of the Indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand (the lands in which I reside) to communicate with you my Samoan ancestral connection to people and place.

[1]A pan-Pacific concept that includes the relational space between bodies (material, social, potential, actual, ethical, spatiotemporal).

***Figure 1*. Digital Image of Loloa.** A freshwater spring in Siumu village, (well known in this part of Samoa). This spring, which dates back more than 200 years, has been a life-sustaining source for my ancestors. This digital image reflects skies, growth, movement and lines that project formations of layers within the waters. Jacoba Matapo, (2016). Digital Image.

This thesis argues that mobilising Pacific Indigenous Philosophies (PIP) in education research (specifically Pasifika education research) offers alternative ways of thinking relational-ontology, knowledge creation and pedagogy. The nomadic capacity of PIP brings attention in the research process to spatiotemporal relations. In the research process, these ways of existing in (and with) world are explored throughout the thesis through creative modalities (video, imagery, poetry, chant and story) to bring attention to a variety of selected Pacific cosmogonies. The creative modalities in this study demonstrate how PIP epistemically traverse other-than-human worlds by way of relational ontologies.

Right from the beginning of this project, I have been trying to struggle out of the existing limitations of my thinking. In fact, in the academic language I was using at the time, I wrote for myself "in locating my ontological position as a researcher, I must attempt to be conscious of the meta-narratives that textualise my thoughts"; this was written in my very first attempt of framing the introductory chapter to my doctoral research. The irony is that language constraints have challenged my 'being and becoming' throughout the five-year process of my doctoral thesis. Rather than relying solely on words to frame my ontological

commitments in this opening section, I also use imagery to project another 'voice' that I wish to share with you, the reader.

The photograph below was taken at Long Bay Regional Park in December 2016, a place which has had a significant connection to my childhood, identity and research journey. ***Playing in the lines*** is what I call this impression – a digitised inverted image (colour and lines) that present ocean and earth without a precise cutting apart of the boundaries or borders.

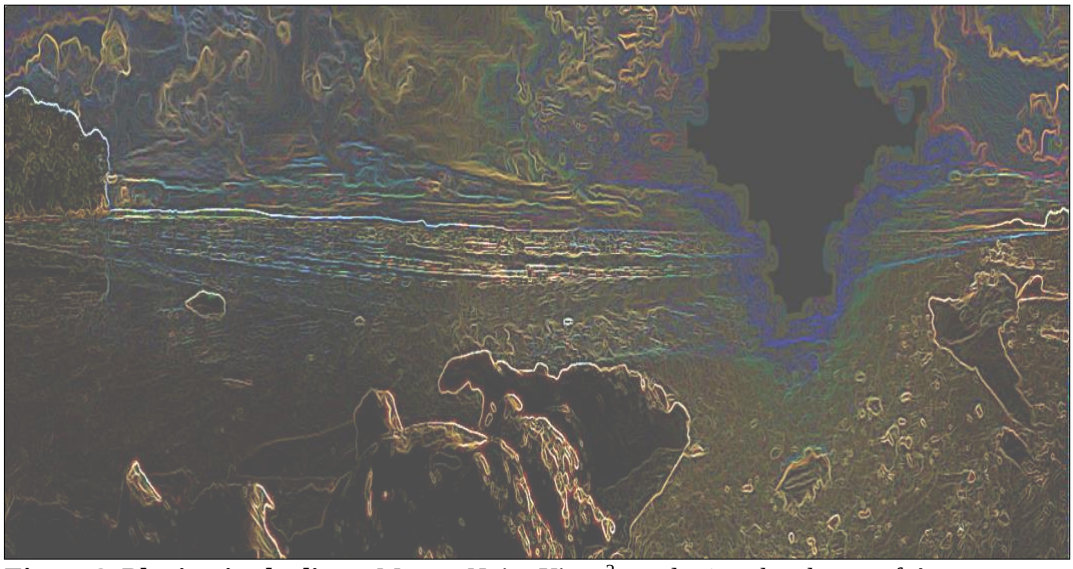

***Figure 2.*** **Playing in the lines.** *Moana Nui a Kiwa* [2]enveloping the shores of Aotearoa. Jacoba Matapo, (2016). Digital Image.

The very limitations of textualised images of thought are presented as re-occurring events throughout this thesis and provide openings in theorising that work with and against representationalism. In order to bring PIP and posthuman critical theory into conversation and discussion, I have had to traverse the historical, social, and political discourses of Pasifika education research. My aim in this study is to present the valuable contribution of PIP as more than simply an equity-based or inclusive approach to research (Braidotti, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Foucault, 1980).

[2] Moana Nui a Kiwa – Māori for the great ocean (Pacific).

## Why the posthuman turn?

The posthuman turn as a contemporary movement in qualitative research has projected altogether new ways of undoing methodology as we know it. The posthuman turn destabilises humanist (anthropocentric) philosophies through vitalist and materialist onto-epistemologies and has brought about new ways of reconceptualising social science research, including transversal approaches to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research (Alaimo, 2016; Braidotti, 2013; Haraway, 2016). The posthuman turn in research takes multiple trajectories, however, in this study, the lines of philosophical thought will follow that of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and more recently the work of Rosi Braidotti (2019). These philosophers have presented alternatives to reimagine methodological, ethical and theoretical debates in contemporary philosophy and research. This thesis will also explore what PIP contributes to these lines of philosophical thought as they position human(ity) as interconnected planetary beings; a radical departure from transcendental existential claims. I expand on these positions in later chapters five and six. For now, I wish to explain why I have chosen the posthuman turn to theoretically engage in research as an exercise of more-than-critical inquiry.

## More-than-critical inquiries

The transformational supposition centred within critical inquiry research emphasises the need to both deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge systems that underpin social injustice and inequity (Shields, 2013). Clearly, many Pasifika education research projects traversed within this thesis have transformative aims, particularly in confronting issues of racism, ethnicity, diversity, inclusion, class, culture, spirituality, identity, language and many more. Most often, within Pasifika education research studies, interpretivist paradigms are utilised to frame the significance of disparities. Representations of Pasifika peoples perceived as marginalised within New Zealand's systems of education are ongoing themes across numerous studies. Critical interpretative studies seek to understand and interpret the voice, experiences and realities of Pasifika peoples. These studies are often presented as a

precursor to transformative action. All of these socio-historical and socio-political issues addressed within these studies rely on human-centred critiques of social justice and equity.

This study situates the social justice assemblage from a PIP perspective to include non-human, corporeal and incorporeal bodies in co-agentic and processual capacities of knowing (see chapter five). The study does not seek to diminish critical theories for transformative action as such research in Pasifika education has contributed important insights and means for understanding complex relations of education politics (micro and macropolitical) in New Zealand. My intent as a Samoan/Pasifika researcher is to exercise PIP and posthuman theory as a standpoint to engage in the fully saturated histories of social life rather than be abstracted from it (Harding, 1992; Ulmer, 2017). PIP and posthuman philosophy bring into conversation the ethical responsibility of human(ity) to reimagine justice as a more-than-human endeavour. In doing so, there is potential for education research to attend to global and local material, ecological, geopolitical, and geographical injustice (Ulmer, 2017).

The careful consideration of (undoing/doing) methodology must be conducive to the contexts in which this research is traversed, where I attend the vā (the inter-relational space) that provides possibilities for emergent and generative forces in the creation of being and meaning within Pasifika education research (Anae, 2010).

*I totonu*[3] *– coming in from the middle, situating researcher ontology in the study.*

### *Musumusu as a performative thought-experience*

Throughout your reading of this thesis, you will find images, poetry, whispers, (dis)ruptures-in-writing, which I present as provocations for thought-experience in an attempt to avoid a narrow representation of meaning. Engaging a process of thinking-differently in and with Pacific philosophies in Pasifika education research, this thesis

[3] Samoan definitions: Inner; to penetrate; internal; inner-side

presents storying-with-theory to reconceptualise and recast alternative modes of being-in the writing assemblage. I propose use of a Samoan concept of *musumusu*[4], which is taken up throughout the writing-thinking-process of this research. As a Samoan-Pasifika researcher, I wish first to explain musumusu (whispers), a Samoan expression embedded in culture that has specific ties to the sharing of cultural knowledge. Musumusu is an adaptable expression shaped by various contexts and relations, so the act of musumusu produces a force to affect other(ed)-bodies. Within this study musumusu is a performative expression in negotiating the tensions and insights of the research(er).

The practice of musumusu has ancient connections in precolonial Samoan Indigenous thought and religion. Tui Atua (2014) speaks of the Samoan culture of whispers as a continuum, whereby at one end the whisper is affirming, such as a mother lovingly whispering to her unborn child or a Samoan knowledge custodian whispering sacred intergenerational knowledge in the act of sustaining ancient wisdoms. The affirmative whispers are *tala tu'umusumusu*. On the other end of the musumusu continuum is *taumusumusu*, which is destructive, usually motivated by spite or arrogance. However, as a continuum, the type of musumusu depends on the motivation for passing it on, the nature of that knowledge, and the degree of guilt or shame when passing it on. An example of guilt or shame as explained by Tui Atua (2014), may be noted when an interaction of an Indigenous knowledge custodian who is also Christian becomes uncomfortable in contexts that refer to Samoan Indigenous religion – this person's practice of whispers may express guilt or shame.

In his invitation to affirm Samoan Indigenous thought in a contemporary Samoa, Tui Atua (2014) states:

> I cannot see how we can adequately address our culture of whispers without opening it up for intelligent and loving conversation. And we cannot do this without access to its contents. We owe it to our forebears, whose names we carry, whose inheritances we flaunt and fight over and whose spiritual presence continues to guide and support us, to remember

[4] Samoan for whispering, or whisper

> and recite their songs, stories, chants and medicinal incantations as fully and as proudly as we can (p. 39).

He also warns:

> The culture of taumusumusu is hinted at when there are competing value systems and where knowledge is incomplete or withheld and so vulnerable to manipulation. The conversations of custodians and their nanai in the contemporary Samoan scene can easily turn from tala tu'umusumusu session to a session infused with tala taumusumusu (p. 34).

As a Samoan/Pasifika researcher wary of the colonial constraints and guilt or shame associated with the practice of engaging musumusu, I hope to express musumusu in a way that arises out of relations as an affirmative force (not to be mistaken for a dialectic good or bad) force. This is why I have chosen to share with you, the reader, my musumusu in writing-analysing-thinking. I accept that the musumusu I express carries nuances that may at times carry tones of either taumusumusu or tu'umusumusu; however, I intend to engage in the processual movements the spectrum of musumusu as both (concepts) are constituted within each other. Through conceptualising musumusu in this way, the act of expressing musumusu engages in murmurs, echoes, uncertainties, complexity and life, and at times carries more weight in the writing-thinking assemblage within this study.

As a Samoan/Pasifika researcher, I aim to embody musumusu to create opportunities to murmur under the (un)certainties of the western canon. Musumusu generates breath in writing-expression, to break away; take stock before launching into talk and bringing worlded-being into the writing-assemblage. Musumusu carries through voids and silences as a potential for openings in new/old understandings. Musumusu is metaphysically grounded and is not only conceptualised with words or textualised forms of logic, and connects me as a Samoan/Pasifika researcher to spirituality, intuition and the collective inter-subjectivities of my being. By showing how musumusu recurs, through observation and anecdote, I seek to mobilise PIP throughout the thesis.

**Musumusu**

Mapping the multiplicities that have shaped my becoming as Pasifika researcher reveals the inseparable trajectories that have influenced my personal histories and being. These include my cultural embodiment and ways of knowing as a Samoan/Pasifika academic. I am an untitled Samoan/Palagi; a daughter of migrant parents who met in a factory in Auckland and were both from disparate parts of the world. My mother came from a small village in Upolu called Siumu and my father from Leiden in Holland's South Province. Throughout my childhood, the relational space between Samoan/Palagi[5] culture and familial relationships were nurtured. Neither of my parents attended university nor found opportunities within the education system that would enable room for 'difference' in their sense of being as learners, as their own multiplicities. Although both of my parents were from different parts of the world, both were engaged and disengaged in their experiences of education. As I tried to conceptualise my parents' perception of education, I noted that stories of physical harm, compliance, and fear underpin their education narratives – I was provoked to ask why they pushed me so hard to engage in education? Why do they not resent education for what it has done to them, emotionally, spiritually, socially and physically? As an academic and researcher, I now ask, what can I achieve in my education, and in my becoming as Samoan/Palagi in an Aotearoa context?

It is here, from the middle (milieu) I express my ontology within education as a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) of the multiple: Samoan, Palagi, New Zealander, daughter, mother, learner, early childhood teacher, lecturer, Pacific academic and researcher (and other...). This position has rhizomic overtones, as the rhizome enters and exits through varied points, is non-linear and extends both inwards and outwards from all points of connection. The rhizome is open to complexity, new formations and movements that break from the macropolitical.

*Pause in writing to think 'breaks' in the macropolitical.*

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) reminds us that:

> A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p 25).

My personal and professional experiences shape this project's genesis in education within a New Zealand context. This is inclusive of the various ways I have journeyed and traversed

[5] Palagi – Samoan term for fairskinned or European.

education and education research, as a child, a teacher, a student, a lecturer and academic. As a New Zealand born Samoan/Palagi Pasifika ECE lecturer, I am cognisant of my presence teaching and advocating for marginalised Pacific Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies within an education sector that is predominantly western in its ideology. This tension is not only relevant in my work as an initial teacher educator, but also within my role as an academic where the very social and political histories are grounded upon western philosophies and transcendental metaphysics. The associated presupposition of the human-subject as a separate being from progenitor/creation/God is discussed in further detail in later chapters (see chapter two and six). Although I intentionally and critically locate myself within a typically western paradigm of education, I contest dominant discourse that privileges itself and continues to marginalise Indigenous knowledge. Through my relationships, interactions and experiences within broad education contexts (early childhood, primary school and tertiary) I have become increasingly critical of taken-for-granted existentialism, notions of the human subject and how these influence the place of valued knowledge(s) in education and education research.

## Why Pasifika?

The story of Pacific migration to New Zealand directly relates to my mother's story; a story of hope for her and her family. Having a job in New Zealand meant that my mother could provide financial assistance for her family in Samoa and provide further opportunities for education for us, her children. As a child, the stories of Samoa took many forms; metaphors to teach me the value of work and commitment, songs and fingerplays that showed love, care and sensitivity. Through stories, my mother reminded me of the blessings New Zealand provided our family and wider family. The narratives shared with me through childhood never alluded to my mother's harsh social and political realities at the time of the dawn raids. Her choice in calling New Zealand home was to express her gratitude for the opportunities the land New Zealand had afforded.

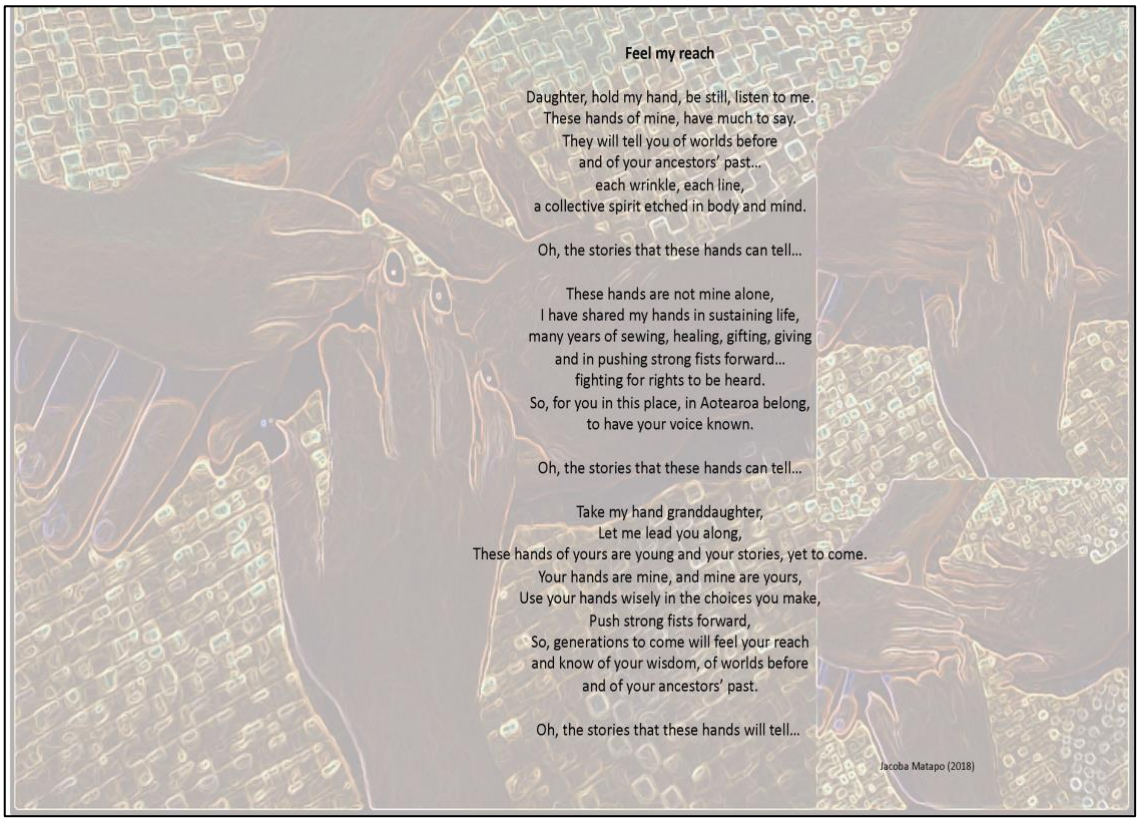


***Figure 3.*** **Feel my reach** (Image hyperlinked). Jacoba Matapo, (20th October 2018). Digital Image and Poem.

## The terminology of Pasifika

Pasifika is a term that evokes a strong feeling. Pasifika is a collective reference to Pacific Island peoples who have made New Zealand their home and is also inclusive of New Zealand-born Pasifika peoples. Pasifika ethnic groupings have been identified in association with the Pacific Islands of Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau and Tuvalu (Leaupepe & Sauni, 2014), however, is not limited to these Pacific Islands only. The term Pasifika was first formally used in New Zealand education context in the mid-1980s within early childhood education, through a Pasifika community led initiative called Anau Ako Pasifika (Airini et al., 2009a; Mara, 1997). It is argued that the term Pasifika was already a part of the early childhood education vocabulary and can be traced back to the early 1970s (Tongati'o, 2010). Later in the mid-nineties, the term Pasifika was utilised as a bureaucratic term in creating efficiency in grouping Pacific populations together (as a collective group) across national policy documents. At the time, the department of education initially adopted the term 'Pasifika' as a collective reference through engagement with Pasifika community through the Anau Ako Pasifika project (Airini et al., 2009a).

Mara (1997) explains the definition of Anau Ako Pasifika as follows:

> Anau Ako Pasifika ‘Anau’ is Cook Island Māori for 'family'. Ako is both a Niuean and Tongan word which means 'focus on learning and teaching', and Pasifika is recognisable by most language groups referring both to our geographical region and our way of doing things (p. 29).

Pasifika as a term within education, has been contested due to its contentious political history. Pacific scholars have recognised that the term Pasifika is not always well received amongst Pacific peoples living in New Zealand (Finau, 2014). As Finau (2014) explained, many Pacific peoples living in New Zealand identify more with ethnic-specific cultural ties like Samoa, Fiji, Tonga. In contrast, the term Pasifika locates a geographical standpoint and forms an inclusive identity for those Pacific peoples whose home is in New Zealand and provides connexions to Pacific Island homelands.

The term Pasifika has been taken up by Pasifika researchers who have developed this term to bring forth a positive light in asserting the collective significance of those who live in New Zealand and claim Pacific Island nations as homelands (Samu, 2006). For Pasifika peoples the term can imply significant ties to the land extending beyond one current location, they are genealogical, spiritual and are open to relations of change. These ties take forms of stories and Indigenous knowledge and are woven into the fibres of Pacific oratory traditions. Mila (2014) explains 'Pasifika' as a diasporic concept within the New Zealand context and that the term 'Pasifika' is inclusive of how Pacific peoples operate within diasporic communities. Anae, Coxon, Mara, Samu and Finau (2001, p 7) argue:

> There is no generic 'Pacific community' but rather Pacific peoples who align themselves variously, and at different times, along ethnic, geographic, church, family, school, age/gender-based, youth/elders, islands born/NZ born, occupational lines or a mix of these.

The diaspora concept is grounded upon historical, political, economic, cultural and social constructs of migration. It was typically used in reference to Jewish migration and Christian

theological interpretations of migration (Kenny, 2013). In more recent years' diaspora' has been used in more interchangeable ways, thus resisting the traditional arbitrary forms of migration meanings such as 'immigrant' and 'emigrant'. Diaspora as a concept recognises the relationship between peoples and place, particularly the ties that continue to connect peoples to homelands or ancestral lands. Kenny (2013) explains the aspects of this complex relationship: "At the most straightforward level, these connections occur when migrants or their descendants in one country continue to involve themselves economically, politically, or culturally in the affairs of the homeland" (p 13). The diaspora term, is also inclusive in the notion of broader 'Pacific' and can refer to a group or persons with a biological, economic, political, religious, social or educational connection to the Pacific. As a geographical term, the Pacific extends beyond one's immediate location; it has the potential to connect peoples and groups to the Pacific as an extended family (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017).

In connecting globally with communities of origin, diaspora can be conceived as nodes in a network. When depicted this way, the concept of diaspora suggests that identity formations are historically constructed rather than fixed (Kenny, 2013). For Pacific peoples in New Zealand, the term Pasifika as a diasporic concept relays the new formations or nodes of transversal relationships across communities. Although I discuss diaspora as a term alongside Pasifika, this study further suggests an alternative be reconceptualised. The genealogy of the term diaspora within the scholarship of Pasifika education research seems to render it as somewhat displaced. Using diaspora alongside PIP and posthuman philosophy provoke some questioning as diaspora (its genealogy) suggests a lack of agency in the historical and socio-political influences pertaining to one's subjectivity and identity. Diaspora is relevant to those who have experienced imposed geographical displacement, for example, through colonisation or environmental disaster. This positionality is different for many Pasifika peoples who chose to come to New Zealand, exercising their agency to leave their ancestral lands to go to New Zealand for new opportunities.

Migration from the Pacific Islands to New Zealand between the 1950s-1970s was spurred by the increasing demand of the manufacturing sector. The labour demand required skilled and semi-skilled workers, for which employers turned to people of the Pacific (Spoonley, 2013). While the manufacturing sector was productive, there was little concern about the increase in migration of Pacific people. However, when the economic crises arose, and unemployment became an issue, the Labour Government sought to revoke Pacific migrants' working visas. This event exposed tensions within society. Pacific people were seen as taking valuable employment opportunities for New Zealand residents, although the majority of illegal working migrants were from Europe and South America (Spoonley, 2013). Pacific peoples were targeted as the 'problem' in taking New Zealanders' jobs and therefore, one of the major causes of the economic issues. Such contentious labelling and shaming of Pacific peoples as 'overstayers' were accompanied by immigration policies to target Pacific peoples' deportation by way of dawn raids. This economic crisis in New Zealand demonstrated the fragility of New Zealand's economy and capital (Spoonley, 2013). In the current context, many Pasifika families within New Zealand are able to trace back to the migratory stories of their ancestors (Ministry of Social Development, 2016).

## (Re)Positioning the researcher in the research

As a researcher functioning within PIP and posthuman paradigms, I hope to generate openings of difference (Deleuze, 1994) as a process to destabilise humanist centred ideals in Pasifika education research; this includes an ontological commitment to Pacific Indigenous philosophy in an emergent researcher-research-assemblage. Consequently, doing theoretical (post)qualitative research differently, I have chosen to engage imagery, poetry, storying, and musumusu as a way of analysis, theorising and expressing subjectivity (St Pierre, 2015). Although I put forward research questions to frame this study, I am also sceptical in offering answers to such problems; falling back into dialectic thinking to present notions of 'new' knowledge. As a researcher engaged in Pasifika education research, I wonder how Pacific philosophy can further Pacific scholarship beyond the teleological,

humanist, and transcendental critical theory constraints (as discussed in chapter six). From this onto-epistemological position as a researcher, the following sections introduce specific concepts that inform the methodological framing of the thesis.

## Research aim and questions

This study sets out to trouble humanist ideals that have long privileged the 'knower', as a human only capacity to reason above all other(ed). By engaging a humanist critique of knowledge creation and its associated social and historical striated conditions for thinking and experiencing research, I argue that PIP's validity within New Zealand Pasifika education and research offers powerful and affirmative ways to reimagine education. Throughout the study, PIP is mobilised to think differently about Pasifika education and Pasifika education research as they are currently discursively represented. Furthermore, this study aims to bring PIP into contemporary conversations of education philosophy, politics and research praxis (both local and global).

This research seeks to mobilise Pacific Indigenous philosophy alongside western philosophical debates to open up opportunities for Pasifika education research(ers) to generate new understandings of relationality that is not only bound to the human-subject and social contexts, but also affirms non-human (worlds) as co-agentic partners in research. In so doing, the importance and validity of difference in the research(er)-assemblage is considered.

| |
|---|
| **Research Aim:**<br>Reimagine Pasifika education research through Pacific Indigenous philosophy |
| **Overarching research question:**<br>How does Pasifika education research mobilise Pacific Indigenous philosophy to generate new understandings grounded in Pacific onto-epistemologies? |
| **Research Questions:**<br>• How are Pasifika ways of knowing expressed in Pasifika education research?<br>• How do Pacific Indigenous methodologies deterritorialise and reterritorialise the human subject in Pasifika education research?<br>• How can Pacific Indigenous philosophy generate new possibilities for Pasifika education research? |

# Chapter two: Politics of place in the Pacific

This chapter discusses the implications of global, regional and local politics on Pacific education in the Pacific region, taking account of globalisation as a process that stems from ideals of expansion. The complexity of socio-economic relationships within the Pacific including the transnational cultural flows of Pacific peoples living in New Zealand are explored. In response to the provocation given by Epeli Hau'ofa (2008), this chapter navigates conflicting conceptualisations of the Pacific Ocean framed through western lens contrasted with Moana, an Indigenous pan-Pacific construct. Hau'ofa (2008) argues that it is critical for Pacific peoples to resist the confinement of hegemonic views that present Pacific Islands as 'small'. He boldly claims, "We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces […]" (p. 39).

The geographical division of the Pacific Islands and seas was imposed by colonial intention and influenced by the distinct division of the characteristics of peoples (sizes, skin colour, ethnic groupings), and land features. In the early 19th century, French explorer Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d'Urville classified Pacific Islands peoples as Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian and consequently the geography of the Pacific was divided into three parts: Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia (Bellwood, 1978). Although Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017) recognise the significance of these sub-regions, they argue that such profiling has created borders within the Pacific. Despite the shared and collective vā of Pacific peoples, the imposed demarcation of geographical borders continues to impact Pacific subjectivity today.

Coxon (1996) suggests that modernity is fundamentally based upon theories of evolution that justify colonialism, thus influencing the ongoing processes of globalisation. The extreme mobility of modernity through technological communications has generated new networks of relations. Geographical boundaries that once shaped people's perceptions and subjectivities of location are collapsing rhetorically into globalising discourses. Globalisation removes limitations of exchange, allowing the exchange of ideas to cross boundaries. In the rise of extreme mobility,

cultural boundaries are also traversed and although western understandings and attitudes become fundamentally dominant, Pacific cultural concepts appropriate other forms such as arts practices, music, dance etc. There is resilience in the mobilising of Pacific concepts and innovations shared by Pacific peoples to use technologies in generating and sustaining the *digital vā* (Enari & Matapo, 2020). For instance, during the global pandemic and closure of international borders, Pasifika scholars used zoom, Facebook and Instagram to innovate research spaces of writing and collaboration in the academy (Baice, et al., 2021).

Many Pacific Island nations are connected to both New Zealand and Australia through education, financial, communications and transportation systems (Stevenson & Stevenson, 2006). Australia and New Zealand are major exporters to the South Pacific Islands. Consistently present is a convergence in cultures, markets, services and an increase of flows of capital, goods, information and peoples across borders. The interconnectedness and convergence of the world's economies are similarly present in policymaking (Laryea, 2013). Globalisation both threatens and accelerates the process of colonisation. Global, regional and local politics are imbued in the politics and policies of Pacific education. Regionalism is a response to globalisation and is fundamentally concerned with the cultural, historical, commercial, and economic interactions between countries within a geographically specific area (Laryea, 2013). What was once impacted via individual networks and communities is now influenced by regions and nations, particularly as a result of innovations of communication technologies (Smith, et al., 2000).

The complexity of these regional relations is multi-faceted (Hau'ofa, 2008). Throughout the twentieth century, the configuration of economic networks across the Pacific has come to form one linked economy, which shares in one dominant culture that progressively marginalises local subcultures (Crocombe, 2007). Countries in the South Pacific are subsumed by the single economic system that is directed by transnational industrial, commercial and financial interests, supported by governmental organisations (Seidel & Lal, 2010). The narrow view of Australia and New Zealand as benefactors should be contested, as this characterises Pacific Islands nations as both dependent and at the mercy of more economically powerful nations. More recently, the rise

of Chinese investment and aid in national infrastructures is adding further economic and political pressures within the Pacific region (Levine, 2016). The political agendas that Crocombe warned of in 2007 continue to play out in the Pacific today and are entrenched in the international investments and aid that serve as an invitation for wealthier nations to wield power and influence over Pacific Island nations.

Within Pacific Island nations, western ideologies are becoming normalised in societies, in governmental structures and in political and policy processes. Those who are directly or indirectly concerned with the economic activities of the private and public sectors in the South Pacific form social echelons of elite groups (Crocombe, 2001). As part of this ruling class of the South Pacific there is an increasing homogeneity of language (English) including ideologies and material lifestyles. Hau'ofa (2008) problematises the power and access of these elite groups. He states, "These elite groups are locked into to each other through their privileged access to and control of resources moving within the region and between the South Pacific and other regions of the world" (p. 12). The social fabric of Pacific societies (originally collective in nature) is changing as notions of Pacific personhood take up the typical characteristics of a capitalist society which include individualistic economic liberalisation in notions of being. The division of classes and the existence of elitist groups who are privileged in their control of economic resources perpetuate disparity and increase inequality. Hau'ofa (2008) describes the inequality of a single dominant culture in the Pacific. He states, "The privileged classes share a single dominant regional culture; the underprivileged maintain subcultures related to the dominant one through ties of patronage and growing inequality" (p. 13).

The burgeoning global economic push within the Pacific region extends to external investments in Pacific education research. Education research funded by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), for instance UNESCO, is specifically focused on education outcomes to improve Pacific peoples' engagement in the labour market. This aim is premised on the assumption that increased engagement in the labour market will lead to improved, fulfilling, prosperous standards of living for Pacific peoples (UNESCO, 2015a). UNESCO's (2015a) regional education initiatives are

postulated on universal notions of quality education; however, the organisation also espouses the importance of engaging traditional values, knowledge, skills and practices of culture to support sustainable development in the Pacific. The disjuncture between Pacific local Indigenous ontologies of knowledge and the universalised notions of quality education are yet to be taken into account within UNESCOs (2015) strategic aims.

## Pacific Ocean: Labels that impact research

Pasifika leaders, teachers and researchers require assiduous navigational skills as the tumultuous and changeable 'waters' of education milieu constantly shift political and social directions. The tides of the Pacific Ocean that advance towards and recede from the shoals of New Zealand in contrast to the Pacific reefs bring other encounters that require emerging, shifting and more fluid research approaches; approaches that challenge both hegemonic and fixed cultural constructions of methodological engagement within Pasifika education research. Pasifika education research requires ethical considerations of the inter-relational space, acquired skills and specialised cultural knowledges constituted within Pacific Indigenous epistemologies (see chapters three and five).

Pacific education researchers and scholars over the last two decades have attempted to dismantle the colonial constraints, critiquing education discourse that continues to marginalise Indigenous knowledge (Meyer, 2014; Si'ilata, 2014; Smith, 2012; Thaman, 2003). For Pasifika education research, exploration of new identity formations in relation to place and ontology as transnational communities reveal new cultural relations that give rise to opportunities for reconceptualising Pacific personhood (Matapo, 2021). For instance, the concept of 'Pasifika' is symbolic of the ties of Pacific Island peoples to New Zealand. The term 'Pasifika' recognises connections between Pacific people's ancestral lands in the Pacific and their 'home' in New Zealand (Matapo, 2017).

**Musumusu**

As a Samoan/Pasifika researcher, I am conscientious of the multiple complexities to be traversed in a re-imagining research as encounter(s); fluid and changing yet grounded in the personal, cultural and professional discourses that infuse my reality.

One contemporary depiction of the Pacific follows the trajectory of nineteenth century representation which still remains: the Pacific as a romantic and 'untouched' paradisiacal space (Hau'ofa, 2008). This misrepresentation of the Pacific has been used to commercialise an 'Island' experience where the spaces in the Pacific are seen as tranquil and the peoples are docile and submissive (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). Cultural practices and traditions, reduced to entertainment for the pleasure of visitors, often are disconnected from the epistemologies of these arts practices. This sort of commercialised experience of cultural practices and traditions and the commodification of cultural arts experiences is another kind of cultural oppression. Arguably, "The commercial representation conceals the painful stories and suffering and the lost stories of oppression under colonial rule and profiling" (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017, p. 9).

Smith, Burk and Ward, (2000) also warn of the implications and threats to the cultural survival of cultural practices exacerbated by globalisation:

> […] for many non-Indigenous peoples, globalisation is merely a means of opening up new markets in finding new ways of selling Indigenous culture. For some it provides access to a smorgasbord of cultural practices that are seen as public property to be borrowed at will. Certainly, globalisation makes Indigenous cultures available to a wider audience, often without the audience ever having to leave home. It deliberately invites the outsiders in. The result is that Indigenous peoples are having to fight harder on a variety of fronts to ensure their cultural survival to find new means for asserting their rights and autonomy in the face of the new threats posed by globalisation (pp. 2-3).

Another contested term taken up in scholarship since the 1960s is 'Asia-Pacific'. Although there are some historical links in migration (as recorded by anthropologists), the term is politically charged. 'Asia-Pacific' includes Northeast and Southeast Asia, and encapsulates the major powers of countries including the United States, China, Japan, and Australia and, in turn, fuels their economic power in the Pacific region. Asia-Pacific conceptualisations assume that small Islands should be associated with greater land masses and their political and economic powers. The terminology conflates both Asia and the Pacific, as if these two regions have the same issues,

cultures, politics and interests. This Asia-Pacific merger, in fact, makes the unique cultures and values of Pacific peoples less visible and raises the prospect of further marginalisation and colonial subjugation. Vaai & Nabobo-Baba (2017) warn, "If we are to concentrate attention on the aggression of colonialism and neo-colonialism, then we need to respect the distinctiveness of each region by providing each the space to address the legacies of these injustices" (pp. 8-9). Consequently, the political and education implications of the use of the term Asia-Pacific must be addressed.

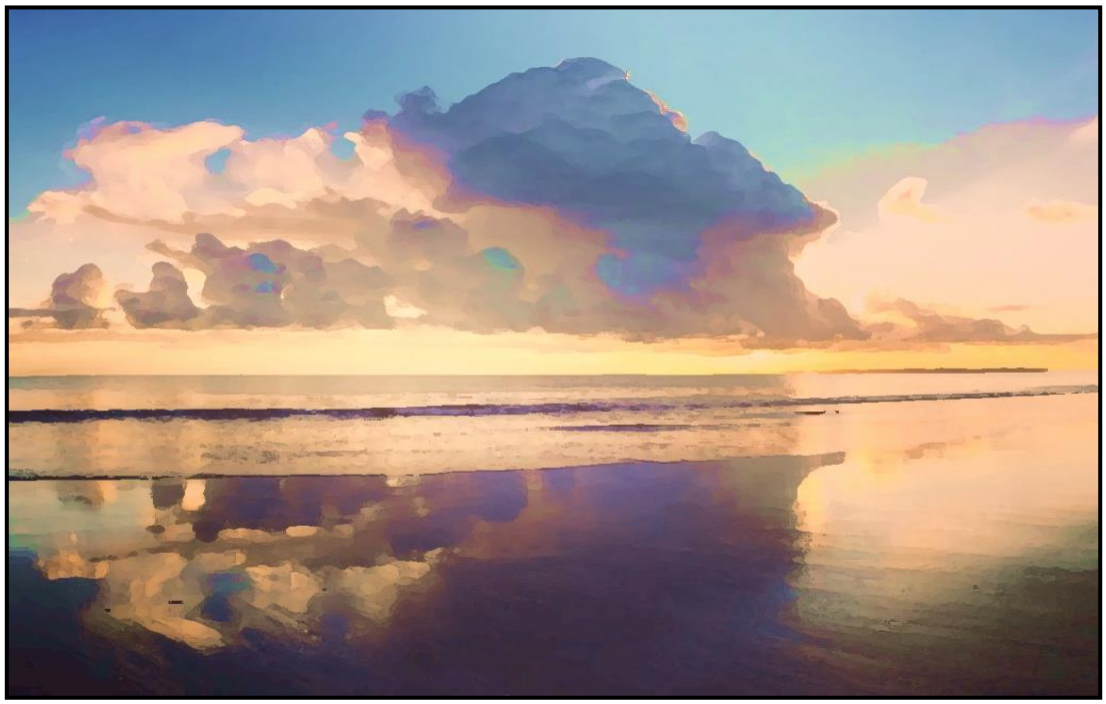

***Figure 4*. Charting the waters.** The depths of the Pacific Ocean to the shoals of Aotearoa. Jacoba Matapo, (2018). Digital Image.

## Pacific navigation histories: Already globalised

The way in which both human and non-human knowledge is collectively constituted is at the very core of Pacific ontology and epistemology. Globalisation in the Pacific is not new and is deeply embedded in the histories of Pacific culture (Crosby, 1986). Pacific oceanic navigators, for example, crossed vast distances to trade, populate new lands and generate new understandings through social and cultural exchange. Pacific Indigenous conceptualisations of Moana (Pacific Ocean) as home extended the sense of belonging and identity among Pacific peoples to include both lands and waters (Hau'ofa, 2008). It is through specific cultural knowledge of the cosmos

among Pacific peoples that the virtuosity of navigation and voyaging enabled the discovery of new horizons (Arnold, 2019). Dunford and Ridgell (1995) describe the precise skills and knowledges of Pacific Indigenous navigators as 'extraordinary'. Before European explorers arrived, Pacific navigators had found every inhabitable island within the Pacific, which spans at least a quarter of the globe (Lewis, 1994). Pacific Ocean navigators used the earth, wind, fluctuations, rhythm, tides, sea currents, sun, moon, stars, clouds, birds to locate and situate paths into the known and unknown. The Pacific body of knowledge of navigation was not conceived in isolation, but rather intertwined intergenerational knowledges of history, ocean, and cosmos (Arnold, 2019). The ability of Pacific peoples to successfully navigate with such accuracy and skill continues to inspire scholars today (Lewis, 1994).

## Transnational Indigenous: Reconceptualising 'Pasifika'

This section highlights the transnational relationships of Pasifika peoples and the ways in which hybrid and fluid forms of cultural identity and cultural representations flow within and across territories, in the context of Pacific Islands peoples migration to New Zealand. This section also argues for a transnational conceptualisation of 'Pasifika' to affirm the agentic capacities of collective decision making. Collective agency is expressed through the ongoing responsibilities shared by Pasifika peoples living in New Zealand. Pasifika as 'transnational Indigenous' peoples, takes into account the relational ties to Pacific Island homelands, knowledges, histories and community. Transnational indigeneity is not only concerned with physical connections and spatial movements, it includes the multiplicity of 'multilocal identities and memories' (Fox, 2012, para. 6).

A transnational view of history is wide-ranging. It seeks to move beyond concepts of the nation state and is critical of the nationalist approaches of the past (Fox, 2012). For Indigenous scholars, the idea of a transnational critique pushes back at the centrality of the modern nation-state or national boundaries which excludes the telling of Indigenous histories through Indigenous people's knowledge systems. Fox (2012) cautions, however, about the potential danger of transnational history-writing, in that it may still "[…] perpetuate the marginalisation of

Indigenous voices and stories that took place for long" (para. 8). By grounding Indigenous knowledge at the centre of historical scholarship, transnational approaches of Indigenous scholarship resist the denial of rights (from colonisation and dispossession), to connect people with place and place to people (Fox, 2012).

Across various Pasifika research studies within New Zealand, the concept of diaspora is widely used to describe the mobility of cultural knowledge and migratory networks amongst Pasifika peoples within New Zealand (Mila-Schaaf, 2010; Papoutsaki & Strickland, 2009). However, when considering the migration histories of Pacific Islands peoples to New Zealand, it is critical to emphasise the agentic nature of their collective decisions. 'Diaspora' as a term entails a very different ethos to 'migration' and includes variables such as forced exile of minority groups, forced migration through colonial regimes, or environmental displacement (Bruneau, 2010) which may not be relevant to the migrant histories of Pasifika peoples within New Zealand. Another political definition for 'diaspora', clearly relating to the history of Israel, refers to the way in which populations are scattered prior to the establishment of their nation-state (Bruneau, 2010).

Unlike 'diaspora', the concept of transnational communities includes the sharing of political and cultural interests and is economically oriented. Within transnational communities there are continual circulating networks between both home and host country thus mobilising transnational spaces, interactions, traditions and belonging (Bruneau, 2010). In this regard, transnational Indigeneity takes on complex relations, often hybrid, fluid identities within the socio-cultural milieu. For Pasifika peoples, these are critical spaces and relations from which to mobilise Indigenous onto-epistemologies from a place that is not their ancestral land.

The position of *tangata whenua*[6] is essential to Pasifika peoples in honouring Māori and *tauiwi*[7] partnership. Although Māori and Pasifika peoples share genealogical ties and an affinity with Moana Nui a Kiwa[8], Māori are the Indigenous peoples of New Zealand, which is now home to many Pasifika people. This unique relationship between Māori and Pasifika peoples which goes beyond colonial migratory histories, can be seen and heard in epistemological ties through creation stories, chants and cosmogony (see chapters four and five).

Transnational Indigeneity for Pasifika peoples takes many forms, such as familial and cultural responsibilities, regular visits between Pacific Islands, New Zealand, Australia and the provision of financial aid. It seems for many Pasifika peoples, cultural interactions extend beyond local borders and are intricately tied to an ethic of care within the collective. One example of Samoan transnational duty is the *fa'amatai*[9] system that traverses and transcends the geographical borders of Samoa, demonstrating the cultural affective ties of the fa'amatai system and how this cultural framework binds one to the collective, economically, culturally and socially (Anae et al., 2016).

## Why Indigenous?

Authenticity of Indigeneity seems to be an ongoing tension and upon entering this research study, I grappled with the question:

*How Indigenous does one have to be to be Indigenous?*

Forte (2010) explains the assumptions of Indigeneity from a position reflecting his membership in a dominant culture: "The dominant notion of real indigeneity is that it must be racially unmixed, culturally undiluted, geographically remote, and materially impoverished" (p. 1). This definition is not widely accepted by Indigenous or even non-Indigenous scholars. The scholarship

[6] Tangata whenua – Peoples of the land. Māori peoples are the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand.
[7] Non-Indigenous New Zealanders (peoples who are not Māori).
[8] Great ocean of the Pacific (Māori).
[9] Samoan chiefly system by which Samoan society is constituted

of *Indigeneity* has been associated with cosmopolitanism, which Forte (2010) argues predates European conceptualisations of cosmopolitanism and brings about alternative understandings of Indigenous people as both rooted, yet open to navigating their ways of living, working and thinking through various trajectories of their transcultural and transnational experiences.

I use the term 'Indigenous' cautiously as the practice of labelling anything with a static definition is problematic and contradicts Indigenous practice (Mika, 2017). The historical colonising label of 'Indigenous' has been associated with political and systemic intentions to fix definitions of specific ethnic groups. For Mika (2017) Indigenous peoples refer to those who are descendants of the first people who identify with the land irrespective of whether or not they belong to the majority or minority populations. For many Pacific Island nations (including Samoa and Tonga) Indigenous peoples make up the majority of the population (Thaman, 2014a). Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) used to refer to culture-specific knowledge systems and practice have been developed and accumulated over time. The intergenerational IKS are unique to a specific group or region; the philosophical intersections arise from the nature of commonality or opposition between modes of thought within one culture or between cultures (Mika & Stewart, 2018). The complex philosophical intersections of Indigenous thought that entail relational phenomena present an ongoing challenge for Indigenous peoples. Mika and Stewart (2018) assert that Indigenous knowledges are relationally grounded and co-constituted, and are "not confined to the discourse of 'knowledge' (but includes it)" (p. 745).

## Calling into question the human-subject

This study brings into conversation a reimagining of the human subject to confront tensions in education in general and Pasifika education research in particular. Pacific Indigenous philosophy, considered alongside posthuman theory, challenges the notion of the universalised human subject (the individual, autonomous-self) taken for granted within universalised notions of education success. The conventional European 'human subject' is historically associated with the 'great chain of being' itself anchored in Eurocentric patriarchal social structures and ideology. This particular human subject exists within a western view that places the human subject in a particular

hierarchical order, first being God and subsequently human, sentient beings, plants and then non-living (Braidotti, 2019; Matapo, 2016). This view of the human subject is determined by a specific duality, a transcendental separation between human and God as superior. Given 'God' is generally presented as a white European male, the ties between his superior being and the hierarchy of non-white people are contested by Indigenous scholars (Braidotti, 2019; Mika, 2017; Matapo, 2018).

This duality of separation of human and other presupposes the agentic force human species over 'other-than-human'. How has this image – this 'great chain of being' permeated our very thinking as Pasifika researchers? What does it mean to be human? The human subject in this hierarchical sense prescribes a specific subjectivity, one that is ontologically located within man's capacity to think rationally; this leaves other-than-human estranged from the rational man. Indigenous scholars, for example Meyer (2014), Smith, (2012) and Thaman (1993a), have argued against this dominant position of the human subject, problematising the racialised and gendered 'others' who have yet to become fully human. I recognise the tensions for Indigenous scholars having to validate Indigenous knowledge and other ways of being (human), from the edges of a molar or rigid lines (the line of consistency). These are the conditions of striation (the relation between state apparatus and its territories) and for Indigenous philosophy within the academy means working with and against its mechanisms to open lines and trajectories of difference in knowing and being in world (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

In juxtaposition to the previous explanation of the human subject and the great chain of being, I share an image of my mother's ancestral lands in Siumu, Samoa (my mother's village). This image shows our fanua (Samoan for land and placenta). The Samoan lexicon brings together human and non-human ties to land, thus human is inseparable from land, as land is placenta (life-giving). This concept of fanua is an integral thread that raises questions around subjectivity throughout the thesis.

***Figure 5*. Fa'alogo fanua**. Saaga, Siumu, Upolu. Jacoba Matapo, (2019). Digital Image.

The relationship with land is reciprocal, rupturing the humanist position in the hierarchy of being as presented in conventional western conceptualisations. Historian and interdisciplinary scholar Professor James Clifford (2013) asserts the importance of Indigenous research in negotiating the complexities of Indigenous world views and dominant western epistemologies. The complexities Pasifika education researchers must face is also alluded to in the Pasifika Education research guidelines:

> The role of Pacific research is primarily not only to identify and promote a Pacific world view, which should begin by identifying Pacific values, and the way in which Pacific societies create meaning, structure and construct reality, but complementary to these is the need to also interrogate the assumptions that underpin western structures and institutions that we as Pacific peoples have adopted without much questioning. But in replacing these with Pacific systems, structures and institutions which are appropriate to Pacific contexts, the values which should underpin these uniquely Pacific structures should be clearly identified and understood (Anae et al., 2001, p 7).

Decolonising research requires theoretical engagement in post-colonial paradigms. However, both Spivak (1999) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) are sceptical of the post-colonial movement in scholarship, as the separation of Indigenous and western world views is not always as clear cut as the term 'post-colonial' would suggest. Clifford (2013) suggests there are irreconcilable contradictions when partial perspectives are seen in isolation to the multiplicity that configure historical movements.

He suggests:

> We work among irreconcilable antinomies, entering the paradoxes and tensions of our historical moment with agendas that are positioned and relational, pushing against, while drawing on, partial perspectives. The result is a more realistic, multiscaled, dialogical and unfinished understanding of contemporary sociocultural worlds (Clifford, 2013, p 45).

This leads me to another…

**Musumusu -** whispers of fanua and embodied subjectivity

***Sitting in a hotel room***

*Sitting in a hotel room in the Pacific feeling somewhat artificial to the ways of being and connecting as my forefathers had many years before.*

*The dirt on his feet and the sweat on his brow, working the plantation – my grandfather immersed in the land, his land – not owned but ethically entangled. Fanua – a place where his blood and land are one, co-agentic life flows. I walk this land with a gaze of scepticism, love and yearning.*

*Sitting on the lounger, hearing the rolling waves in the distance and the rhythm of Moana. The slight salted air with its gentle embrace. Feeling synthetic, in a simulated space far from the stories of Moana shared by my mother.*

*Can I think other, in an othered space? Neatly pruned trees, the wildness and weeds taken. The Frangipani I wear, an introduced plant to these Pacific Islands. How has this become a commodified symbol of Pacific beauty?*

*Sitting at my desk engaging in research, what questions do I ask? How can I conjure up the words that affect this writing-assemblage? I pause to reflect on the highly striated conditions that govern my work.*

*Sitting too much, a repetition of movement or lack of? How can I sense and come to understand Indigenous knowledge? …breath and pause…wait…**to live Indigenous knowledge?***

*How can I sense the sweat on my grandfather's brow – as he toiled with the land and the land toiled with him?*

The nature of research in the field of Pasifika education is tied to the philosophies of education and education discourse. The dialectic ethos entrenched in education research permeates Pasifika education research, evident in problem-based approaches to generating research inquiry. While Pasifika education research seeks to understand so-called disparities in Pasifika education, many of the critical-inquiry frameworks used to theorise disparities start from a deficit position. The deficit theorising of Pasifika engagement in education requires alternative modes of inquiry.

Mobilising Pacific Indigenous philosophy and posthuman theory may evoke emerging and dynamic pathways for reconceptualising Pacific Indigenous philosophies in the interplay of relational, material and social ontologies within contemporary perspectives of education. Such approaches also affirm the nomadic potential of Pacific Indigenous philosophy and cultural practice, which are neither static nor closed.

Epeli Hau'ofa in a 1999 interview with Juniper Ellis (2001) warned against the 'trapping' of tradition in times past. He signals the fluidity of culture, mixing, evolving and adapting.

He states:

> We've often put our traditions in cages, and so we try to do what we think our elders, the people in the past, did. And we trap our traditions there. We freeze them. Whereas people in the past really lived very much like people in the present. There were always cultures mixing. Things were fluid, they were not frozen. But we froze them (p. 23).

I follow on from Hau'ofa's interview (cited in Hau'ofa & Juniper, 2001) to think differently about Pacific Indigenous pasts by posing the following questions leading into conversations of decolonising Indigenous scholarship:

- *How can Pacific Indigenous philosophy generate alternative understandings of Pasifika research processes and modes of inquiry?*
- *How does this approach interact with established decolonising movements in scholarship?*

Decolonising movements (particularly in scholarship) argue that the colonial presence be lifted, socially, politically and economically. However, the economic, social, and cultural ties of the Pacific Island nations to Australia's and New Zealand's economy, social and cultural relations are impossible to disentangle. Pacific research, particularly research that is governed by Pacific peoples for Pacific peoples, requires self-determining *mana*[10] and authority over land control understood as the ethical relationship with fanua. Given the changes to individual subjectivity

[10] Mana is the life energy or flow that sustains life (a concept shared across various Pacific Islands nations).

wrought by globalisation, land becomes a landmark for identity. Smith et al. (2000) describe these tensions:

> […] Indigenous people's inherit rights and responsibilities [connect] to particular tracks of land. These rights to land cannot be bought sold or re-invented. They were established in the ancestral past of Indigenous people's around the world and are reiterated in the present through conceptualisations of spirituality. Thus, land is central to the definition of self (p. 2).

Decolonising research calls for radical change in political and social environments too. From a personal decolonising perspective, decolonising involves opening oneself to confront the assumptions on which colonialism is based and internalised. To arrive at the transformation of social and political orders, Indigenous peoples must be active agents sharing common goals which arise from lived experience of colonialism (Smith, 2012). Self-determination as understood in specific and different Indigenous societies is a key feature in the fight against the negative impacts of globalisation upon Indigenous culture, society and knowledge. Decolonising in this regard, includes the self-determination of past, present, and future stewardship of knowledge. It is not only concerned with maintaining Indigenous culture and intellectual property, but also with sustaining Indigenous societies themselves. Therefore, research must make visible the diversity of Indigenous life-ways and concerns regarding Indigenous rights and empowerment. The notion of land in relation to subjectivity is expressed and reconceptualised as a main theme running through the thesis.

# Chapter three: The historical landscape of Pasifika education

## Historical perspectives of Pacific Indigenous education

This chapter introduces Pacific Indigenous education from a historical position focusing on pre-colonial pedagogy, specifically Pacific collective practices in teaching and learning and its relationship to particular Pacific Indigenous Knowledge Systems (PIKS). This chapter also contrasts how pre-colonial to post-colonial Pacific education evolved from context-based institutions that were environmentally and collectively situated within Pacific cultures to formally structured institutions framed by Eurocentric education models.. The significance of positioning the history of Pacific education and the emergence of Pasifika education provides insights into the complexities of Pasifika education research today. The agenda of Pasifika education research continues to seek the advancement of Pasifika peoples throughout all education sectors. This chapter problematises fundamental dualisms that obstruct Pacific Indigenous episteme in education.

Pacific Indigenous education (PIE) in the Pacific before the introduction of formal education by the missionaries, was usually carried out by village elders and exercised in the context of daily village life. Learning in the context of village life facilitated the continuity of society (Baba, 1985). In this regard, Pacific Indigenous paradigms of pedagogy are collective, intergenerational, context-based, relational and embodied. PIE takes many forms depending on the context and ontology of relations constituted within particular Indigenous knowledge systems. Pre-colonial Polynesian society utilised respective knowledge systems of the natural world, spiritual world and social world to configure notions of subjectivity. I refer to Fijian Indigenous peoples' cosmological ecology, specifically the concept of *vanua* (land). Fijian ancestral Gods are inseparable to vanua; they inform the ecological relationship between Fijian peoples in the way they work the land, think about the land and theorise the land (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). Vanua, as an ecological concept encompasses both land and waterscape and the past, present and future genealogical and spiritual relationships with their natural world (Crosby, 1994; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; 2008). PIE in the context of learning ‘vanua’ engages thinking with vanua and thinking

future-past through the weaving of genealogical knowledge through traditional education methods.

Genealogy of a social nature, secures social structures, including social order and the hierarchical processes of intergenerational knowledge-transfer that sustain society. The art of oratory tradition in memorising and reciting one's genealogy concerning particular knowledge systems help to secure a basis of influence, responsibility and power within the collective. For example, in a Samoan context, the fa'amatai is a socio-political system that governs Samoan way of life. Every *matai* title (chiefly title) carries its *gafa* (genealogy) within the *aiga* (extended family). When a Samoan aiga collectively decides the bestowal of a matai title, it secures leadership influence within the aiga and village. The matai's responsibility is to care for the well-being and welfare of the extended family (Anae, 2017). Understanding the collective genealogy of person, place and knowledge systems position cultural epistemologies and relational ontology at the heart of cultural knowledge exchange.

Tied to the embodied expression of genealogy, the art of oratory was highly developed throughout Polynesia. It required the speaker to have in-depth knowledge of travel history and to be well-versed in genealogy to affirm the status of the clan or tribe. Along with oratory practices are arts practices significant to expressing genealogical knowledge, including the role of performative arts (dance, song, chant) and visual arts (printmaking, weaving, carving) (Davidson, 2017). Such practices alongside oratory traditions are exercised within ceremonial and customary protocols and are performed by both women and men (Mara et al., 1994). In pre-colonial Polynesian societies, specific knowledge that sustained life and social order were generally passed down from generation to generation. For some Polynesian societies this remains an integral collective practice. Specific knowledge of Indigenous sciences and technology, such as knowing the right time to fish for a specific species to ensure conservation and balance between local supply and demand, was shared through everyday living (Petaia, 1994).

**Musumusu**

*Fagogo* in Samoan Indigenous education are cultural allegories that carry Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing the natural world. The story *ma'a ta'i fe'e* explains an encounter between an octopus and a rat. The rat was saved from drowning by the octopus, which allowed the rat to ride on his head to shore. When the rat had reached the shore, the rat had left a mess on the octopus' head. This made the octopus angry and, to this day, the octopus still has a gripe against the rat. This fagogo explains the method of fishing for the octopus: the bait is carved into the shape of a rat. The rat's body is made of shell, and sennit fibre is braided as the tail of the rat. The bait is then lowered into the water and, as the fagogo suggests, irritates the octopus to react and engulf it (Petaia, 1994). There is debate amongst Samoan traditional knowledge experts about which came first, whether the fable was invented to explain the fishing technique or whether the story came first, and the technique was developed from it.

Traditionally, processes of learning were usually embedded in family life and included particular roles within the family, in which members also learn and develop an understanding of their role in society. Language and social behaviour learned through daily interactions and exchange amongst family members supported the family as a collective to function within their village community context's social strata and hierarchy (Mara et al., 1994). It is the family's collective responsibility to ensure the passing of intergenerational knowledge such as genealogy, cultural practices and skills, and social obligations. Traditionally, learning was usually through memorisation, careful listening and observation as well as practical application. Through this process, the learner acquired the teacher's expertise and knowledge; it was most often an Elder. Pre-colonial Eastern Polynesian societies had more formal learning institutions, while Western Polynesian societies generally did not have formal learning institutions (Thaman 1993 cited in Mara et al. 1994). There were common patterns of education throughout traditional Polynesian culture and society, including common practices for learning, for instance memorisation, observation and practical application. The mutual dependence between teacher, learner and the environment were pertinent across Polynesian societies.

From a traditional Hawaiian perspective, Malcolm Nāea Chun (2006) explores learning processes situated in Hawaiian ways of being and knowing the world. The relationship between teacher, learner and environment centres the learning process. He explains five fundamental aptitudes to learning new insights and gaining knowledge and mastery of skills. The first is observation, the

second is listening, the third is reflection, fourth is doing, and the fifth is questioning. Observation is vital in island life, the ability to look at the sea, to observe where the schools of fish were located or if there were any at all lead to a great skill and fishing. The ability to deduce and comprehend by putting facts together coming from the mountains (Chun, 2006), being able to read the land and the seas social behaviours; how land and waters relate and co-exist. Listening requires patience and mastery of attentiveness. Learners develop these skills by memorising chants, prayer, and ecologies of the world around them and become able to recount without the aid of written text or material. To describe the aptitude of reflection, Chun (2006) uses the Hawaiian term *pa'a ka waha*, which means to shut one's mouth, suggesting caution be taken when learning, instead of jumping to conclusions. The reflection process generates possibilities for the consideration of many options, bringing together the experiences of both listening and observing (Chun, 2006). Number four is the practical application of doing the task. Doing involves practical application and hands-on creation, through which mistakes are experienced and corrected as part of the learning process. The final aptitude is questioning. It seems that, for many cultures, questioning would come first in the process of learning. From a traditional Hawaiian perspective, questioning follows experience, follows seeing, listening, reflecting and doing, through which most trivial questions may have already been answered, leaving only the most important for the teacher or mentor. The traditional Hawaiian belief is that when one learns and gains mastery of particular knowledge and skills, these treasures are to be shared only with the committed and generous, through relationships grounded in mutual respect and regard (Chun, 2006).

**Musumusu**

Throughout the reading and analysis of texts presented in this section, specific education practices speak to western education philosophy tensions. They are a real concern for me as a Pasifika education researcher and lecturer. I am reminded of the traditional notions of education that Dewey opposed, such as rote learning and memorisation, which were deemed inappropriate for developing critical thinking and habits of inquiry. Dewey argued for context-based learning and social influence within the learning environment to grow and nurture future democratic citizens. His progressive education ideology is grounded in instrumentalism, and yet renders the natural environment as inert.

Mara, Foliaki and Coxon (1994) describe the hierarchy of Pacific knowledge production in pre-colonial times. Indigenous Polynesian and Micronesian cultural knowledge was governed by chiefs ruling over communities in the upper echelons. The rigidities in Indigenous knowledge production were politically constructed within collective processes that provided relatively stable territories and social rank (Keown, 2009). The status for chieftainship depended fundamentally upon inheritance and genealogy to god(s). With this privileged status, chiefs upheld the responsibility for sustaining oratory traditions of knowledge (re)production within society. Keown (2009), explains that "Eastern Polynesian Indigenous knowledge relates to the pantheon of 'departmental' gods with influence over human affairs and nature, while Western Polynesia had fewer Gods and more spirits (many unnamed), who were attached to persons or families rather than particular roles" (p. 14). Tui Atua Tamasese Ta'isi, Samoan cultural knowledge custodian, generates critical dialogue by pointing out 'talamusumusu', the whispers of culture that have brought shame and repression. Tui Atua argues for responsibility in Samoan culture and admits that for Samoan 'Indigenous-ness' to survive even the most tapu or sacred knowledge (old and new) needs to be opened to (re)evaluation and scrutiny (Tui Atua cited in Suaalii-Sauni, Mo'a, Fuamatu, Wendt, Whaitiri, Va'ai & Filipo, 2014).

Tui Atua (2009b) reveals a range of tensions underlying Pacific Indigenous knowledge and problematises Pacific knowledge as difficult to conceptualise. Like the rhizome has multiple trajectories of the rhizome is instead, Pacific Indigenous knowledge is open to a multiplicity of knowledge(s). Tui Atua (2009a; 2009b) and Hau'ofa (1994) both argue for 'discursive dialogue' around the sustaining of 'traditional' forms of Pacific knowledge. They acknowledge that traditional forms of Pacific cultural knowledge are endangered due to the cultural constraints limiting who can access this knowledge. Other literature challenges the notion of traditional Pacific knowledge, identifying that within Pacific knowledge discourse, the idea of truth is problematic and that idea of traditional knowledge as unchanging should be contested (Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009). The very nature of Pacific knowledge as multiplicity is a subjugated knowledge. Pacific knowledge has been disqualified and insufficiently elaborated. Foucault

(1980) suggests subjugation of knowledge refers to forms of knowledge which are "…located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (p. 82). Other ways to think about science that affirm a co-existence with world are expressed in Pacific stories and cosmogony.

> The land and the sea and the shores […] were our science and our sustenance. And they are our universe about which there are stories of great deeds and relationships and magic and imaginings, love and terror, heroes, heroines, villains and fools. Enough for a lifetime of telling (Potiki, cited in Keown, 2009, p 145).

Pre-colonial Pacific philosophical and theological thought is grounded upon its relationality to all things, of difference and of the capacities to affect and be affected, inclusive of 'magic' and 'imaginings' (Keown, 2009). Monotheism directly impacted the Pacific collective constructions of knowledge. A demarcation between religion and the world disrupted epistemologies that affirmed spirituality as immanent in ways of knowing (Hau'ofa, 1994). Immanence in knowledge creation is an openness to generating new images of thought concerning all things. This was replaced by a transcendental epistemology (Christian values and beliefs). Within the literature, there is a blending of Christian values with Pacific ways of being that are discernible. Mara, Foliaki and Coxon (1994) explain this amalgam in Pacific philosophy and theology as an adaptation from one dogma to another. Also, Hau'ofa (1994) mentions the lasting effects of condemnation by the Christian missionaries on Pacific culture and its further implications for Pacific peoples in their perceptions of Pacific traditions and histories. For many Pacific societies, people continue to divide their histories in two; the era of darkness associated with savagery and the era of light and civilisation led by Christianity (Hau'ofa, 1994).

Before European colonisation, Indigenous knowledge in the Pacific played a particular role in maintaining order in society. The knowledge of genealogy, for example, serves a purpose in hierarchical structures where one's ability to justify their position as high chief depended on

positioning oneself as a descendant from *Atua*[11]. Concerning Polynesian hierarchy, the order of society is based on one's ability or justification of one's position as a high chief in relation to descent from Atua (Mara et al., 1994). The arts practices were also significant in expressing genealogical knowledge, for instance through dance, chant, song and poetry. In Polynesian societies, specific knowledge of crafts, building, navigation and healing were contained within an occupational social class. Knowledge within all social levels, were generally passed down from generation to generation in the family (Keown, 2009).

Indigenous pedagogy is embedded in ways of knowing and being within one's position in society. Thus, content taught generates lived expression from ceremonial practices to daily living as a collective (with peoples, places, earth, waters). Knowledge systems that are intergenerational present opportunities for the sustaining of familial modalities of expression in arts, weaving, printing, making. The process of learning is integral to family life, which includes learning experiences within the aiga. By learning their position within the family, a person develops an understanding of their role in society (Mara et al., 1994). Social behaviour and language are developed to support relationships between different hierarchies of society (Burnett, 2008). Learning appropriate social behaviours and language is a central focus for teaching, particularly in the extended family. Failure to learn appropriate behaviour or genealogical knowledge and connection to ancestors, is perceived as dishonourable to one's family and extended family (Mara et al., 1994). Ranking in chiefly titles and class provide access to specialist knowledge.

Hau'ofa in a 1999 interview, warns against static notions of culture that privilege a position of power:

> Well, there are many reasons for freezing cultures in our past. Look at it from the political point of view: people try to bolster their position in power by not changing the ideologies underpinning chieftainship and things like that, so they freeze culture. There's also a misapprehension that to preserve our traditions, we must do exactly what our ancestors did (Hau'ofa & Juniper, 2001, p 22).

[11] Atua are the gods and spirits of the Polynesian peoples such as the Māori or the Hawaiians. The Polynesian word has multiple meanings such as "power" or "strength". Today, it is also used to refer to the monotheistic conception of God.

## The introduction of western formal education to the Pacific

The introduction of formal education within the Pacific was tied to the European agenda of colonisation. As European Pacific explorers shared literature of Pacific Island discoveries throughout Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century, evangelical Christians sought to convert Pacific Indigenous peoples as part of their mission. It was believed that Indigenous knowledge and belief systems and cultural practices were heathenistic and uncivilised, and it was the God-ordained duty of the missionaries to save them (Aiavā, 2017). In 1796, the London Society Protestant interdenominational body sent a missionary ship to the Pacific Islands of Tonga, Tahiti and the Marquesas with a clear objective: to convert Pacific Indigenous peoples to Christianity (Lātūkefu, 1974). The relationship between Christianity and the European 'Age of Discovery' was deeply entrenched in the view that Christian ethics and beliefs were morally superior. Consequently, people who did not fit into this category were considered uncivilised (Bellwood, 1978), and "[…] the establishment of schools was therefore of major significance to the missionaries in achieving their objectives of Christianising and civilising the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific" (Mara et al., 1994, p. 187). Historically, European humanism developed into a 'civilisation' model, imbued by the universalising powers of reflexive reason as a sign of rational human progress (Braidotti, 2013).

Cresantia Koya (2010) expresses the tensions and misrepresentation of 'names' used to characterise Pacific peoples in the Pacific. She deliberately calls into question the colonial human subject position that positioned Pacific Indigenous peoples and inferior:

> **Name Calling**
> Cresantia, F. Koya (2010, p. 28).
>
> We have been called ignorant as if our lives could not have meaning if we were clothed in bark
> As if the walk of sea and land meant nothing
> As if speaking to spirits was a waste of time
> As if we were stupid
>
> We have been called poor as if money is a measure of wealth
> As if we needed someone else to define us
> As if we did not have all that we wanted

> As if we didn't know any better
>
> We have been called black as if the brown of our skin somehow mirrored the colour of our souls
> As if we needed to be told how to live in balance
> As if the sacred space of love and relationship was empty
> As if we did not understand the notion of universe
>
> We have been called heathen as if our expression of God was invalid
> As if somehow a new story of origin could wipe away our past
> As if we thought the world happened as an accident of chance
> As if changing the names and stories would us 'human'
> As if your way was better.

The introduction of European humanist ideals, included the technologies of warfare. Pacific peoples access to European weapons perpetuated a change in the Eurocentric perceptions of Pacific peoples (particularly Polynesian peoples) as 'noble savages'. As Pacific Indigenous peoples fought for their sovereignty against the Europeans, the old respect for Polynesian culture held by the European explorers and scientists diminished (Bellwood, 1978). By the early 1800s, missionaries were rapidly spreading throughout the Pacific region, converting Indigenous peoples who were considered unenlightened. The missionaries understood and manipulated the internal conflicts that were occurring in the Pacific and sought the conversion, protection and patronage of certain chiefs. Polynesians perceived the new technologies of the Europeans, such as iron goods, medicines and guns as superior. The Europeans' relationship with God was associated with the 'superiority' of white man's technology (Campbell cited in Mara et al., 1994).

In his account and critique of Pacific history and the influence of the missionaries in Polynesia, Bellwood (1978) argues that the missionary influence should not be blamed for the destruction of Polynesian society:

> Although it is now rather fashionable to blame missionaries for the almost total destruction of Polynesian society, I would say in their favour that they did preserve many things, particularly land, in the hands of the Polynesians themselves. Regarded in hindsight, the bans on singing and dancing and the enforced wearing of European-style clothing are really rather trivial. For if the commercial enterprises of the Victorian era had had their way, there could well be nothing left of Polynesia at all (p. 15).

The argument presented trivialises and Indigenous epistemology, especially the performative and collective cultural practices that are essential for many Polynesian societies to know and relate to their natural environment.

## Language and literacy

The missionaries tasked themselves with bringing the word of God to Pacific peoples; this meant that people needed to have direct access to the word of God. Missionaries developed written forms of the Indigenous languages with the purpose of interpreting the Bible for the use of Pacific peoples. The missionary's task was to bring souls to God, and teaching reading skills was a way to achieve this. The opportunities to learn to read and write that arose from the missionaries were willingly received by Pacific peoples (Hingano cited in Mara et al., 1994). The appeal for many Pacific peoples of learning literacy was to gain access to the European's technical and commercial knowledge. The initial translation of biblical texts into Pacific languages was to assist Christian instruction through literacy learning, rather than to support the survival of Indigenous languages (Lay, Murrow & Meleisea, 2000). Macpherson and Macpherson (2014) remind us that: "Throughout human history, 'language loss', for instance, has influenced the status of societies' Indigenous knowledges. When some societies began to dominate others, they routinely imposed their own languages on those whom they dominated" (p. 170).

*Without language*

I hear the elders speak sometimes
The rhythm of the words
The beating drum of being
My language moves me
Tone differentiating meaning
Gestures speaking
Bodied expressions
Thinking in more than one language
Fluid in becoming
My language carries me
From one language to another
More than textualised formations

Without language
Without the collective,
People and place.
Without ancestral connection
Who will understand our being?

Poem by author, Jacoba Matapo (2020)

The establishment of Christian schools within Pacific societies was often initiated first in the homes of missionaries, later within church buildings, and then in separate school buildings (Mara et al., 1994). The physical location of education within Polynesian societies was decentred, the site for learning shifted away from the village. Early European teaching and learning practices applied through the missionaries followed Eurocentric ideals of education and reflected the ontological divide of culture over nature (human and non-human).

The ontological divide permeates through formal education curricula and delivery modes as it positions a hierarchical valuation of western culture over nature. The implications for introducing formal education go against the grain of Pacific Indigenous subjectivity because of the humanist bias in education. The modernist, humanist assumptions of formal western education struggled to accept the principles of Pacific Indigenous subjectivity. The learner's subjectivity, the relationality of pedagogy constituted through intergenerational knowledge exchange and local Indigenous knowledge systems of the natural environment were not part of the agenda in formal western Eurocentric education.

## Christian moral regimes and dualisms

The ministry of the missionaries in Pacific Islands education was structured around the inculcation of Christian morals and values. European moral theory enmeshed with Christian ideology informed a framework for teaching and learning, a religious ministering moral code of conduct. The intent for teaching and learning was premised on the belief that all people could be saved from a fallen state (darkness). Through Christianity's teachings, Indigenous peoples would be led to conversion (Ernst & Anisi, 2016; Morris, 2005). Through Christian transcendentalism, and teleological morals, a new ontology of ‘being’ was introduced across the Pacific region. Pacific Indigenous cosmogonies of creation that relied on multiple Gods of the natural, spiritual and social worlds (human and non-human) became one of monotheism (one God). Pacific cosmogonies are distinctive to each Pacific Island and are genealogically bound to people and location. Pacific creation stories traverse epistemology, knowledge of creation and the genesis of

man with the natural world (Matapo, 2018). Pacific cosmogonies express ontological commitments for Pacific Indigenous peoples and are an impetus for thinking collective 'being' that ties Pacific people's inter-subjectivity as co-existent and co-evolutionary with world.

Through a western cultural perspective, spirituality has been understood mostly as disembodiment from and transcendence of this world. Theologian Marcus Borg (1997) has called this model "monarchical", a view which positions God as distant. He contrasts this position with spirit models in which God is immanent. The monarchical tradition that separates God from man essentially grounds the idea of souls as disembodied and not of this world, therefore the soul only inhabits bodies during 'earthly sojourn' (Borg, 1997). The ultimate purpose of life is to dwell with God in a heavenly state that is not an earthly state, tied to mortal disembodiment of the body and soul. Christians must act morally toward others and be good stewards of the earth, because that is what God commands for their salvation in order to unite with God in another realm outside of this earthly world. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) elaborate on the Christian monarchical model, suggesting that:

> Christians are supposed to live a holy life focused on transcending all the things of this world-bodily desire, material possessions, fame, worldly success, and long life. This disembodied, otherworldly conception of spirituality and transcendence downplays one's relation to the world, the natural environment, and all other aspects of embodied existence […] Thus that form of Christianity ties morality, and the reason to be moral, to the disembodiment of mind and soul (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 564).

The denigration of Pacific Indigenous Gods through Christianity and the increasing political presence of European and American ascendancies within the region functioned to immobilise local Indigenous knowledge systems (Helu, 1994). The decentring of Pacific Indigenous cosmogonies in Pacific subjectivity through systemic regimes of colonisation and Christianity facilitated the presentation of a different metaphysics of life, man's nature (European Humanism), the culture/nature divide, and the object/subject divide in knowledge generation. After the establishment of missionary schools, formal education in the Pacific had a teleological moral grounding and privileged humanistic centred ideology. Pacific Indigenous pedagogies, albeit in limited form, continue to operate in co-agentic relationships with the natural world. For instance,

in the ceremonies of Samoa, both the umbilical cord and the deceased body return to fanua (the land) from whence it came. In this way, these practices '*fa'amau le fanua*[12]', securing place and relational space for generations to come.

***Figure 6.*** **Fa'alogo fanua.** Saaga, Siumu, Upolu. Jacoba Matapo, (18 October 2019). Digital Image.

**Musumusu**

This image (Figure 6) shows a location that my mother has not visited for more than 50 years. When we visited Samoa, she was not able to walk the distance to her father's land. She and her father tilled this land and planted the entire section with coconut trees. Using my phone and a video chat app, I was able to simultaneously stand on and show her the land she had missed since migrating to New Zealand in the early 70s. As the camera provides her a window to the land, she tells the story of the land, the features of the land and plant life. As I watch her through my phone, she indicates a specific location, and with words, I had never before heard her say, tells me "That's where I will be buried. *Fa'a mau le fanua mātou aiga*" – (Samoan - securing the land for our family *past, present, future*).

Theories of the culture/nature divide grounded upon dualisms are prevalent in the western canon of education and present nature as something to be tamed. The properties of nature are not humanistic; therefore, they do not have the same agentic capacity. It seems that Christianity is

[12] Fa'amau le fanua mātou aiga: Samoan phrase – To securely bind the land (securing the land) to our family.

complicit with capitalism and the exploitation of the natural world as the bible refers to 'man' having dominion over fish and fowl, thus rendering nature as a standing reserve for man and therefore available for exploitation. Earth or nature in education discourse continues to present this position of 'world' as an object for the benefit and use of man, where the exploitation of natural energies is fundamental to modern technologies (Heidegger, 1977). It is from this position of 'lack' that nature is presented as inert. The instrumental rationality of science produced factions between nature and the human-subject and at the time of modernity was a critical feature of social domination.

## Curriculum and the nature of knowledge

The following section critiques the Eurocentric curriculum and the tensions this imposed upon Pacific Indigenous peoples, notably how the curriculum presented a different understanding of the world as something to be exploited.

Christian morals and values engender explicit gender roles; the order of family structures and social order are based upon the Christian patriarchal structures entrenched in European society. From a Samoan perspective, Tupuola (2014) is critical of sexuality through a Christian moral gaze. She argues that Christian moral separation of gender and sexuality positioned Samoan cultural ontologies of sexuality as evil (Tupuola, 2014). From a New Zealand perspective (although relevant across the Pacific in the introduction of European models of education), the Eurocentric male patriarchy and relationship towards women and children were implicit through missionary education (Pihama, 2018). Boys in the mission schools were taught specific carpentry skills, which focused on training them to build European designed homes. The very structure of these homes brought in further implications for Pacific lifestyles as rooms were separated, designed to cater to the nuclear and gendered family structure. While the boys were taught carpentry, the girls were taught sewing, cleaning, cooking: the standard roles of European women. Missionary education taught the roles of the nuclear family, to the exclusion of the Polynesian collective ideals of extended family roles (Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2018). Alongside the changes introduced into Pacific concepts and applications of family structures, the concept of private

property ownership was also introduced. These conflicting ideals continue to challenge Pacific peoples today.

The missionary schools presented knowledge that was considered to be necessary at the time. Pacific Indigenous peoples of this period were vulnerable to the undervaluing of Indigenous skills and knowledge; this was partly because of the generally held belief in the Pacific Islands that European technologies were more advanced than their own. So too were their religious beliefs (Crocombe, 2001). The social fabric that was to Polynesian peoples before European contact, such as social structures and hierarchical responsibilities of the family in a tribe and village, was not taught in schools. The central focus of the missionary school curriculum was biblical history. Polynesian cultural experts such as artists, traditional healers, and choreographers once valued by chiefly society began to lose their status (Mara et al., 1994). The schools and curriculum did not include traditional Indigenous knowledge of the Polynesian peoples before European contact, which caused further implications to sustaining traditional knowledge (Mara et al., 1994; Pihama, 2018). Christian ideals taught that men were created in the image of God and that salvation provides access to everlasting life on the condition of obedience to God's commands (Morris, 2005). The earthly embodied corporeal experience of man determines the outcomes of another realm. This transcendental separation between man and God contradicted many Polynesian traditional knowledge systems and ontologies. The individual view of personal salvation, an essential feature of Christian salvation and the growth of the individual subject, overrides the collective ontological position and purpose (Morris, 1972).

The contrast between transcendental Christian metaphysics and Pacific Indigenous metaphysics extends to morals, as in Christianity, life choices to be a good person or live a good life are determinants of teleological outcomes: choices are made to gain rewards in an afterlife (Morris, 2005). Again, the separation of afterlife and life is not so clearly demarcated in Pacific Indigenous cultures, and ancestors breathe and continue to live amongst Pacific Indigenous peoples. In Protestant thought, unlike in Catholicism, the notions of individual economic success are tied to the subjectivity of 'special selection' whereby individuals are chosen to be elite and that an

individuals' financial success is a sign of being chosen by God. Seventeenth-century Calvinists believed that only a limited number of chosen people were able to access heaven, thus generating further division amongst peoples based upon their favour in the view of God (Morris, 2005). How does a researcher think differently about morals that are not teleologically tied to 'good' behaviour? One might think 'ethics' as an event – that actions of selflessness, love, care, respect are made and remade through co-agentic encounters with world.

> **Musumusu:**
> What is a 'good' life, and for what purpose?
>
> Of course, these questions are not new. Philosophers have asked these questions for thousands of years, from the days of Classical antiquity, pre-Socratic philosophy, and medieval philosophy through to modernity and postmodernity. As an Indigenous scholar, I have always wondered about the ancient unwritten Indigenous Pacific philosophers who exercised a very different way of relating, creating and living philosophy. I wonder how one might live to embrace an Indigenous Pacific philosophical tradition. What would be its purpose? Can such a way of thinking be reconciled with the domination of the western canon in philosophy? Should it be reconciled? Thinking about the fundamental tenets of the human condition (Eurocentric Humanism / Anthropocentrism), it seems to me that many post-modernists, post-structuralists and post-humanists continue to work with philosophy to disturb the presupposed conditions of Humanist ontologies. How does the current work of postcolonial and posthuman philosophy generate new convergences in ontologies of knowing? How do we (as scholars in the academy) take the cosmogonies of Pacific Indigenous peoples seriously to generate, locate, co-create new insights into the proposed questions?
>
> What is a 'good' life, and for what purpose?

## An Indigenous science perspective

The following section brings attention to the contrasting positions of the value of Samoan scientific knowledge grounded within the collective against the grain of knowledge present within capitalism – the exploitation of the earth, resources and people.

Samoan scholar Nuufou Petaia (1994) notes particular tensions between Samoan cultural science education and the institutionalised science education promoted throughout Samoan education curricula. Key aspects mentioned are how western science epistemology dominates curricula, not only in terms of the delivery of science curricula in the English language but also regarding the precedence given within institutions to privilege science research conducted elsewhere. Petaia

(1994) explains that the language of instruction must be taken seriously to engage and revitalise traditional Samoan science knowledge systems.

> The modern age generally denies that traditional science has value, hence status. Traditional knowledge is lost in the glamour of the modern. Looks predominate, not value. The search for knowledge seems to be in libraries, in books, from the work of previous academics, when in actual fact, the science is in the village people, in the environment, in the stories of the wise and old around a kerosene lamp, in the ramblings of the witchdoctor in the village and in the incoherence of the village dumb, blind and deaf (p. 185-186).

Another notable aspect of Samoan traditional science knowledge exchange is the hesitation of those village experts to impart their knowledge to others. Traditional experts who possess knowledge may guard certain skills, so that the mana or source of the knowledge belongs only to their family (Petaia, 1994). This a common practice in Samoa, where it is perceived that the expert knowledge is more valuable if hidden rather than shared (Petaia, 1994). This specialised knowledge tends to not be seen as innovative or able to play a role in Samoa's national development (Petaia, 1994). Within the discipline of science in the academy, Petaia (1994) argues that the modern ways of studying science have institutionalised science knowledge and practices and that Samoan traditional institutions tend to be ignored.

From a Hawaiian perspective, Hawaiian scholar, Meyer (2017) reminds us that there is a false duality between science and culture. For instance, she explains that Hawaiians have long been scientists in their study of the cosmos, of lands and ocean. She is critical of the humanistic constraints capitalism places on Hawaiian Indigenous peoples, and the loss of Indigenous knowing constituted with the mana of land.

She states:

> We are digging up priceless agricultural lands to develop malls and fast food chains. This is amplifying and heating up – this idea that capitalism and its free market fundamentalism, the economic literacy of our times, is the way forward. For Island peoples, this is coming to head as our health, education and creativity also remain imported. Our lands, ocean and waterways are polluted and we are not thinking clearly. We did not trust in the mana of our own lands and the pono of our own knowing (p. 127).

The undervaluing of Indigenous science knowledges within the academy inhibits opportunities for a radical 'rethinking' of ecological sustainability through Pacific Indigenous philosophy. For instance, Pacific Indigenous cosmogonies tell us that the earth has its own life-force and agency, thus sustainability of the earth is not only important because of human life. The rationale for ecological sustainability is decentred as humanistic through this frame of reference (Matapo, 2021).

## The significance of the arts practices in Pacific Indigenous education

The role of arts practice in the Pacific Islands, whereby cultural expressions define social identity, Indigenous epistemologies and relationship to world and cosmos, has been fundamental in structuring Pacific Indigenous societies (Wagner, et al., 2003). Arts practices conserve Indigenous knowledge in embodied storying that provide continuity from generation to generation. Arts practice takes many forms and, traditionally, were revered for the deep cultural significance they held. Arts practices were also pedagogical, teaching and reinforcing Pacific Indigenous knowledge systems through contextual and relational interactions. Wagner et al. (2003) suggest that cultural arts practices within the Pacific region must be revived to sustain Indigenous knowledges. The arts heritage of the Pacific peoples includes a rich tapestry of song, dance, visual arts, artefacts, performance and oral history. The impact of globalisation on traditional arts practices has eroded and continues to diminish art forms through commodification of performance, artefacts, experience for the tourism trade (Wagner, et al., 2003). Resisting the valorising of Pacific arts practices, Hau'ofa (2000) states: "We are not interested in imitating [western art] and asking our artists to perform dances for tourists. It is time to create things for ourselves, create and establish standards of excellence which match those of our ancestors." (cited in Wagner et al., 2003, p 11). In early interactions between European and Pacific Island peoples, the body, particularly the woman's body, was seen, interpreted and represented by Europeans through a Eurocentric gaze. Dances that carried rich cultural epistemologies were first sexualised and later valorised in the interest of tourism.

The Pacific-female-body assemblage depicted through dance had acquired a different ontology.

*Dances me*

I danced
In the depth
Of your breath

The heat
Danced on my breast
and my hips

The dance-
Dances me

The flows
Danced in the wind
Beckoning waves

The current
Danced on my legs
And toes

The dance-
Dances me

I dance
In the depth
Of your flower

The vibrant
Fragrant dancing
Through my fingers

The dance-
Dances me

Poem by author Jacoba Matapo (2020)

## Indigenous Māori education and post-colonial education in New Zealand

The following section introduces connexions between Māori Indigenous education in New Zealand and Pacific Indigenous pedagogies presented in previous sections. This section is not to be read as an extensive account of Indigenous Māori education; instead, I invite you the reader to traverse the relationality of collective Pacific Indigenous subjectivity.

Māori are Pacific peoples, Indigenous to Aotearoa, the southernmost part of the Pacific. Maori share an ancestry and affinity with Pacific histories and culture (Kēpa & Manu'atu, 2011). Like

many Indigenous Polynesian societies before European contact, education for Māori was practised within a relational context, and the processes of learning were grounded within the collective (Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2018). Learning as a holistic practice was distinct in purpose and associated with the content and context of particular knowledge systems and reflected Māori conceptualisations of personhood (Pihama, 2018). Traditional Māori society had specific rituals and knowledge transfer associated with social standing and the survival of the *whānau* (family), *hapu* (sub-tribe) and *iwi* (tribe). The main form of social control was *tapu* (religious restrictions), and the education process demonstrated respect for tapu and knowledges of its operation (Calman, 2012). In the oral culture of Māori, *waiata* (songs), *whakatauki* (proverbs), *korero tawhito* (history), *pūrākau* (stories) and *whakapapa* (genealogy) were essential educative tools for teaching and learning to ensure the intergenerational transmission of tribal knowledge, values and behaviour (Calman, 2012). The early education of Māori children as a collective practice included learning within the whānau, hapu and iwi, where children contributed to daily tasks and decision-making (Rau & Ritchie, 2011). Learning began in the mother's womb, where *oriori* (traditional waiata related to genealogy) were shared with unborn children (Calman, 2012). As Reedy (2013) has suggested "The child was, and still is, the incarnation of the ancestors […] the living link with yesterday […] the binding rope that ties people together […] and the embodiment of the aspirations of tomorrow" (p 40). The Māori child as mokopuna (an image of ancestors, in body, mind and spirit) is inclusive of spiritual dimensions, genealogy and geographical ties as well as material relations (Matapo & Roder, 2017; Rau & Ritchie, 2011).

*Weaving Te Whāriki*
My hands grasping flax, harakeke
The movement of weaving, present-past a folding of time and space,
Our hands, sensing threads our bodies knowing
A child, mokopuna a reflection of tīpuna in body, mind and spirit
And the fibres of flax, entangled with forces and flows, histories and life
How do we weave present-past and future, a Whāriki for wisdom, for a people yet to come?
(Matapo, 2017)

***Figure 7*. Weaving *Te Whariki.*** Matapo weaving with Pasifika early childhood education student teachers at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland. (November, 2018). Digital Photograph.

Missionaries, led by Thomas Kendall of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, introduced western education in New Zealand in the Bay of Islands in 1816, as part of the establishment of a new British colony (Simon, Smith & Cram, 2001). Their early vision for education was to assimilate Māori into the new colony as a form of social control; education would reflect the dominant social traits of Britain (Mackey, 1967). The 1847 Native Schools Act provided vocational training for Māori and was founded upon British industrial models of education. British believed such industrial models of education were more conducive to the economic productivity and the citizenship ideals of a new society (Simon et al. 2001). As a consequence, Māori knowledge systems of learning were dismissed. The 1877 Education Act for schools supported the continuation of emphasis on the basics of the three R's and kept some alignment with the industrial models of education. The history of progressive education in New Zealand is linked to political, social and economic changes; these were the great depression of the 1930s and the New Education Fellowship (NEF) conference of 1937 (Mutch, 2013). Progressive education approaches were promoted through the NEF conference and it aimed to provide the New Zealand teaching profession and the public, opportunities to challenge traditional pedagogy and

curriculum methods. While the NEF conference brought to light the need for reform in public education, the first kindergarten (1889) in New Zealand had already demonstrated strong evidence of child-centred approaches, informed by egalitarian and liberal progressive philosophy (Mutch, 2013). Critical philosophers that influenced the acceptance of early progressive ideals in ECE in New Zealand include Locke, Rousseau and Froebel, all of whom advocated for experience-based learning. This early history of holistic and child-centred approaches left a legacy in New Zealand early childhood education that many authors believe, as recognised by May (2013), later led to the development of New Zealand's first bicultural curriculum Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996). The history of progressive education, particularly in early childhood education is significant because of the contributions Pasifika peoples have made to early childhood education, developing full immersion early childhood education for Pasifika children to maintain language, culture, spirituality and identity.

## Education in the Pacific: Post-colonial and neo-colonial

New Zealand's close proximity to the South Pacific Islands seemed advantageous in serving New Zealand's economy. New Zealand's colonial administration served a particular agenda within the Pacific region, through which, by attempting to colonise smaller Pacific islands, New Zealand would gain specific vantage points and further political reach. Pacific countries subjected to New Zealand's colonial administration were positioned strategically to engage in political participation with trade and commerce involving numerous personnel on government contracts. Involved in these contracts were missionaries and volunteers. A large number of Pacific Islanders, many of whom were leaders in their own countries, were educated in New Zealand in order for the colonial administration to pursue this agenda. Historically, there is a processes of conversion to Christianity, colonisation and migration that followed similar patterns. Indigenous (society) and social institutions inclusive of education, seemed overcome by external forces (Keown, 2009). Resistance by Indigenous peoples was firmly suppressed through physical and social violence, and even death (Mara et al., 1994).

There was a pronounced racial dimension in New Zealand's colonial rule in the Pacific because it involved the maintenance of white supremacy (Quanchi and Adams cited in Mara et al., 1994). During the last decades of the nineteenth century an increase in trading brought metropolitan countries with political and economic interests to the region. Britain, France, Germany and the United States proceeded to incorporate the Islands of the Pacific into their colonial empires. After British New Zealand had established colonisation over Māori peoples, leaders within New Zealand administration and government deemed themselves as qualified to rule over other Polynesian peoples. In 1901, both Niue and the Cook Islands became annexed to New Zealand, and with World War I, New Zealand undertook (on behalf of the Allied Nations) the first invasion of enemy territory in the Pacific displacing Germany in Western Samoa. In 1925, Samoa came under New Zealand's administration. From the early years of the century, New Zealand also took on many administrative functions in Niue and the Cook Islands, including education. During the first stage of educational development led by New Zealand's administration, the role of education in these islands was primarily viewed as functional to the political and economic relationships between the Pacific Island countries and that of New Zealand's colonial power. Many education policies at the time were dependent on the educational interests and understandings of semi-autonomous colonial administrators in the Pacific Island countries. Education was to fit the goals of colonial administrators, to prepare Pacific peoples for life in an emerging capitalist economy. It could be argued that the purpose of education was not to liberate; instead, the focus was instrumentalism. Education in these New Zealand-administered islands was a means to an economic end.

Post-World War II, political changes were occurring globally. A world-wide process of decolonisation, not epistemological but colonial, was gaining traction. Colonies were deemed by colonial powers as politically unacceptable and financially unviable. Two major global influences impacted the genesis of decolonisation in the Pacific region. The first was the spread of nationalist movements among colonised peoples and their demand for self-government and self-determination. For instance, the non-violent Mau movement of the early twentieth century in Western Samoa resisted colonialist regimes through their political activism, calling for '*Samoa*

*mo Samoa*'[13]. The other factor was the decrease of the powers of Britain and the apparent anti-colonial powers of the USA and the USSR (Mara et al., 1994). In addition, some leaders and parties in colonial governments believed it was time for change. The New Zealand Labour Government, under Prime Minister Peter Fraser, understood the plight of colonised peoples and their desire to gain political sovereignty. The decolonisation process was important to Fraser, as he understood that New Zealand's foreign policy interests were less likely to advance in partnership with Britain than with the United States. In 1945, Prime Minister Fraser initiated a commission to Western Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands. The aim was to explore the issues with their school systems and develop strategies to improve them, so that Pacific peoples would be equipped for self-government (Mara et al., 1994). It seemed that education within Western Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands was a fundamental component to decolonise imposed political powers and governance as education provided a pathway to self-government.

The 1950s and 1960s were years of economic diversification in New Zealand, especially involving the expansion of the industrial and manufacturing sectors. There was a shortage of unskilled labour within New Zealand, even after the urban migration of rural Māori. Employers began to look to the Pacific for their labour needs as recruitment was cheap and convenient (Spoonley, 2013). The perception of better educational opportunities, the availability of waged employment and an increasing interest in the outside world resulted in a flood of Pacific peoples taking up employment in New Zealand (Mara et al., 1994).

In the history of the education of Pacific Island groups in New Zealand, assimilationist policies have been found to be both unsuccessful and untenable. As immigrants, characteristically, Pacific Islands communities have always shown a keen interest in working hard and providing better opportunities for their children (Mara et al. 1994). In the 1970s and 1980s, acts of Parliament established specific Pacific education initiatives. One of these, the Pacific Islands Polynesian Education Foundation (PIPEF) was established with a purpose to encourage and foster improved

[13] An important statement that motivated political activisim in Samoa. 'Samoa for Samoa'

education outcomes for Pacific peoples and to provide financial assistance for that purpose. However, the funding for this Foundation was inadequate. The growth of Pacific community led initiatives such as the establishment of *Aoga Amata*[14] and other Pacific Island Early childhood services throughout New Zealand were significant in supporting the retention of Pacific language, culture, values and beliefs (Leaupepe et al., 2017). There was an understanding amongst Pacific leaders of the role of education played in maintaining a sense of belonging for younger children and that that culture and language facilated the connection to homelands, in the Pacific (Leaupepe et al., 2017).

## Problematising Education in the Pacific: Contemporary perspectives.

In 1985, Fijian scholar Tupeni Baba envisioned Pacific education in the year 2000. His predictions were uncanny. He advised of the issues of Pacific education disparities between Pacific independent nations and those that were affiliated to larger Nations, particularly the loss of language and Indigenous epistemology. In New Zealand for example, there are three Pacific Island Nations that are in free association with New Zealand: Tokelau, Niue and Cook Islands. All of these Island nations have greater populations living in New Zealand than in their Pacific Island (Statistics New Zealand, 2013; Ministry of Social Development, 2016). These Island nations are also experiencing language loss, and it has been recorded by UNESCO (2017) that these three languages are in fact, endangered. The education system of those Pacific Island nations in association with France, the United States and New Zealand still experience an entrenching of foreign epistemologies within education content and delivery. For example, in the French Pacific group (Tahiti and New Caledonia), their school curricula and pedagogy reflect the education ideology of metropolitan France (Baba, 1985).

Thaman (2014) insists that Pacific Indigenous knowledge systems are more than 1000 years old and that Pacific cultures within the region deserve to be recognised and valued, particularly within education institutions. Education research within the region continues to view the need to

[14] Samoan Early Childhood Education

legitimise Indigenous knowledge to support modern education to facilitate the development and learning of Indigenous students. Thaman (2014b) argues that formal education needs to be more relevant for Pacific learners and, at its best, the curriculum needs to reflect the culture and Indigenous epistemology of its people. She asserts that valuing Indigenous knowledge systems is mutually beneficial for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups and it must include an emancipatory approach against traditional institutionalised Education and its colonising effects (Thaman, 2014a). Indigenous knowledge systems have penetrated western disciplines, and contemporary education research is showing the need to document and preserve Indigenous knowledge (Enari & Matapo, 2020; Mika, et al., 2018; Mika & Matapo; 2018). The following table presents a comparison between traditional Pacific Indigenous education and traditional western education.

The tensions for Pacific leaners are evident across the different features presented, particularly in the ways that education may impact the subjectivity of the Pacific learner.

**Table 1.**

**Comparison between Traditional Pacific Indigenous education and Traditional Western education**

| Features | Traditional Indigenous education in the Pacific region | Traditional Western education |
|---|---|---|
| Teachers | • Family members<br>• Cultural experts<br>• Environment<br>• Experience<br>• Not funded<br>• Not constrained by set timeframes<br>• Connected to learner (personal and collective interest)<br>• Can also be learner | • Often strangers<br>• Disconnected to familial context<br>• Qualified<br>• Member of a profession<br>• In paid employment<br>• Practices within scheduled timeframes<br>• Not connected to the learner by personal interest<br>• Is tied to teacher identity |
| Learners | • Can also be teacher<br>• Connected to family and ancestors (collective)<br>• Has mana | • Tied to learner identity (produced within the institution)<br>• Individual<br>• Autonomous |
| Learning | • Restricted<br>• Relational<br>• Communal<br>• Participatory<br>• Contextual | • Open<br>• Individualistic<br>• Competitive<br>• Standardised<br>• Institutionalised |
| Questioning | • At times discouraged – respecting the role of the teacher and the context<br>• Through observation and listening (in relationship to environment and peoples) | • Actively encouraged<br>• Forms the basis of habits of inquiry<br>• Dialogic in nature |
| Knowledge | • Collective in nature<br>• Sacred<br>• Connected to context (local)<br>• Holistic | • Individual ownership<br>• Open access<br>• Universal (global)<br>• Intellectual |
| Assessment of competence | • Contribution to collective (productivity)<br>• Context-specific | • Individualistic<br>• Formal achievement based<br>• Not context-based |

*Note*. Adapted from Coxon, et al., 2002; Baba, 1985; Matapo, 2021; Thaman, 1993b; Wagner et al., 2003.

From a contemporary position of Pacific education, Pacific scholars across the region continue to contest the devaluing of Pacific Indigenous knowledge systems in academia. The institutionalisation of education informed by western knowledge systems are entrenched in their own hierarchical order of power. The medieval epoch attributed scientific discourse as unitary,

theoretical and formal, thus portraying western knowledge as powerful (Foucault, 1980). The rise of disciplinary knowledge factions in western education was influenced by the science axiology of knowledge production, which perpetuated western knowledge as superior. Due to the perceived scientific rigour of western education, broad knowledge systems and subject-specific content knowledge emerged and were defined as major or minor sciences. Higher education as perceived powerful institutions in the Pacific region espouse a scientific axiology in knowledge production.

### *What knowledge does the academic institution produce?*

Colonial legacies stitch together the global knowledge economy
With concealed threads,
Capitalising knowledge, suppliers compete
Bright and alluring packaged material
Stitching education, supply and demand
Education for learning and unlearning of localised wisdoms,
Globalising the local fabric of being
Formulating globally standardised pedagogies for teaching and learning
Decontextualized to place, space and the threads that bind relationship
Politicizing Pacific inter-subjectivity as failure

Poem by author Jacoba Matapo (2020)

The depoliticisation integral to neoliberalism sets up false choice and can appear as value-free and common sense (such as best policy practice). Neoliberalism within education discourse is grounded upon paradoxical ideologies; terms such as ‘innovation’ are used alongside terms such as ‘standardised’ (Gould & Matapo, 2016). Consequently, difference, that is, whatever does not fit in the structures of neoliberal scientism (theorising, race, and so on) or whoever does not play by its rules can be brushed aside as insufficient and costly (Daza, 2013). Furthermore, organisational theories in higher education are premised on structural functionalism, with little to no attention to other epistemologies and teaching and learning theories (Capper, 2019). This has led to the alienation of other cultural sets of knowledge and practice. Structural functionalism is criticised for its inability to consider issues of power, privilege, identity, oppression, equity and social justice (Capper, 2019). The rise of international agencies that advocate for Indigenous knowledge and are steeped in transformative aims continue to compare underdeveloped nations to so-called developed nations (Clifford, 2013).

# Chapter four: The emergence of Pasifika education in New Zealand

I open this chapter with a whakatauki (Māori proverb) "Ka mua, ka muri". This proverb means "walking back into the future". To understand the current terrains of education politics and policy that inform Pasifika education research, it is important first to understand the past. The historical and socio-political terrains of the past and present are explored within this chapter, including the ways in which Pacific methodologies are adapted within a Pasifika education research context.

## Historical perspectives and the notion of 'priority learner'.

Peoples from the South Pacific have been documented in New Zealand statistics since 1872, when a report showed 31 people were born in the 'South Sea Islands', a number which could have included Island-born colonials and Indigenous islanders (Airini et al., 2009). The New Zealand 1916 records showed 208 Pacific peoples from Polynesia and Melanesia had settled in New Zealand (Airini et al., 2009). Later, government initiatives were critical to the growth of the Pasifika student population in New Zealand; for instance, from 1963, scholarships were offered to Tokelau to support 186 students to study in New Zealand. Further government initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s were targeted towards education, such as the establishment of the Pacific Islands Education Resource Centre at Bayfield School in Herne Bay, Auckland, in 1975. The objectives of the centre were targeted at improving the engagement and contribution of Pasifika peoples in schools as part of an assimilationist agenda to help Pasifika peoples to "[…] overcome language, social and other difficulties faced when settling in New Zealand" (Mara et al., 1994, p. 202).

In 1988, The Royal Commission on Social Policy published the first comprehensive report of Pacific Island and Migrant Education Policy since the 1960s, covering a period of a rapid increase in Pacific Island migration to New Zealand. The Commission questioned the effectiveness of an assimilation-based policy. The Commission also revealed that ethnic and cultural minorities had not been given full opportunities to attain equitable positions in employment and other social success measures. In 1993, the MoE undertook an internal review of its structures and functions.

This led to the disestablishment of an existing Pasifika policy analyst position which had been in place as part of the implementation of Tomorrow's Schools in 1989[15]. As a result, a new position was established, a Pacific Advisor PMP (*Pule Ma'ata Pasifika*[16]). In 1994 in her role as PMP, Tongan leader, Lesieli Pelesikoti Tongati'o held a series of Pasifika community *fono*[17], to consult with Pasifika peoples about their education aspirations. This series of Pasifika community fono were particularly important because the data and research on Pasifika participation, achievement and engagement in education were generally scarce (Tongati'o, 2010), and the fono would help collect valuable information. Lesieli Tongati'o later advised MoE of the need to develop a Pasifika strategic plan for the development of coherent and intentional processes within education to transform teaching and learning conducive to the aspirations, culture, language and identity of Pasifika families. More Pasifika education data started to emerge from the mid-1990s onwards. It revealed that Pasifika children had the lowest participation rates in early childhood education and that Pasifika students leaving secondary school had fewer qualifications compared to non-Pasifika students, impacting their entry into tertiary education (Tongati'o, 2010).

There are three distinct phases in the development of Pasifika education. These are: first, state-funded and directed programmes; second, intensification and consolidation of state funding in national policy including research; and, third, the current state, which includes a reduction in research and development contracts and an increase in professional learning and development (PLD programmes informed by phase two (Si'ilata, Samu & Siteine, 2018). Much of the research conducted over the span of twenty years since the late 90s has identified fundamental tensions in education for Pasifika student engagement, in particular, a Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy that excludes Pacific language, culture, and epistemology (Coxon et al., 2001; Leenen-Young, 2020; Samu, 2014; Taleni et al., 2018;). As a result of issues identified during the three targeted

[15] Before 1989, Pasifika education had been grouped together with the Māori and Pacific Island Division of the Department of Education. Some Pasifika staff worked within the old Department of Education and in the new Ministry of Education as advisors and policy analysts. However, not all were tagged as Pasifika (Tongati'o, 2010).
[16] *Pule* Manager in the languages of Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu, and Fiji. *Ma'ata* Senior or above manager in the Cook Islands Māori language. *Pasifika* Pacific peoples with different spelling depending on the Island grouping (Tongati'o, 2010).
[17] Samoan term: A meeting usually formal with intent or purpose.

phases, The MoE has identified three priority groups for whom to improve student outcomes: Māori, Pasifika and children with special needs (Si'ilata et al., 2018). Although MoE intentions are to strengthen Pasifika student outcomes through targeted policy and strategic initiatives, the implications for grouping Pasifika learners as 'priority' politically displaces Pasifika on the margins of deficit theorising (Matapo & Baice, 2020). Research across all education sectors has shown how the notion of 'priority' (as lack) has been internalised by Pasifika students themselves and has also been taken up in the assumptions of teachers considering Pasifika students as underachieving (Coxon et al., 2002; Devine, 2006; Leaupepe, et al., 2017; Matapo, 2018).

**Musumusu**

Education philosophy and policy within New Zealand is fundamentally based upon the western canon, through which liberal and progressive ideals infuse learners with particular identities, mainly that of the learner as an individual, autonomous and self-directing. For Pasifika, the notion of the individual is not so clear cut. The complexity lies in understanding how the individual Pasifika learner is situated in time and space (vā), connected to past, present and future – the relationship extends beyond people and the here and now; it is open to ancestors, lands, ocean, cosmos. How can education create spaces to reconceptualise Pasifika success that are generative to the histories, futures, lives and spirits of the Pasifika collective? Pasifika leaders knew the value of education for sustaining specific cultural practices, identity, language, values and beliefs. It is the local Pacific knowledges of Pasifika peoples that tie the collective to place, ancestors and people. The last 25 years has brought about shifts in the discourse around Pasifika education. A dominant focus for success in Pasifika education became centred upon the number and level of 'qualifications' Pasifika graduates gained. The assumption being, that in the attainment of higher qualifications, Pasifika peoples would contribute more to the nation's economic capital. This position gave rise to particular targets in education policy and strategies. Pasifika education, which was established to revitalise and further Pasifika culture, shifted towards deficit representations, such as the underachievement of Pacific peoples in education. Essentially, Pasifika peoples became perceived as a 'problem' of education success in New Zealand.

**Priority learner.**

I'm a priority – that's what I'm told,
from the time, my mother held me in her arms, my father on his shoulders I stood, always trying to look beyond the horizon.

I'm a priority… learner, that's what I'm told, lowering my head, lower statistics reveal. This dichotomy is my story.

Priority learner to lift the outcomes of success, yet when I hear my grandfather's words I am a success in his eyes no less.

I am his story and he is mine, sensing more than education outcomes to define me.
My wairua, my mauri, my life force.

Why the obsession to fix me?
Do I need to be fixed?

How is education shaped by taken for granted truths?

Am I reduce-able to one's perception taken in brief moments of assessment?
When in brief moments, solidified are my fears.

My fears to fail, to be another statistic another rhetoric, to persuade others that I need to be fixed, I am broken.

The pieces of me, become pieces of you – fragments in politics, policies of change and priority education plans.

What motivates you to help me to achieve higher degree?

Responsive to policies, a responsive tap to funding...and in changing my perceptions of wisdom, what it is to know, and who's knowledge matters most.

And still, with fire in my eyes, and warmth in my soul, the horizon I seek beyond one's control.

Responsive, inclusive, equality, terms coined in essentialising difference…of culture, of colour, of ability…my hopes, for education is that our eyes may meet in search of the horizon and for that moment, knowing the potential in me, is knowing the potential in you.

How can we navigate potentiality, to bring forth new subjectivities, what it means to lead and to know, to traverse tides of change in a globalised space?

Spaces together, spaces of difference and an openness to the unknown.

These are our indigenous histories, that bring us together, the vā of our ancestors, within me, within you, and the hope for wisdom for a people yet to come.

Poem by Author (Matapo, 2016, p. 45)

***Figure 8.*** **Jacoba Matapo –** ***Priority Learner*****.** (1987). Digital Photograph.

## Pasifika education Strategies: The Pasifika Education Plan (PEP) and *Tapasā*.

Throughout the 1990s, Māori and Pasifika peoples were generally coupled together in education policy although their educational experiences and outcomes varied. The 1993 New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZFC) included a page on Pacific languages advocating the use of Pacific languages as a medium of instruction in schools. Subsequently, Pacific language curriculum statements were incorporated; Samoan in 1996, Cook Islands in 2004, Vagahau Niue in 2007 and Tongan in 2007 (Airini et al. 2009). In 1996, MoE introduced a plan to promote Pasifika success in education '*Ko e Ako 'a e Kakai*: Pasifika Pacific Islands People's Education in Aotearoa New Zealand'.

MoE (1996) described the plan and its intent and principles are as follows:

> This plan will help Pacific Islands peoples to gain full participation and achievement in all areas of education. The Pacific Islands population is young and diverse in culture and language. How this population experiences education depends on its holistic well-being in spiritual, intellectual and physical growth. Fanau, parents, communities and schools can work together towards helping Pacific Islands students succeed within the learning community. This plan is based on the principles of empowerment, of recognising resourcing, and building on 'kakai Pasifika' strengths. Through success in education, Pacific Islands

> peoples can realise their full potential and contribute even more positively to New Zealand society (p. 10).

From 1999 to 2001, the 'Closing the Gaps' strategy was instigated by the fifth Labour government to mitigate the socio-economic disadvantage of both Māori and Pasifika ethnic groups. The strategy targeted social inclusion and development and was aimed at the rights and responsibilities of Māori and Pasifika contributing to the paid labour market (Piercy, Mackness, Rarere & Madley, 2017). Shifts in Demographic trends[18] between Māori and Pasifika also meant that specific initiatives were needed to cater to each of the two groups differently and by the 2000s, the government officiated education strategies for each group. Hattie (2003) disputed the issue of 'low-socioeconomic' factors as the reason for education underachievement among Pasifika students. He argued that the issue of underachievement was more likely worsened by the relationships between teachers and Pasifika students. He and others (Alton-Lee, 2003) based this critique on the differences between Pasifika and Pakeha. Hattie's (2003) findings showed that Pasifika students who were of similar socioeconomic standing as Palagi students (across deciles) were still comparatively underachieving in reading (Hattie, 2003). Within Pasifika education 'Closing the Gaps' was adapted as a sector-wide approach to improve Pasifika education outcomes coupled with new research initiatives across all education sectors. The Pacific Teacher Supply strategy was implemented in 2000, whereby 115 TeachNZ scholarships were allocated to encourage Pasifika peoples to undertake teacher training (Airini et al. 2009a). In 2001, MoE commissioned the development of the first Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (Anae et al., 2001). Later in 2002, an extensive literature review 'Literature review on Pacific education issues, final report' (Coxon et al., 2002) was also commissioned and published by the MoE to strengthen the research base of Pasifika education to inform the 2001 Pasifika Education Plan (MoE, 2001).

To strengthen policy and practice in education through an empirically grounded evidence-based approach, the MoE commissioned a series of Best Evidence Synthesis (BES). In 2003, Adrienne

[18] Increasing younger Pasifika population and the disparities of low socio-economic representation of Pasifika peoples (Airini et al., 2009).

Alton-Lee developed a Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling BES. She described the BES as a document that brings together key findings of quality teaching of 'diverse' students across primary, intermediate and secondary school. Within the BES, she includes characteristics of quality teaching that are derived from her analysis of the evidence in practice that fostered high achievement and reduced disparities amongst diverse students (Alton-Lee, 2003). The way in which diversity is framed within the document, suggests there are specific marginalised groups within New Zealand education, particularly in the context of teaching practice.

Alton-Lee (2003, p. v) states:

> Diversity encompasses many characteristics, including ethnicity, socio-economic background, home language, gender, special needs, disability, and giftedness. Teaching needs to be responsive to diversity within ethnic groups, for example, diversity within Pakeha, Māori, Pasifika and Asian students. We also need to recognise the diversity within individual students influenced by intersections of gender, cultural heritage(s), socio-economic background, and talent. Evidence shows teaching that is responsive to student diversity can have very positive impacts on low and high achievers at the same time. The ten characteristics are interdependent and draw upon evidence-based approaches that assist teachers to meet this challenge.

Tanya Samu (2011) argues that despite the rich evidence-based information BES has provided to MoE to construct a responsive education system, the BES programme itself fails conceptually in terms of the absence of in-depth critical analysis of the power relations and the complexities of culture that are at the interface of the teacher-learner relationship. Ten years following the Alton-Lee (2003) BES report, Chu et al. (2013b) conducted a summary of Pasifika education literature. The findings revealed the need for teachers to utilise culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies when teaching Pasifika learners. Chu et al. (2013b) reported there was significant evidence for the need for greater teacher understanding of culturally responsive pedagogies for Pasifika learners.

Samu (2011) highlights that the simplistic conceptualisation of the Pasifika learner as an autonomous individual and the notions of success underpinned by a value-laden competencies orientation fail to confront the enterprise of education in shaping a consumer-driven market reality (Peters & Marshal cited in Samu, 2011). While higher qualifications may offer broader

opportunities for employment and improving socioeconomic conditions at a micro and macro level, the implications for Pasifika peoples include the complexity of how education is internalised and influences subjectivity. The power of Pasifika education axiology in framing notions of Pasifika success as 'culturally universal' contradicts the specificity Pasifika education research highlights as important for different Pacific ethnic groups (Chu et al., 2013a).

The following table presents a timeline of key Pasifika Education MoE publications from 1996-2020. These include specific strategic documents targeted at the achievement of Pasifika learners as well as guidelines and Pacific research frameworks, set out to advance Pasifika education research. The central focus of MoE Pasifika education research literature is to inform and strengthen evidence-based approaches to enhancing culturally responsive teaching. The green lines within the table are key Pasifika Education Plan documents. The yellow lines indicated in the table are Pasifika Education research guidelines and supporting research resources.

**Table 2**

***Timeline of Key Pasifika Education MoE Publications (1996 – 2020)***

| |
|---|
| **1996** – Ko e ako a e kakai Pasifika: Pacific Islands peoples' education in Aotearoa New Zealand: towards the twenty-first century (MoE, 1996) |
| **2001** – Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (Anae et al., 2001) |
| **2001** – First Pasifika Education Plan (MoE, 2001) |
| **2002** – Literature review on Pacific education issues (Coxon et al., 2002) |
| **2002** – Te Au Kite Pu'apiga, Useful Resources: Pasifika Education (MoE, 2002) |
| **2002** – Picking up the pace (Phillips et al., 2002). A research project in literacy instruction in decile one South Auckland schools. |
| **2002** – Pathways over the transition to schools: Studies in family literacy practices and effective classroom concepts for Māori and Pasifika children (Turoa et al., 2002) |
| **2002** – Pacific peoples and tertiary education: Issues of Participation (Anae et al., 2002) |
| **2003** – Pasifika Education Research Toolkit (MoE, 2003a) |
| **2003** – Shifting the focus: Achievement information for professional learning, a summary of the sustainability of professional development in literacy (Timperly et al., 2003a). A research project targeting improved outcomes for students from Mangere and Otara. |
| **2003** – The sustainability of professional development in literacy Part 1: Changing and sustaining teachers' expectations through professional development in literacy (Timperley et al., 2003b) |
| **2003** – Pasifika Early Childhood Education (Meade et al., 2003) |
| **2003** – Evaluation of professional development for Pacific teachers which supports the Arts in the New Zealand curriculum (MoE, 2003b). |
| **2004** – Pasifika peoples in New Zealand education: A statistical snapshot (MoE, 2004) |
| **2005** – Pacific Islands School Community Parent Liaison Project Case Study (MoE, 2005) |
| **2006** – Literature review on the effective engagement of Pasifika parents and communities in education (Pacific Island School Community Parent Liaison) (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006) |
| **2006** – Pasifika tertiary education students in 2006 by ethnicity (MoE, 2008) |
| **2006** – Pasifika Education Plan (2006-2010) (MoE, 2006a) |
| **2006** – Pasifika Education plan, monitoring report (MoE, 2006b) |

| |
|---|
| **2008** – Literature review on the experiences of Pasifika learners in the classroom (Ferguson et al., 2008) |
| **2009** – Pasifika Education plan (2009-2012) (MoE, 2009a) |
| **2009** – Ua Aoina le Manogi o le Lolo: Pasifika schooling improvement research – summary report (Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2009) |
| **2009** – Pasifika tertiary education students in 2009 (MoE, 2011) |
| **2010** – Teu le va: Relationships across research and policy in Pasifika education (Airini et al., 2010) |
| **2012-** Pasifika education research priorities: Using research to realise our vision for Pasifika learners (MoE, 2012) |
| **2013** – Pasifika education plan 2013-2017 (MoE, 2013) |
| **2013** – An analysis of recent Pasifika education research literature to inform and improve outcomes for Pasifika learners (Chu et al., 2013b) |
| **2013** – Understanding special education from the perspectives of Pasifika families (Mauigo-Tekene et al., 2013) |
| **2014** – Pasifika education plan 2013-2017: Progress to date against quantitative indicators (MoE, 2014) |
| **2018** – Tapasā: Cultural competencies framework for teachers of Pacific learners (MoE, 2018) |
| **2018 –** Pacific research in performance-based research fund **(**Tertiary Education Commission, 2018a) |
| **2019** – Best practice for teaching Pacific learners: Pacific evidence brief 2019 (MoE, 2020a) |
| **2020** – Action plan for Pacific education, 2020-2030 (MoE, 2020b) |
| **2020** – Action plan for Pacific education 2020-2030: Supporting research and community voice (MoE, 2020c) |
| **2020** – Research to understand the features of quality Pacific bilingual education: Review of best practices (May, 2020. |

*Note.* Adapted from Ministry of Education Publications 1996-2020 (Referenced within the Table)

## Pasifika Education Plan

In 2000, under the Labour government, a suite of Pasifika papers was developed to address the broad scope of Pasifika engagement in early childhood education, the compulsory sector and tertiary education. The six papers were drafted by different groups within the MoE, however, there was a Pasifika unit who maintained oversight of all the papers. Their role was to ensure the visibility and interests of Pasifika peoples were represented (Tongati'o, 2010). In August 2000, the six Pasifika papers were approved by Cabinet, and later informed the development of the first 2001-2005 Pasifika Education Plan. These six Pasifika papers provided insight into issues across education and proposed a set of sector-specific solutions to overcome these challenges. In her analysis across all six Pasifika papers, Tongati'o (2010) identifies the main areas in which government policy changes were necessary:

> These were increasing participation in quality early childhood education services; promoting more effective teaching with Pasifika students; increasing the supply of qualified Pasifika teachers across the system; improving English

> language proficiency for Pasifika students to support student learning and effective teaching; and capacity building of Pasifika communities to support effective teaching (p. 277).

The 2006–2010 Pasifika Education Plan (MoE, 2006a), specifies targets and goals for Pasifika education, extending on the previous iteration to address unmet targets and the growing evidence of effective Pasifika teaching and learning.

The goals identified within PEP (2006-2010) were:

- Increasing participation and quality of early childhood education services;
- Increasing achievement in early literacy and numeracy in compulsory education leading to more students leaving school with a qualification;
- Increasing participation, retention and achievement in tertiary education, with the intent of more students progressing to higher levels of study;
- Across all levels of education, effective monitoring of the implementation of PEP including developing and disseminating research of the effective practices that lead to success and strengthening the strategic approaches that support Pasifika education within New Zealand and across the Pacific region.

Under a National-led government, the 2006-2010 PEP was revised to reflect National's new education priorities. This revision led to the 2009-2012 PEP iteration which focused on transitions between education sectors and lifting numeracy and literacy achievement integrating the National Standards as benchmarks to inform teaching. Like previous iterations, the plan aimed to increase the number of Pasifika students achieving qualifications with the intent of enabling improved prospects in the workforce or furthering education and training (Tongati'o, 2010).

The 2013–2017 PEP iteration aimed to achieve optimum learning by promoting closer alignment with and compatibility between the learner's educational environment and their home and/or cultural environment. It espoused are more collective conceptualisation of Pasifika success. It included a community focus, encouraging education providers and services to utilise collective and cultural connections and affiliations to work together towards better outcomes and results. The notion of Pasifika success was characterised as Pasifika learners, being secure and confident in their identities, languages and cultures as they navigate through all curriculum areas such as the arts, sciences, technology, social sciences and mathematics. Unfortunately, the place of

Pacific Indigenous epistemology and intersubjectivity as a feature of transformation in education for Pasifika peoples was not considered. The means for culturally responsive approaches within PEP simply aimed at advancing outcomes in subject knowledges.

Rae Si'ilata (2014) raises other tensions for teaching and learning of Pasifika learners. She suggests that the intent of PEP provides limited guidance in relation to the principles and goals of effective engagement with Pasifika learners and that the actions to meet the proposed targets are not clearly articulated. She argues that in order to implement PEP effectively within school contexts, teachers and leaders must engage in professional learning and knowledge development to confront and critique existing beliefs and assumptions about Pasifika learners. The responsibility, however, is not only for teachers; effective implementation requires systemic support with which the whole organisation implements strategies to improve culturally inclusive practices (Si'ilata, 2014). In addition the integration of Pacific epistemology within curricula and in teaching and learning remains absent. The following diagram depicts the core Pacific values and intent of PEP (2013-2017).

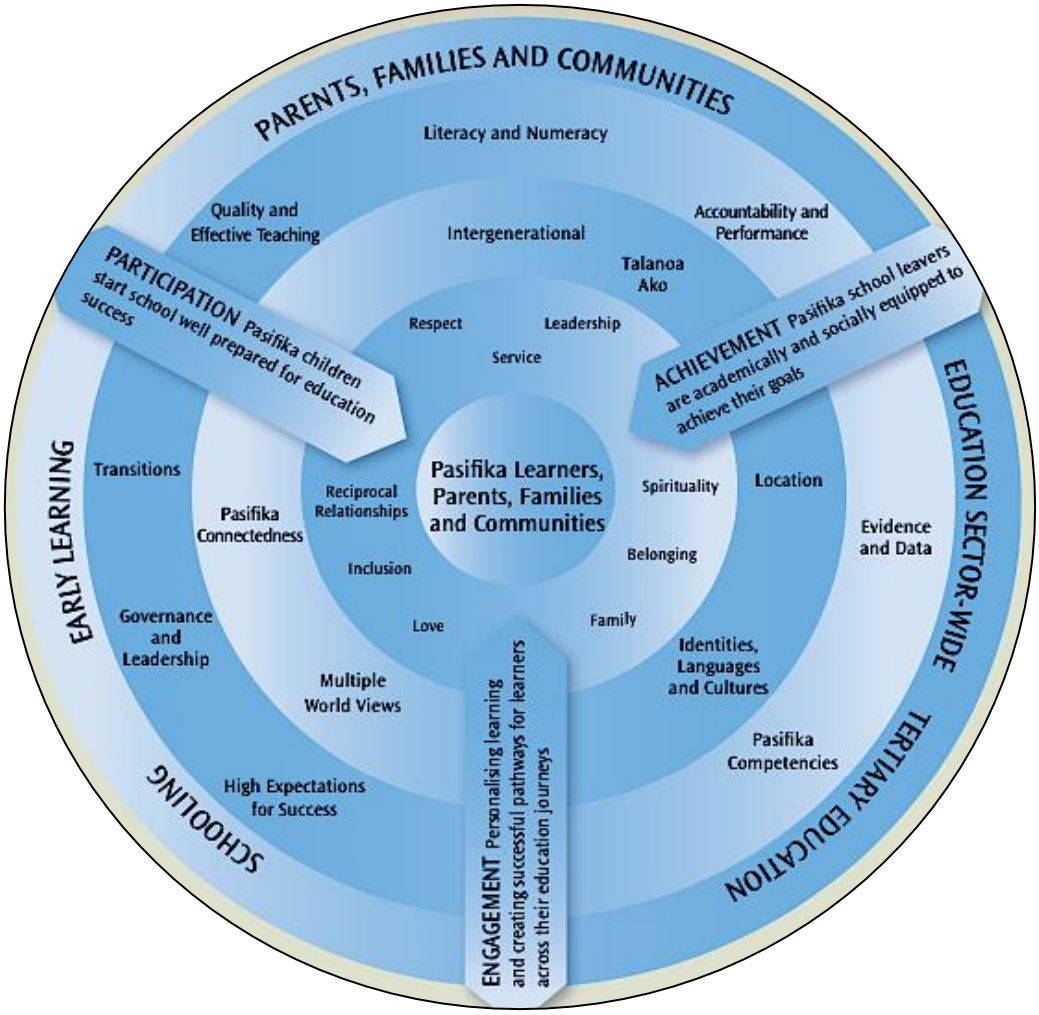


***Figure 9.*** **Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017.** Ministry of Education (2013). Digital Graph.

In her introduction to the 2013-2017 PEP, Education Minister Hekia Parata claims:

> Practically, this means increasing participation in quality early childhood education to drive higher literacy, numeracy and achievement of qualifications in schooling, which in turn will contribute to higher participation and completion of qualifications in tertiary education, resulting in the greatest social, cultural and economic benefits [...] Higher-level tertiary qualifications bring people the greatest benefits, including better income and employment opportunities. When compared with all other groups, despite the progress we have made, Pasifika people still have the second-lowest proportion with degrees or higher qualifications (MoE, 2013, p. 1).

Pasifika's deficit representation in education led to the ongoing focus on Pasifika education success through the Pasifika Education Plan (PEP) with four revised versions spanning seventeen years. The 2018 launch of *Tapasā*[19] (Cultural Competency Framework for Teachers of Pacific

[19] The Samoan term, *Tapasā* can be loosely translated as a navigation compass that is referred to as guide on a journey. In the context of teaching, *Tapasā* is a guide for teachers to navigate their own journey of becoming more culturally competent (MoE, 2018).

Learners) has attempted to capture the essence of the PEP. Through each version of the PEP Pasifika success is characterised as holistic, including language, culture, and identity. The genuine aspirations for Pasifika become marginalised however, when narrow and often standardised education assessment measures take precedence as measures of success (Matapo & Baice, 2020). New Zealand education strategies and policies are tied to global education and economic trends, including future-focused innovations that discard local knowledges in favour of global knowledges. For Pasifika peoples in New Zealand, local Pacific knowledges bind the collective to place, ancestors and people (Matapo & Teisina, 2020).

> **Musumusu**
> The Ministry of Education states that successful Pasifika learners may be '…secure and confident in their identities, languages and culture' however, the fact remains that if we are to see Pasifika values and aspirations as the product of Pasifika education success, then existing Pasifika education policies and strategies must be called into question and reconceptualised. Rather than focusing on success (specifically, academic success measures), I am interested in what Pacific subjectivities are produced through the effects of Pasifika education discourses. PEP is entrenched in mechanisms of power that presuppose a certain truth or image of the Pasifika learner, including the assumption of how one should live as a valued contributing member of society. The language of cultural pedagogies has also evolved over the last two decades and are reflected in all versions of the PEP, such as *culturally responsive*, *culturally inclusive*, and *culturally sustaining* which are not to be conflated as these definitions of cultural pedagogy are evolving through critical-inquiry based paradigms (examined further in later sections of this chapter).

## *Tapasā*

Since the first launch of the PEP in 2001 and through multiple iterations thereafter, the aims and intent of the PEP have remained relatively unchanged in targeting the improvement of education outcomes for Pasifika learners. The final version of PEP (2013-2017), alongside the growing body of Pasifika education research and scholarship (discussed further in chapter 5) led to the launch of the first Pacific cultural competency framework in education: *Tapasā* (MoE, 2018). The application of *Tapasā* is intended for both the ECE sector and school sector, to target specific teaching guidelines and examples of practice for Pacific learners. The teaching competencies within *Tapasā* are intended to embed culturally responsive pedagogies of teaching and are presented in stages (novice to expert teachers). There are three *turu* (strands), or competencies that form the basis of the framework (MoE, 2018, p. 7-8):

- **Turu 1: Identities, languages and cultures** Demonstrates awareness of the diverse and ethnic-specific identities, languages and cultures of Pacific learners.
- **Turu 2: Collaborative and respectful relationships and professional behaviours** Establishes and maintains collaborative and respectful relationships and professional behaviours that enhance learning and wellbeing for Pacific learners.
- **Turu 3: Effective pedagogies for Pacific learners** Implements pedagogical approaches that are effective for Pacific learners.

As a strategic document, Tapasā removes the term ‘Pasifika’ and replaces it with 'Pacific'. This is problematic, as using the term 'Pacific' runs the risk of the erasure[20] of a term that has been used with increasing relevance and significance in education discourse over the last two decades. A change in terminology influences shifts in the conceptualising of Pasifika as a well-established body of scholarship in education. Pasifika is specific to a New Zealand location within the broader Pacific region and informs Pasifika education research through a myriad of suppositions, diaspora, transnational, hybrid, and nomadic. Another limitation of *Tapasā* is the framing of ‘action’ oriented competency behaviours. The cultural competency ‘actions’ are coupled with the professional teaching standards as an espoused Pacific-centric approach to improve culturally inclusive teaching. However, the framing of the competencies within the document compartmentalises the practices expected of beginning teachers to experienced leaders in education. The linear presentation of cultural competency progression within *Tapasā* fails to engage with the complexities of the Pacific relational-self or the ways in which Pacific inter-subjectivity with-world (human and non-human) are rooted in Pacific Indigenous epistemology (Matapo, 2018; Matapo & Teisina, 2020).

## The critical tradition and Pasifika education

The critical tradition is fundamentally the school of thought and process of critique that refers to the illumination of societal inequities. Historically, the critical tradition of social critical theory traces its conceptual roots to Karl Marx and the Frankfurt scholars in the early twentieth century (Tatebe, 2018). The analytical tools of social critical theory as applied to the discipline of

[20] Derrida’s philosophical work engages in a post-structural critique of language and language signifier(s), particularly the inadequacies of a signifier tasked with creating definitive meaning in language. When a concept or word is under erasure, there are attempts to change it or rub it out while retaining its original concept or meaning (Anderson, 2012).

education draw upon five key elements: power, politics, enlightenment, empowerment and emancipation. These analytical social concepts are present across Pasifika education research studies, particularly in research that maintains transformative aims in addressing social, economic and political processes within education that marginalises and oppresses the engagement of Pasifika people in education (Parkhill, Fletcher, & Fa'afoi, 2005; Podmore, Tapusoa & Taouma, 2006; Tuafuti & MacCaffery, 2005). Within critical theory, the notion of power operates at multiple levels; it can be individual and/or distributed among groups. Largely, power from within a critical theoretical critique is concerned with the unequal power distribution across society, groups and individuals (Tatebe, 2018). In this regard, power is humanistic in that it is concerned with domination and subordination of human beings. Those holding more economical, social and political power within society are positioned as the dominant group, while those with less power (by definition) are part of the subordinate group. Power can be conceptualised as a relational concept, which includes human relations with discourse, knowledge, histories, and the social structures (micro, meso, macro) that ground the fabric of society (Foucault, 2000).

Part of a transformative agenda taken up in critical education theory is social justice through enlightenment, empowerment and emancipation. In this context, enlightenment refers to education that raises the consciousness of those who are marginalised and oppressed (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Enlightenment, through the process of questioning and analysing contested social conditions, raises greater awareness of social inequalities (Giroux, 1986). Transformative theories in critical research argue the need to deconstruct and reconstruct frameworks of knowledge that persist in perpetuating injustice and inequality (Ulmer, 2017). Critical inquiry in education research is premised upon the idea that the world is composed of contested and often competing ideas, and therefore, society is a site of struggle (Tatebe, 2017). The position of critical inquiry in Pasifika education research is concerned with empowering Pasifika peoples as marginalised groups within education to provide insights to the transformational praxis required for Pasifika people's success in education. While critical inquiries in Pasifika education research provide deeper understandings of contextual, cultural, social and economic issues, the valuing and embedding of Indigenous knowledge within education is still not incorporated into the aims

and intent of education in New Zealand. The aims and intent of many critical inquiries into the study of Pasifika people's education focus on achieving academic outcomes and addressing inequity issues. Engagement for success in achieving academic outcomes is problematic for Pasifika learners. They are expected to assimilate different ontologies of knowing within the academy which are not always consistent to Pacific notions of personhood (Baice, et al., 2021). It comes as no surprise that although Pasifika success in education has been extensively researched, there are still persistent inequalities within education (Matapo & Baice, 2020).

The emergence of Pasifika education and Pasifika education research are tightly knitted to the issues of education and the disparities of education outcomes for Pasifika learners. Since the early 2000s, Pasifika education strategies have targeted specific approaches to improving education outcomes for Pasifika learners based upon empirical data that demonstrate pathways for growth in achievement for Pasifika learners. For instance, BES, which has contributed to the so-called quality of teaching practices for Pasifika learners in the school sector. The nexus of BES is grounded upon an inclusive and responsive pedagogical approach, steeped within an ethos of social justice and equity in education. BES, refers to diverse students in several categories: socio-economic background, gender, disability, giftedness, home language and ethnicity (Wendt-Samu, 2006). Mainstream schooling perpetuates and reinforces the dominant culture's way of subjectivity by adapting and justifying agency into established regimes of power difference (state apparatus). Sleeter and McLaren (1995) contest the dominant culture of mainstream teaching practices and the way in which schools mirror the larger culture of society, and state that:

> […] dominant forms of pedagogy accommodate existing modes or forms of intelligibility and their distributive effects which are part of the ritualized conversation of becoming a citizen […] The dominant culture of schooling mirrors that of the larger culture in so far as teachers and students willingly and unwittingly situate themselves within a highly politicized field of power relations that partake of unjust race, class, and gender affiliations (p. 6.)

In more recent years, the notion of cultural competency has gained precedence in education policy and practice. Cultural competency is a contested concept in that it presents an essentialist view of culture that is focused on ethnicity (Sherwood & Russell-Mundine, 2017). Furthermore, cultural

competency is often conflated with culturally specific concepts which lead to conflicting views. Cultural competency arises from a culmination of complex systems based upon a set of values, attitudes, beliefs and congruent behaviours (Cross et al., 1989). All of which, allow for the agency in systems and policy in intercultural contexts. A culturally competent system engages the importance of culture at all levels, including the assessment of cross-cultural relations (Sherwood & Russell-Mundine, 2017).

## Pacific Education Action Plan (2020-2030)

The 2020 launch of the Pacific Education Action Plan (PEAP) 2020-2030 aims to address the ongoing inequalities for Pasifika engagement and success in education with a vision that diverse Pacific learners and their families are safe, valued and equipped to achieve their educational aspirations' (MoE, 2020b, p. 4). The PEAP proposes a different approach to transforming education to enhance Pasifika learners' success and recognises the limitations of previous PEP strategies over the years. Limitations include: the lack of systemic monitoring of the PEP; the national-level emphasis over a region or local level; the limited time frame (5 years) to sustain change; the lack of partnership between government, education partners and learning contexts; and the lack of ethnic-specific data to be responsive to Pacific peoples as a diverse group (MoE, 2020b).

The following headings and subheadings summarise the overarching objectives and system shifts identified within the PEAP (MoE, 2020b).

**Overarching objectives for the education system**

- **Barrier-Free Access:** Great education opportunities and outcomes are within reach for every learner.
- **World-class Inclusive Public Education:** New Zealand education is trusted and sustainable.
- **Quality Teaching and Leadership:** Quality teaching and leadership make the difference for learners and their whānau.
- **Learners at the centre:** Learners with their whānau are at the centre of education.
- **Future of learning and work:** Learning is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and throughout their lives.
- **Quality Teaching and Leadership:** Quality teaching and leadership make the difference for learners and their whānau.

**Five key system shifts needed for Pacific learners and families to meet the objectives**

1. Work reciprocally with diverse Pacific communities to respond to unmet needs, with an initial focus on needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Confront systemic racism and discrimination in education
3. Enable every teacher, leader and educational professional to take coordinated action to become culturally competent with diverse Pacific learners
4. Partner with families to design education opportunities together with teachers, leaders and educational professionals so that aspirations for learning and employment can be met
5. Grow, retain and value highly competent teachers, leaders and educational professionals of diverse Pacific heritages

***Figure 10.*** **Pacific Education Action Plan (2020-2030).** Illustrating cohesion across government departments to support Pacific success in education. Ministry of Education, (MoE, 2020b, p. 21). Digital Resource.

Across the various MoE Pasifika/Pacific Education strategic documents, there are distinct relations of power that position Pacific engagement in education as 'lacking' in terms of its

collocation to other higher-achieving populations. Although the more recent PEAP claims to take a strengths-based position in confronting both systemic barriers and ineffective teaching practices, the focus for inclusion and transformation reinforce education, social, economic and political norms as ideal for Pasifika peoples. The provision of culturally responsive pedagogies to implement inclusion within the classroom must be open to philosophical interrogation from which cultural practices emerge. To engage practice without understanding the epistemological trajectories limits the capacity of teaching and learning from within Pacific onto-epistemology. Sleeter and McClaren (1995) contextualise this tension as a mainstream teaching practice that is 'membership oriented'. Essentially the purpose of teaching from a critical responsive perspective is to support students to gain 'cultural capital' that will enable them to negotiate contemporary mainstream society. These researchers argue that:

> Most mainstream teaching practices, therefore, could be characterized as "membership oriented" pedagogy which requires that teachers assist students in acquiring those necessary interpretive skills and forms of cultural capital that will enable them to negotiate contemporary zones of contest— the often complex, complicated, and conflictual public and institutional spaces within the larger society (p. 6).

There are politics of difference at play: the convergence of Pacific ontologies and epistemology in education as valid and rigorous knowledge systems may offer a more radical approach to inclusion, in addition to a social-justice equity position for inclusion. The system of education itself is politically charged and within education, governmentality and capitalism generate ongoing (and new) forms of oppression. Governmentality in education positions the Pasifika student within a complex network of power relations which play out through institutional procedures, analysis, reflections, calculations and so forth (Foucault, 1980). The data collected on Pasifika students is used to make generalisations regarding Pasifika student engagement, and to classify, reproduce and even perpetuate the internalisation of negative labelling of Pasifika students (McClutchie, 2020; Wolfgramm-Foliaki & Smith, 2020). Terms such as retention and completion are often cited within institutional aims and objectives for Pasifika students (Matapo & Baice, 2020).

*How is decolonisation crucial here to regain and revive deeper meanings within Indigenous knowledges?*

*And how can the impetus for research not be positioned at the outset as a deficit?*

## Pacific Indigenous philosophy to challenge deficit views of Pasifika peoples in education

Education for Pasifika peoples happens in multiple contexts and relations as Indigenous knowledge systems and are not yet extinguished. Engagement in education is not isolated to the context of the classroom; learning occurs within the home, within the body, within the world, within the collective and with ancestors. Vaai (2015) reminds us that, constituted within the process of knowing (or, in this case, learning), exists a complex network of relations that moves and flows between human and non-human worlds and, furthermore, that life evolves through dynamic relations. This processual movement in ontological relations ruptures a dichotomous understanding of knowledge creation and challenges the universalisation of one-truths (universal abstractions as objective truths). Vaai (2017a) elaborates on the dynamic flow of relations with world that are *in* the realities of Pacific personhood.

> In the Pacific, life evolves in a dynamic relational fashion whereby one reality flows and weaves into the other constituting that reality and, as a result, such reality can only exist because of the other. The land flows *in*to the sea, the sea *in*to the skies, the skies *in*to the people, the people *in*to the trees, the trees *in*to the mountains, the mountains *in*to the rivers, and the rivers *in*to the communities (Vaai, 2017a, p. 30).

The flows and fluidity of relationality positions human beings as partners in the reality of the cosmos. The moon's cycle determines the time for planting, fishing and harvesting, and this worlded understanding of regeneration allows for the respect and harmony of life. The waters, the non-human species need time to breathe and to regenerate (Vaai, 2017a).

Upon the arrival of European colonisers in the Pacific, the Island inhabitants were labelled ‘lazy’. The capitalist ‘anthropocentric work ethic’ (Vaai, 2017a, p. 34), which was part of the European

social ideology, was imposed upon Pacific peoples. The assumption was that Pacific peoples should be working from morning till night to advance their so-called quality of life, to gain profit. The rhythms of their environment determined the cosmological ontology of life for Pacific peoples, the interweaving of the self in the other (constituted in each other) living, dynamic and embodied relationships. Vaai (2017a) reminds us that "all in the cosmic-community are elusive constellations of embodied life" (p. 34). Given this understanding of the notion of self and the ontologies of knowing (relationship to knowledges) are dynamic in this way, how does this transform the image of the Pasifika learner within the education context? One way could be affirming the collective (human and non-human others) as constituted within Pasifika learner subjectivities. This is a very different view of the 'image' of the Pasifika student as presented in Pasifika education research and challenges the dialectic or deficit 'lack' often associated with conceptualisations of Pasifika student engagement. In this regard, the Pasifika student is already fully knowing in their capacity to engage in education (they bring with them their histories, genealogies, and collective relations). The notion of 'collective' is also opened up to include world and cosmos (geo-ontological) and is not only bound in human relations. The purpose of knowing and knowledge is tied to the purpose of its collective relations, its embodiment to give life and nurture life. Knowledge for the sake of knowing is not enough; what is exercised with that knowledge and its contribution to the collective brings the value of that knowledge into being (Matapo & Baice, 2020).

The presentation of the harmonies of collective knowing (as discussed as before), is not to suggest an idealistic 'good' society. There are tensions always present and are relevant to collective ontologies. Hau'ofa (2008) warns that in the Pacific, there are strains of authoritarian tendencies that suppress freedom; these exist within, for example, political systems and community relations, including Pacific academic institutions. Vaai (2017a) cautions the need for robust Pacific Indigenous modes of critique to confront and analyse underpinning factors that may betray the relationship within the collective. He suggests the following as a relational hermeneutical approach to trust and honesty within the knowledge assemblage:

> It aims to deconstruct any thinking or relationship that is not built on trust. In other words, it aims to locate and critique the underpinning factors that 'betray' relationship, especially parts of the relationship that may invite rigidity, passivity, domination, oppression or submissiveness, whether it be political, economic, religious, familial, social, gendered, and so forth. It is a power-sensitive discourse (Vaai, 2017a, p. 31).

One relational concept that has been taken up within the context of Pasifika education and Pasifika education research is *Teu le Va*[21]. As a pan-Pacific philosophical concept *Teu le Va* brings together the relationality of being and knowing, affirming secular and sacred relations. *Teu le Va* (Anae et al., 2010) has been applied to various research studies that focus on the co-construction of new and emerging concepts of knowledge generation. Conceptually *Te le va* has also shown the mobility of Pacific theorising in contemporary education contexts, particularly in bringing ethical, spiritual and moral dimensions to the research (and policy) relationship. *Teu le va* can also be theorised as a powerful and agentic process, that brings the *noa* (opening up of sacred knowledges) between human and non-human life forces and flows. *Teu le va*, I would argue, generates other opportunities for knowing that are not anthropocentric or humanistic and can encompass the learner, classroom, teacher and researcher (discussed further in chapter five and six).

[21] A Samoan term meaning to keep safe or put away (teu) the relational space (va).

# Chapter five: Moana, Onto-epistemological milieu for Pasifika education research

## Why Indigenous Pacific philosophy and being?

This chapter raises critical tensions by positioning the thesis between two different paradigms: one, an Indigenous Pacific position and the other, the posthuman turn. This chapter engages theorising as a relational-process, bringing to the surface philosophical debates that have, since antiquity, troubled existential notions of *being* and the nature of knowledge. Such questions are pertinent to Indigenous peoples and the western canon. The framing of the thesis is centred upon Indigenous Pacific epistemology, using insights drawn from post-humanist theory, with the intent to avoid conflating either. This chapter draws upon specific theorisations of Pacific Indigenous philosophy, exploring the embodied, relational and spiritual capacities of knowing (Meyer, 2013; Tui Atua, 2009a; Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). Rather than to detail or identify Pacific knowledge, I aim to generate possibilities of becoming, sensing, reimagining Pacific Indigenous knowing as performative in understanding and transforming Pasifika education research. As a researcher I navigate Pacific Indigenous knowledge systems (particularly from a Samoan perspective) in practice. In doing so, I aim to interrogate textualised forms that determine meanings of moral codes, colonial hierarchy and repression of difference.

## Pacific Indigenous knowledge and the tension in colonial discourse

I open this section, with a critique of Mead's (1928) anthropological study *Coming of Age in Samoa*. Mead's study attempts to interpret cultural understandings of Samoan adolescence and the social complexities tied to Samoan notions of gender roles and age. The research is centred upon Eurocentric ideals of civilisation and humanism steeped in the enlightened subject, continually set against western social hierarchy and moral norms. Although Mead claimed to live with her participants as an ethnographer, her writings revealed her personal ontology that Samoans (culture, knowledge, customs, being) were inferior to western civilisations. She seemed to assume that her observations and interpretations could, in some way, fix issues of adolescence in the west; however, she did not regard the privileged humanist position she theorised from.

Throughout the study, Samoan cultural acts and expressions associated with Samoan knowledge and collective ontologies were described and referenced as part of a so-called "simpler civilisation" (p. 187) or actions of a "primitive people" (p. 5). This study is just one example of many that arose in the 1800s and 1900s as part of anthropological research in the Pacific Region.

### *Coming of age – simple life on a small Pacific island:*

Ancestor cults
Genealogies
Mythology
Which are of interest only to the specialist,
Will be published in another place.

I present the young Samoan girl
In her social setting,
Her life from birth until death
Ancestor cults
Genealogies
Mythology

*Are these not the collective voices that inform epistemology?*
The young Samoan girl,
In her social setting,
*At birth tied to ancestors and in death return.*

A graceful and satisfactory contrast of the human race
Picture of the whole social life of Samoa
Illuminating the problem of adolescence
Our (*not Samoan*) highest values are all based upon contrast
Light or darkness, beauty or ugliness

If we would appreciate our own civilisation (*not Samoan*),
This elaborate pattern of life
Which we have made for ourselves as a people (*not Samoan*),
And which we are at such pains to pass on to our children (*for Samoan, colonising of knowledge*)
We must set our civilisation over (*not Samoan*)
Against other very different ones.

(Adapted from Mead, 1928, p 17).
Italicised text by Matapo (2020).

The colonial discourse that positions Indigenous peoples as inferior continues to be contested by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. Indigenous cultural experts assert and problematise Pacific Indigenous knowledge in contemporary contexts. Samoan cultural knowledge custodian and former head of state Tui Atua (2005) outlines a range of tensions underlying Pacific Indigenous knowledge. He regards Samoan knowledge as challenging to conceptualise. He calls

into question the process of thought itself and its relationship to the nature of knowledge from a Samoan ontological position. The movement of knowing is never static, and it is the movement of thought that generates new connexions, like the trajectories of the rhizome (which I will explore later in chapter six). My positioning throughout the thesis is to theorise Pacific Indigenous knowledge as a multiplicity of knowledge(s): knowledge as embodied in and with the world, such as presented in the Pacific scholarship of Tui Atua Tamasese, Epeli Hau'ofa, Manulani Meyer, Karen Ingersoll, and Konai Helu Thaman, to name a few.

Tui Atua (2005) and Hau'ofa (1994) both argue for discursive dialogue around the sustaining of 'traditional' forms of Pacific knowledge. Traditional forms of Pacific cultural knowledge are endangered due to the cultural constraints involved in accessing this knowledge. The tensions for sustaining traditional Pacific cultural knowledge as part of an intergenerational ontology arise out of change and flux in migration, cultural shifts in local society, and the penetrating force of capitalism and neoliberalism (Anae, 2016; Mila-Shaaf & Robinson, 2010; Samu, 2010; Schoon, 2010). Research conducted within New Zealand identifies the existence of such tensions for Pasifika peoples seeking access to Pacific Indigenous knowledge. In New Zealand today, the majority of Pacific peoples are New Zealand-born. There is a concern that many Pacific peoples, particularly for Cook Islands Māori, Niuean and Tokelauan peoples, face the prospect of language loss (Ministry of Social Development [MoSD], 2016). With the loss of language comes a loss in access to specific cultural ontologies associated with language and its ability to express the nuances of cultural meaning and exchange (Si'ilata, 2014).

## Postcolonialism and Pacific thought

Postcolonial and anti-colonial discourses are in effect, critical paradigms that oppose western hegemony in the representation of Indigenous knowledge. Key concepts and theoretical frameworks in postcolonial discourse validate Pacific Indigenous knowledge that is both local and global. Keown (2009) draws attention to significant contrasts between the terms post-colonial and postcolonial, suggesting very different modes of analysis in discourse. Colonial discourse and theory examine representations and modes of perception used as fundamental weapons of colonial

power to keep colonised peoples subservient to colonial rule (McLeod as cited in Keown, 2009). The term post-colonial was first used following World War II to describe former colonial territories that had gained independence. In this context, the term was explicitly chronological, referring to the era of widespread decolonisation following the second world war. In the late 1970s, the term postcolonial had been co-opted by theorists and literary critics to discuss the varying cultural effects of colonisation. In this context, postcolonial refers instead to the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies (Keown, 2009).

Wendt (1995) suggests that within a Pacific context, 'postcolonial' is inclusive of other formations in meaning such as, around-, out of-, through-, against- and alongside-colonial. In his own postcolonial critical narrative account, Hau'ofa (1994) presents a new (re)imagining of Oceania, (Tagata o le Moana), an image of thought that presents the vastness of Oceania, not as the collection of small islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia but instead as Oceania in relation with the cosmos. He contends that narrow views create economic and geographical constraints that isolate the previously perceived boundless Pacific. Stories of colonisation in the Pacific privileges the so-called discoveries of Caption Cook which led to the marginalisation of Indigenous Pacific histories. Geographic demarcation of the Pacific Islands as 'small' presents their 'littleness', a position for Pacific peoples that is reflected in epistemic belittlement (Hau'ofa, 1994). Likewise, Plessis and Fairbairn-Dunlop (2009) challenge the narrowness of concepts of traditional Pacific knowledge as static, suggesting that the notion of traditional knowledge as unchanging should be contested within Pacific knowledge discourse. Wendt (1995) offers a flexible definition for postcolonial, one that is not fixed in linear notions of temporality.

A search for a new form of community and a desire to create alternative spaces for Pacific peoples within the diaspora necessitates a reconstruction of 'Pasifika' identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Refiti, 2014). For Pacific peoples, identity formation is constituted with fanua (land/placenta). Genealogical ties to specific geographical locations are part of the multiplicity of self and

personhood[22] (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Refiti, 2014). Cultural knowledge, being nomadic, travels, to enable new identity formations in new locations and includes material conventions. Cultural knowledge comprises the cultural traditions of exchange and rituals (Refiti, 2014). The place of objects and people within Pacific societies are generally treated with respect (Refiti, 2014). Objects have mana and *mauri*[23] too, that may involve sacred artefacts. I reflect on how nomadic cultural knowledge is open to change of relations; processual deterritorialising and reterritorialising in the context of the human subject and materiality. This study explores how this is lived and expressed in the context of Pasifika education research.

> **Musumusu**
> I am suspicious of my writing and how words as modes of expression may conflate meaning through association in representationalism. I question what this means to me as a researcher with a specific genealogy tied to the land, history, socio-political factors, cultural knowledge and being of my ancestors? (future and past).

## Pacific knowledge and research: A decolonising agenda

For many Pacific scholars, decolonising Pacific research starts with confronting anthropological paradigms that have represented Pacific society and culture without considering Pacific epistemology (Wilson, 1999). Pacific scholars Nabobo Baba, Helu Thaman, Taufe'ulungaki, Vaai and Teweiariki from the University of the South Pacific, for example, have engaged in research centred upon Pacific philosophy demonstrating the value of Pacific ways of knowing and learning within the academy. The aspirations shared by these Pacific scholars are to affirm distinctive Pacific understandings of the nature of knowledge and to strive for the integration of Indigenous knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence within formal educational curricula within the Pacific regions. The work of these Pacific educators extends to New Zealand and the wider world. Mobility of Pacific research that decolonises education is particularly relevant given the transnational context of Pasifika peoples living in New Zealand, who are in a complex position

[22] Quality or condition of being
[23] Mauri from a Māori perspective refers to the capacities of life force, vital essence of an entity or being which can be inclusive of material objects and ecosystems as well as social groups or individuals (Moorfield, 2011).

regarding the creation of Indigenous education that draws upon ties to distanced heritage lands and ancestral wisdoms (Huffer & Qualo, 2004). Whilst recognising the significance of Indigenous education for Pasifika peoples within New Zealand, Māori as tangata whenua, the first peoples of the land, hold specific mana in terms of Indigenous education (which is explored further in chapter seven). So, how do Pasifika peoples from a location other than their heritage lands engage in and reimagine Indigenous education that sustains specific links and ties to lands and ancestors, but also honours the place of Māori as the tangata whenua of the land where these Pasifika peoples reside?

Māori and Pasifika peoples share an affinity with Moana, the Pacific waters that connect land with a shared *whakapapa*[24] that links Māori peoples through navigation histories to Pacific Island nations. Evident in creation stories shared between Māori and Cook Islands peoples are specific ties to the creator of the cosmos, gods and demigods (Marsden, 2003; Reid et al. 2013). As part of the decolonising agenda that threads throughout this thesis, I engage with the political histories, the intersecting lines of social and economic influence upon Pacific regions, people and culture, and the work of Pacific scholars who have in acts of resistance, deterritorialised and reterritorialised place(s), people and seas. One Indigenous Hawaiian scholar with whom I have had the honour to discuss Pacific Indigenous thinking tensions is Professor Manulani Meyer.

**Musumusu**

I share an email communication with Professor Manulani Meyer in November 2019. She invited me to ponder the question 'to decolonise or indigenise'? In the process of writing this chapter, the words of Manulani have stayed with me – they left an impression hard to shake off, her question more than a question, to indigenise or decolonise? Her words provoke a depth of unease, a question that is one or the other – my response to the question teases out the un-knowing that arises out of my being as Samoan, researcher, academic, anti-academic. With her question and mine – "can academia ever be decolonised or indigenised" – I wonder… My email response – a poem I had written to her.

[24] Māori term for geneaology of people and place

**To decolonise or indigenise?**
To decolonise
To confront subjectivity
Subjectivity of governmentality
Constituted in global politics, that privilege and divide
To decolonise
To de-centre self from colonising regimes,
Regimes of knowledge that never fully escape the colonisers' gaze
Or / And
Indigenise subjectivity, the power of place, humanity and being a shared ontology with mountains, seas, land and cosmos
Indigenising thinking, a resistance to the discourse of discovery and the hierarchy of human knowledge capacities, another itulagi
Indigenising agency, a co-existence with time that weaves a folding into futures past.
Indigenising as movement, embodied in space and expression
Can our pasts be unstrung – from binds that constrain?
The residue remains even when unstrung, the ties reform and evolve
The tensions shift and alter
An emerging body of collective spirit – reforms and evolves
Affirming place, spirit, alofa, life –
The hā of our ancestors carries on

Poem by author Jacoba Matapo (2019).

Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017) advocate for Indigenous Pacific conceptualisations of personhood in working with and against the impact of colonisation upon Pacific subjectivity and personhood scholarship. These Pacific authors weave together notions of 'human being' or being human in a Pacific Indigenous context that they emphasise requires *liuliu*[25], a deconstruction of personhood. The three phases of liuliu are cyclic and occur simultaneously in the decolonising of deeply rooted colonial knowledge systems internalised and externalised by Pacific peoples. The process of decolonising requires wisdom in seeking wisdom *tōfā saili*[26]. For instance, the Samoan concepts of liuliu (unthinking or deconstruction), liliu (rethinking and reconstruction) and toe liuliu (return) (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). In this regard, all three phases of liuliu bring about change; and as Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017) suggest, lead to action driven by transformation.

[25] A Samoan term – to turn (examine deeply).
[26] A Samoan term – In search of knowledge. Often coupled with tōfā manino (philosophy).

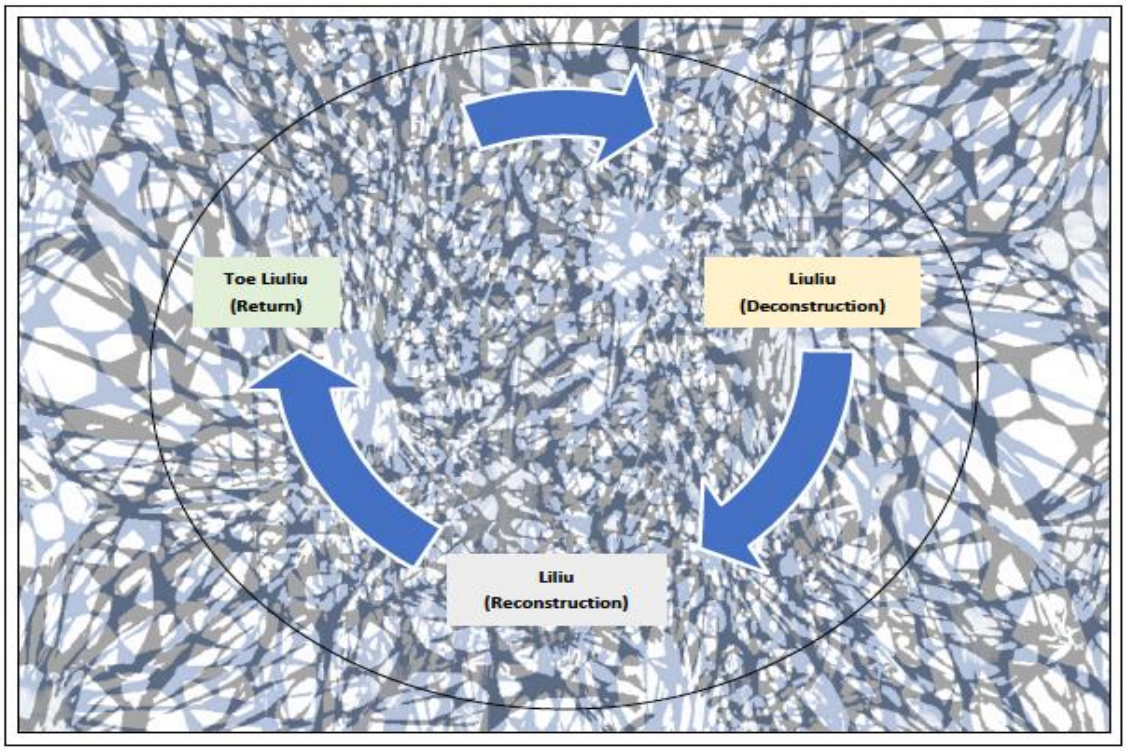


***Figure 11*. Liuliu**. The liuliu as a continual process is fluid, reaching for tōfā loloto[27] (Samoan deep wisdom). Jacoba Matapo, adapted from Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017, p 10).

The materialist presence in thought generation could also be considered in light of Vaai and Nabobo-Baba's (2017) configuration of liuliu, not only as a condition of critique of the 'externalised' colonial impact upon Pacific peoples, but also as virtual realm or vā that breaks down the dichotomous boundaries of outside versus inside. The processual-ontological movement of thought is affected by the materiality of the world and the openness to thought outside of a-priori constructs. In this regard, liuliu becomes part of the bodied assemblage relevant to all three phases to provide new and emerging insights for ethically embedded and responsible action.

Liuliu, as part of this exploration of human subjectivity, is inclusive of all phases of life, including death and the spiritual forces and flows that bring the connection to past and present. The spiritual phases of life, death and dying are acknowledged as celebration and mourning woven into the fabric of humanity. From a Samoan view, the spiritual gives rise to meanings, thoughts and

[27] Samoan term – Deep wisdom

compassion through acts of love. Expressions of alofa[28] (aro'a[29]; ofa[30]; aloha[31]) that nurture both life and the genesis of ideas are shared concepts across the Pacific. Spiritual knowing offers insight into what is both within us and beyond, outside the constraints of mortality (Tui Atua, 2017, p xi).

## Spirit, life force and flows

Recasting the spiritual life forces and flows within the writing-research(er) assemblage are the forces' affective capacities in-being. Spiritual life forces and flows are embedded (even molecular – see chapter six) in epistemology and values and are actualised in an expression of language, customs, and rituals. The spirit is not an elusive subject in the contexts of Indigenous Pacific philosophy. Neither is spirit compartmentalised or hidden, and it is such openness in spirit that generates life…

breathing life,

…life-force affirming

…incorporeal and corporeal bodies, colliding, mixing, moving, transfiguring.

I return to the words of Tui Atua, who reminds us that spirituality breathes and lives in Pacific personhood:

> […]indigenous spirituality lives and breathes in our Pacific person and personhood. In so doing, it celebrates what is core to indigeneity in the Pacific: our names and our naming; our knowing, being and seeing; and our identities and sense of belonging (Tui Atua, 2017, p xi).

Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017) share their concerns for the life and future of Indigenous spirit regarding the ways it is embodied and embedded in being and identity (subjectivity). The body of cultural knowledge production has to navigate the influences of hegemonic research practice which (although it predates neoliberalism) continues to demoralise and separate the physical and

[28] Samoan word for love
[29] Cook Islands word for love
[30] Tongan word for love
[31] Hawaiian word for love

spiritual from the 'real' in our secularised, globalised and digitised communities (p xi). Neoliberalism exacerbates this phenomenon.

Tui Atua puts the problem like this:

> [We must] open our eyes to the damage that is being caused to the Indigenous body politic by ungrounded philosophising and lazy theorising, on the one hand, and by the politically and ethically ambivalent monoculture of neoliberal consumerism that our Island nations have knowingly and unknowingly bought, into, on the other (2017, p xi).

As Tui Atua explains, the separation of the spiritual and the physical or 'de-linking' has severe consequences for Samoan peoples. It fragments and fosters separation of roles and commitments that tend to come from outside of Pacific Indigenous understandings. The process of decolonising requires a mobilising of political and structural decolonisation. According to Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017), this involves not only confronting Palagi[32] thinking but also mobilising Indigenous thinking through rigorous theorising with Pacific philosophy (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). Their book *The Relational self; Decolonising Personhood in the Pacific* is useful for its analysis of the representation of discourse in thinking or unthinking notions of Pacific personhood. It suggests that the reader first critique their positionality and subjectivity. This initiates a process of deterritorialising 'colonised' personhood and reterritorialising the Indigenous Pacific personhood. They authors argue that more is needed than 'liuliu – reconstructing', such as an associated theoretical stance within poststructuralist philosophy or thinking regarding language constraints.

Vai and Nabobo-Baba suggest that "we cannot just reconstruct […] A foundationless decolonisation process would end up either repeating what we want to deconstruct or unreflectively removing or adopting foreign worldviews as our foundation" (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017, p. 6). These authors invite a re-grounding of decolonising of personhood to substantiate a relationality that is key to Indigenous cultural and faith traditions of Pacific peoples. These authors invite a grounding of decolonising of personhood, decolonising the quality or

[32] Palagi - Samoan term for fair skin or European

condition of being. This grounding " […] has to emerge from the itulagi[33] of the people" (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017, p. 6).

The decolonising agenda has provoked an Indigenous struggle to reclaim lands, language and knowledge (Smith, 2012). Dominant forms of western philosophy produce certain conditions of the human subject. An example is the relationship of human to land as owner or tenant, an idea foreign to Pacific Indigenous concepts of self, which is both the individual and intimately associated with land itself. Consequently, Pacific concepts confront western ownership or commodification of land. The genealogical and biological relation presented in the concepts whenua (Māori), fanua (Samoan), fonua (Tongan), all directly suggest that land is placenta, the life-giving force before birth and the sustaining life-force after birth and death. The human subject here in relation to land and its materiality is not separate. The hierarchy of relations is contested here; human ownership (as property) versus the agentic life force of whenua.

Damon Salesa shares insights into the shared cosmogonies between Samoan and Māori conceptualisations:

> In Sāmoa there is a great division between Pouliuli (darkness/ignorance) and Mālamalama (light/understanding), and amongst New Zealand Māori there is a periodisation that began with Te Kore (nothingness or potentiality), followed by Te Po (Darkness), Te Ao Marama (The World of Light). Such periods also frame other sequences, as in Polynesian oral literatures and traditions (Salesa, 2014, p. 40).

[33] The Samoan term Itulagi: Itu means side, and lagi, means heavens. Itulagi literally means 'side of heavens'. This itu constitutes ones' thinking, including culture, family, religion, people, land, ancestors, ocean, language, spirits and the tualagi – *universe* (Vaai & Casimira Cited in Toso & Matapo, 2018).

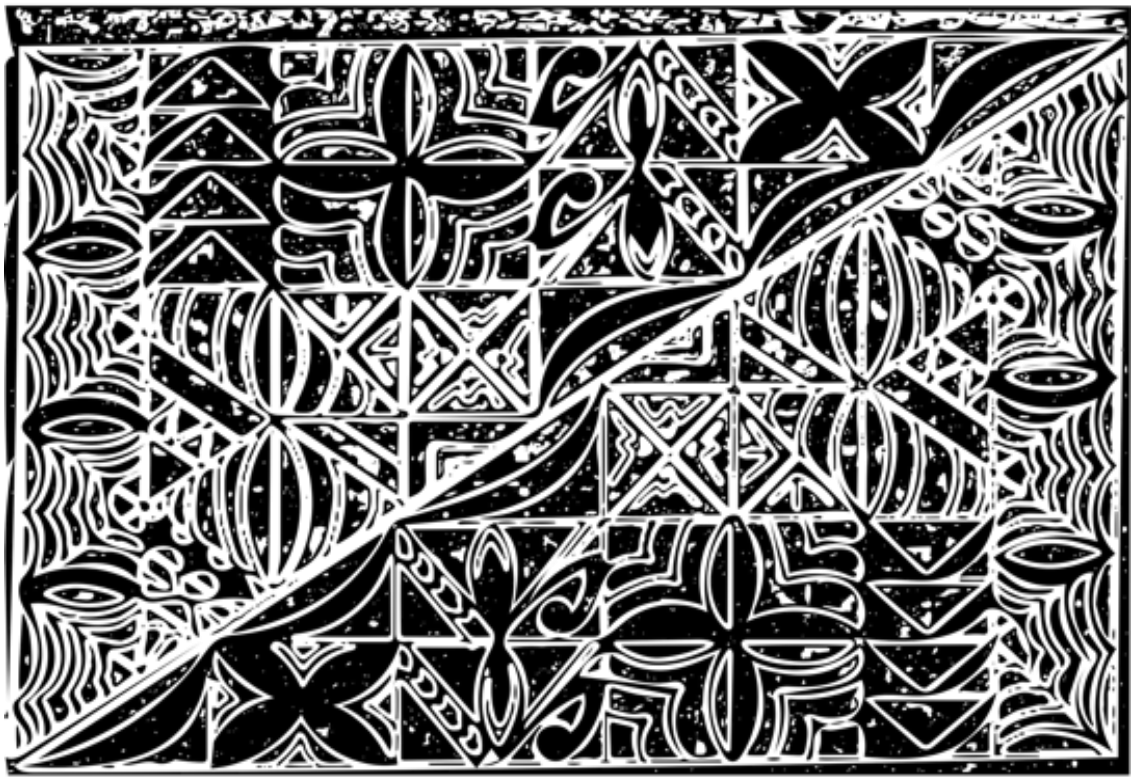

***Figure 12.*** **Between-the-in-between.** The image calls upon various Pacific cultural symbols and is reflected into two parts, a nexus of past folding into the present. Symbols like the ones presented here are woven, etched, printed, carved, and tattooed into skin, as a physical manifestation of spirit, belonging and connection. You will notice the flecks throughout, imperfect and irregular, the contours or lines that emerge and rupture from symbolic cultural constructs, the generative space of in-between. Jacoba Matapo, (2018). Digital Image.

## Relational self and the hologram

The concept of self in Pacific societies as explained by Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017) is always a relational-self, constituted by relations, where the relational-self is the part of the whole and the whole part of the self that is irreducible to the sum of its parts. Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017) have set a challenge for the decolonisation of personhood that involves a twofold process – reconfiguring personhood of the individual and of the collective – and state:

> The challenge in the current decolonisation of personhood [...] How can Pacific Islanders rediscover this relational aspect of their personhoods, not only to address the issues at hand but also to reconstruct a life that is fully communal yet embraces individuality and distinctiveness? (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017, p. 6-7).

The need for Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and cosmological understandings and philosophy must be considered in global conversations. If this is done, Pacific Indigenous

understandings can support how Pacific peoples are governed encouraging self-determination of ownership of decisions regarding land, seas, people and knowledge (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). Walker (cited in Mika, 2017) refers to the internalisation of colonisation as an Indigenous spiritual disease. From an Indigenous position, epistemology as a philosophy of knowledge includes connectedness to lived experience and the application of intelligence that brings meaning or life to what is worth knowing (Meyer, 2003). These understandings are deeply embedded in cosmogony, creation stories that generate intimate ties to land, waters, and skies. For Pacific personhood, human understanding of 'subject' is constituted in the spiritual and cultural context. This raises the question of contemporary notions of spirituality. Indigenous spirituality, as multiplicitous in nature, cannot be reduced to 'dogmatic religious principles' (Meyer, 2003, p. 93).

Meyer, (2003) in her study of Indigenous Hawaiian epistemology conceptualises the distinctive Hawaiian vistas of knowledge as epistemology. She presents the distinct Hawaiian concepts of knowledge as 'planes', which, in effect, eschews the siloing of categories. Each plane intersects and traverses ontology through capacities of being and personhood. The various planes are detailed as follows:

- Spirituality and knowing – Cultural contexts of knowledge
- Cultural nature of the senses– Expanding notions of empiricism
- Relationship and knowledge – Notions of self through other
- Utility and knowledge – Ideas of wealth and usefulness
- Words and knowledge – Causality in language
- The mind/body question– Alternatives to the illusion of separation

(Meyer, 2003, p. 92).

Each plane intersects and traverses ontology through capacities of being and personhood. Meyer (2013) claims there are ancient knowledge systems around the world that are fundamentally based upon three ways to experience knowledge. The first is via the physical, outside world, and is scientific and objective. The second is via the inside world, that being subjective, and engages thought process and interiority, to support understanding and meaning of phenomena. The third is via the quantum world, intersecting, experimental and transpatial, also known as the spiritual element – but not experienced as religious dogma. Meyer (2013) asserts that, in Indigenous

thinking, these three categories of knowledge experience are neither linear nor sequential. She frames the three knowledge experiences in Indigenous thinking as a trilogy of an event that is all simultaneous and holographic. Her metaphor of the hologram offers three beams of experience: body, mind and spirit. Holographic epistemology for Indigenous thinking offers opportunities for rigour in understanding the inseparable whole and interconnection.

Meyer (2013) suggests:

> Here is where Indigenous realities, contexts and understandings can benefit from cross fertilisation with Western classical sciences because the hologram is made with modern techniques, but its implications are best understood with an ancient mind (p. 94).

The dimension of the physical world (body) outside of phenomena can be referred to as the foundation of science, positivism and its empirical verifications, and is experienced through senses. Fundamental objectivity is relevant to Indigenous knowing, which encompasses awareness of physical, external encounters. The physical holographic beam concedes that knowledge comes from direct experience. The weight, time, mass is sensed through the body – where muscles remember the weight of spoiled breadfruit, or the best seasons for growing, for tilling the earth when soil is supple and fertile. Meyer (2013) argues that Hawaiian Indigenous scholarship calls for an evolution of empiricism and respect for other ways of knowing that include the spiritual/quantum and subjective reality immersed in ancestral knowing.

The holographic beam that is of the mind includes all that is subjective, mental and internal. From Indigenous knowing the mind contours relative truth – what is not yet actualised however is available through idea, reflection and thought (both priori and a priori). The mind brings awareness to experience, meaning, purpose and interconnection. The capacities of mind to affect body and vice versa are entangled in knowing (more than the firing of neurons in the brain). The body-thought assemblage brings together these affective capacities (remembering that each laser beam of the hologram is not in isolation). As Meyer (2013) explains: "The mind beam hologram is about insideness, the richness and infinity of difference found in our own humanity […] It is the maturing agency of collective and individual thinking" (Meyer, 2013, p. 96).

Spirit – the holographic beam that is transpatial, cultural and non-physical. Meyer (2013) cautions us not to confuse the Indigenous spiritual dimension as a religious idea, a dogmatic practice or a superstition. Like the mind realm, the dimension of Indigenous spirit has been proven, sung, written about, woven, carved and etched into ancestral understandings, telling us that to be human is to know we are more than our physical bodies and minds. Again, all three holograms draw upon an interdependence of body, mind and spirit (Meyer, 2013). Indigenous intelligence as an enduring pattern of thinking, like quantum sciences, is concerned with the unseen configurations that are causal connexions that alter the capacity of bodies (human and non-human).

*Tina (Mother)*

***Figure 13.*** **Tina (Mother).** Jacoba Matapo, (25th December 2019). Photograph. Agagoa, Saaga, Upolu, Samoa.

**Mususmusu:**
*For my mother* - She watches on as her legs won't allow her to walk further down, her muscles remember the ground. This is the first time in fifty-five years she has returned to these waters, to Agagoa – the place of her childhood. Waves crash, rumbling-rhythmically-repeating, her heart beating, rhythmically repeating. Grains of sand scratching at her toes, toes grounded, reminding her of home. Grandchildren playing, she watches on as her legs won't allow her to walk further down, but her muscles remember– the wind carrying sounds and spray and warmth. To immerse myself in the waters – Oh Moana, I have missed you.

*I now dive into Moana.*

The waters of the Pacific have been reconceptualised by Pacific Indigenous scholars and as research(er) I aim to engage scholarship to think-with-Moana in epistemology. In decolonising anthropological constructs of the 'smallness' of Pacific Island nations. I start with Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa (1994), who conceptualised Oceania as a body of water open to spatiotemporal realms, which connects Pacific peoples in genealogy and cultural knowledge as well as geography. Hau'ofa (1994) argues Pacific Indigenous scholarship is vital to the strengthening of ancestral cultures to regain lost sovereignty[34] within the Pacific region (Hau'ofa, 1994). Rethinking Moana and Indigenous Pacific subjectivity generates possibilities for fluid identity formations that are both multiple and complex, including essential ties regarding specific locations (ancestral lands), cultural knowledge and sovereignty. Peoples of Oceania share many values and beliefs that are brought together by the common sea that surrounds and shapes culture.

Karen Ingersoll (2016), in her theorising of Hawaiian philosophy, conceptualises Hawaiian epistemology as seascape epistemology. Her theorising of Hawaiian Indigenous notions of home and away and the complexities of dynamic local difference are not presented in opposition (as binary), but relational. Ingersoll's (2016) calls seascape epistemology 'waves of knowing' which describes a relationship to the ocean as a seascape epistemology. The ways in which the Pacific ocean is connected to shared histories of migration and cultural exchange amongst Pacific peoples is also considered as part of the culturally specific differences, such as unique history, arts, language and geography.

Seascape epistemology as a basis for decolonising methodology for Pacific peoples, reveals hidden linkages between lands and water that speak to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Seascape epistemology and Moana onto-epistemology express processual movements of

[34] Sovereignty, from a western position, places the human-subject as agent over land, including governance over land. This position that privileges humanist power over land as other is contested in many Indigenous scholarship debates, including Māori, Sāmoan and Tongan positionality to co-exist with land or earth. Thus, land is recognised as having it's own mauri (life force) and agency.

'decolonising', which question and critique political, social, economic, and historical discourses of knowledge (particularly those that have marginalised Indigenous knowledge).

Returning to Ingersoll's (2016) imagery of seascape epistemology, she characterises the ebbs and flows of Moana as transient and dynamic:

> Seascape epistemology engages a discourse about place that recognises the ocean's transient and dynamic composition; waves are constantly formed and broken, sucked up from the very body that gave it life (Ingersoll, 2016, p. 20).

## Segue into subjectivity

Bringing together experimentations with Pacific Indigenous thinking and quantum physics, I wish to engage with two particular concepts introduced in the previous sections. The first concept 'spatiotemporal', pulls together distinct principals of spatial configurations, that is proximity and function along the continuum of time (Barad, 2007). The relationship between the spatiotemporal and subjectivity is relevant to Pacific Indigenous thinking. One such example that demonstrates a reconfiguring of space-time from a Pacific Indigenous reference is the concept of vā (Samoan and Tongan). Vā is a relational concept of space-time which positions the 'self' as a network-of-relations, continually (re)created in an assemblage of multiplicities, including ancestors, the environment, and others. Spatiotemporally ‘vā’ conceptually locates the 'self' in and with specific relational ties to place and people along a non-linear time-continuum plane that is inextricably linked to present, future and past. Vaai (2015) explains the vā as an affirming force, whereby relationality constitutes harmony in and between the environment, others, self and the divine. In this manner, vā offers spatiotemporal dimensions to affirm difference as a coexisting force with the recognisable or representational. Vā expresses an ontological commitment and mutual respect for difference, variation, and the other ways to generate harmony-in-relations.

The second concept, ‘transpatial’, is an axiological dimension, which is not constituted in the spatiotemporal (actual) existence. Rather, it is the interiority or molecular fibres of being, such as

culture, spirit, belief systems, kinship and ethics. Applying the transpatial sphere to the Pacific notion of self as shared by Vaai (2015), opens a rethinking of subjectivity as an individualistic process of interpretation or representation of phenomena. For example, the word *Tagata*[35] renders both singular, and a plurality of being, in which the individual is the community and the community is the individual, and the community is inclusive of ancestors' past (Vaai, 2015). Transpatial relational ties are present in Pacific oral histories that affirm kinship with an animate and inanimate matter in a co-evolution and co-creation of inter-subjectivity. For example, it is not uncommon in Samoa or the Cook Islands to see rocks placed within sacred cultural sites and locations as rocks (inanimate) embody their own mauri (life-force). The mauri of non-human others do not require human influence to provide mauri, it is already inherent in the natural world.

## Philosophy and metaphysics

There are specific tensions for Indigenous knowledge, mainly the colonisation of knowledge systems. Indigenous knowledge has its own episteme, philosophy and scientific logic. Despite the appeal of logic in western philosophical thinking, it is founded on its own metaphysics that can be traced back to ancient Greece (presented in chapter six, part two). The position of metaphysics as centred in the human subject is dominant in western philosophical thinking. A concern raised by Heidegger and Derrida in traditional metaphysics is the notion of metaphysics of presence' which relies on predetermined meanings attached to objects or reality. An essentialist position of metaphysics excludes the conditions or capacities for which presence arises. The implications for philosophy, are the very contradictions of the 'process' of philosophy, such as the abstraction of philosophy to replicate itself. Philosophy as such becomes limited in its capacity for difference in creation of concepts as it becomes a rational and logical position, situated in representing things of the world. Pursuit towards a single identity for a 'thing' has a long-privileged genealogy in the west that places a presupposition of object rather than trying to understand the context of things. The philosophical implications of colonisation have diffused western metaphysics into the corpus of Pacific education philosophies and pedagogy.

[35] Tagata – A Pacific reference to name a group of people or a person (common expression across Polynesia).

To deviate from a western view – I present a poem written by Vaai (2017b) who expresses his position of Pacific-Indigenous relational ontology.

Vaai (2017b) writes:

**We are Because we don't have**
We don't *have* the spirit
We *are* spirit
We don't *have* land
We *are* the land
We don't *have* the ocean
We *are* the ocean
We don't *have* relationship
We *are* relationship
We don't *have* stories
We *are* the story
Rooted
Connected
Fixed yet fluid in bonds of
Being in *Areness*
Born of the depths
Of *In*ness
I am 'in' the community
The community is
'In' me

I live
Because
We *are*
A chorus of
Inextricable relatedness
Breathing concords
Of differences
Savouring variations
Of unity

*Have!…*
And perish in
A unison of loss
Uttered by
One-truth ideologies
Secured by
Systems of oneness

*Are!*
An all becoming source
Whose becoming
I become
A genesis of harmony
Visible
In the sleeps of the stones
In the breaths of the trees
In the dreams of animals

In the whispers of clouds
In the speeches of waves
In the walking mountains
In the re-turns of flowers
In the rhythms of life and death

We *are*
Because
We don't *have*

(p. 283-284)

Knowing what to be or to think directly influences human relationship to the world. As an initial ground of perception, the metaphysical gives rise to the belief that an essentialised being can be obtained and, on these grounds, the problem of colonisation arose (Mika, 2017). The metaphysics of presence as essentialised has infiltrated the philosophies of the west, which are inescapable in all their current forms of language and concepts. Western scholarship imposes this essentialised position and many Indigenous peoples are compelled to adapt to these conventions. German philosopher Heidegger's (1972) critique of Aristotle's metaphysics is that the 'idea' of a thing is present as a composite of components. Therefore, nature as things could be conceptualised as already configured entities; however, it is the capacity of human reason that posits the appearance of things (Mika, 2017). Entities are then positioned relative to other conscious things… so I ask, is *being* in this regard a construct that privileges rationality in being?

Heidegger (1972) contested the notion of an essentialised being, as he argued this notion diminishes the human capacity to think in an authentic way. Heidegger (1972) confronted the limits of language, predetermined by the expectation of everyday representation, language as phenomenon and language as a communicative device. Textualised representation in language become the 'stuffing' of humanist knowledge; its semiotics privileging the validity of that knowledge. Interpretivist research paradigms thus become problematic for Pacific Indigenous philosophy as it grounds representational modes associated to conventional humanist constructs. Māori, for example, have argued that language has its own mauri – which may help to reposition the power of language as a humanist-centred convention or expression when thinking Pacific Indigenous philosophy.

The misconception that language is a useful entity to be drawn on as a device 'to be used' could be reconceptualised as 'language having us' and not 'we have language' (Mika, 2017). The subjugation caused by colonisation can prevent Indigenous peoples from communicating other-ways-of-being due to the limits of western language conventions and semiotics. Constructs of language force one to draw attention to what is in the immediate, emphasising modes of expressing representation. Meyer (2005) emphasises language as having its own spirit connected to ancestors. Through creative-expression and an ontological-commitment to Pacific Indigenous thought, I explore creative components of language (via cultural arts practices) while traversing the constructs of academic writing. I question what this means for me as an Indigenous writer – writing my becoming-research.

*Breathe and pause, the language of thesis is writing me.*

## Chanting Pacific cosmogony and concepts of creation

How does chant evoke spiritual connection and identity through vibration?

Repetition and words to allow for an alternative human subjectivity to emerge, another voice – bodies collide when voices, chant and song carry ancestral knowing. How do tone and vibration reverberate sound expression? (Movement in breathing-air-muscles-blood-flow-life-creation).

I present an experimentation with Pacific wisdom to think with body-spirit-spatiotemporal-Moana, I immerse myself in chant:

> **<u>Solo o le va</u>**
> *(Samoan cosmogony chant).*
>
> Le 'upu a le Tuli, 'o lea ata lea o Tagaloa-savali, ia Tagaloa-fa'a-tutupu-nu'u—
> Galu lolo, ma galu fātio'o,
> Galu tau, ma galu fefatia'i: —
> 'O le auau peau ma le sologā peau,
> Na ona fa'afua a e le fati: —
> Peau ta'oto, peau ta'alolo,
> Peau mālie, peau lagatonu,
> Peau ālili'a, peau la'aia,
> Peau fātia, peau taulia,

Peau tautala, peau lagava'a,
Peau tagatā, peau a sifo mai gagae, O lona soa le auau tata'a.
"Tagaloa e, taumuli ai, Tagaloa fia mālōlō;
E mapu i le lagi Tuli mai vasa;
Ta lili'a i peau a lalō."
Fea le nu'u na lua'i tupu? Manu'a tele na mua'i tupu.
Se papa le tai lē a o'o atu; Ma le Masina e solo manao;
O le la se tupua lē fano;
E tupu le vai, tupu le tai, tupu le lagi.
Ifo Tagaloa e asiasi; Tagi i sisifō, tagi i sasaē;
Na tutulu i le fia tula'i.
Tupu Savai'i ma mauga loa, Tupu Fiti ma le atu Toga atoa; Tupu Savai'i; a e muli
Le atu Toga, ma le atu Fiti, Atoa le atu nu'u e iti;
Ma Malae-Alamisi, Samata-i-uta ma Samata-i-tai:

**Solo o le va** –
**(***Samoan cosmogony chant – English Translation).*

The word of the Tuli, which is the emblem of Tagaloa the messenger, to Tagaloa the creator of lands — The condition of things before creation began.
Rollers flooding, rollers dashing,
Rollers struggling, rollers clashing: —
The sweep of waters, and the extension of waves,
Surging high but breaking not: —
Waves reclining, waves dispersing,
Waves agreeable, waves that cross not,
Waves frightsome, waves leaping over,
Waves breaking, waves warring,
Waves roaring, waves upheaving,
The peopled waves, waves from east to west,
Whose companion is the wandering currents.
The Tuli speaks.
"O Tagaloa, who sittest at the helm [of affairs],
Tagaloa [Tagaloa's bird] desires to rest;
Tuli from the ocean must rest in the heavens; Those waves below affright my breast."
The lands begin to appear.
Where is the land which first upsprang?
Great Manu'a first rose up. Beats on [Manua's] rock his well-loved waves;
On it the moon's desired light looks down;
The sun, like statue, changeless found, [Darts his refulgent beams around].
The waters in their place appear,
The sea too occupies its sphere;
The heavens ascend, [the sky is clear];
To visit [the scene] Tagaloa comes down;
To the west, to the east, his wailing cry he sends;
A strong desire to have a place whereon to stand possesses him;
[he bids the lands arise.]
Savai'i with its high mountain then sprang up,
And up sprang Fiti and all the Tongan group;
Savai'i arose [I say]; and afterwards
The Tongan group, and the group of Fiti;
[Together with] all the groups of small lands;
With the home of Alamisi [the two Samatas arose]—
Samata inland and Samata by the sea

(Adapted from Fraser,1897, p 19 – 36).

*My response to this chant as a process of connecting to creation and personal genealogies:*

***Tagaloa***
*(hyperlinked)*

*(Matapo, 2021)*

*Fall on me*
*shadows of the past,*
*to bend the*
*straight lines that I see.*

*Lines that cut,*
*sever,*
*divide.*
*The power of agency.*

*Whisper your wind*
*in my ear.*
*May I hear*
*your story?*

*Rumblings*
*of life rhythm.*
*More than*
*words*
*that hold*
*(hu) man's glory.*

*Fall on me*
*shadows of the past,*
*that my spirit*
*may come to know,*

*Break boundaries.*
*The separation*
*of who's knowledge*
*matters most.*

*What is knowledge?*
*The line that separates*
*darkness*
*from light.*

*How about*
*cosmogony of*
*co-existence,*
*like when day*
*married the night.*

*Fall on me*
*shadows of the past.*
*Breathe (in)ter-subjectivity*
*of being and knowing*
*with the world*
*a collective agency.*

Poem and video by author Jacoba Matapo (2018).

# Chapter six: Pacific Indigenous philosophy and critical posthuman theory

## Part One: Moana onto-epistemology

Three research questions underpin this chapter, proposing a deterritorialising and reterritorialising of the human subject in Pasifika education and Pasifika education research. These questions are:

- How does Pasifika education research mobilise Pacific Indigenous philosophy to generate new understandings grounded in Pacific onto-epistemologies?
- How do Pacific Indigenous methodologies deterritorialise and reterritorialise the human subject in Pasifika education research?
- How can Pacific Indigenous philosophy generate new possibilities for Pasifika education research?

### Reimagining water-space-body-forces-flows and mobilising Pacific Indigenous philosophy

Part one of this chapter engages both Indigenous Pacific philosophy and posthuman theory to 'think-with-theory' in research. In decentring a human position, I bring my attention to the materiality (ebbs and flows) and fluidity of Moana. For Pacific peoples, Moana generates personal and collective connections. The life force of Moana (its capacities) interplay with cosmos and creation and has been storied extensively in the epistemologies of Pacific peoples. Manulani Meyer (2014) reminds us that Pacific Indigenous epistemology reveals the spirit of Indigenous knowledges as ancient capacities linking peoples to land, water, and language that moves *being* beyond cognitive accumulation.

The sacred kinship between Moana and Pacific Indigenous peoples is ancient (Meyer, 2003; 2013). The collective body of Pacific peoples are enmeshed in the histories and genealogies shared with Moana. The collective body (of people) are a visceral manifestation of Moana; a Moana-collective-assemblage. Karlo Mila (2014) developed a concept, '*mana*[36] *Moana*', that affirms the connection and affinity of Pasifika peoples to Moana (Mila, 2014). The waters that join Pasifika peoples are inscribed in Pacific collective understandings (Mila, 2014) of subjectivity in the same way that the term 'Tagata o le Moana' suggests. Tui Atua (2013) reminds

[36] Samoan version of Mana – Spiritual power that underpins dignity

us that, for Samoan peoples, Moana is home, kin, a teacher and connector to our forebears. *Vasa*[37] is the honorific name of Moana for Samoan peoples, bringing together words vā, referring to space and *sā*[38] that which is sacred. I move in my writing towards Samoan cosmogonies. The chant in chapter five speaks to the people descended from Tagaloa, progenitor of all things. The chanting voice expresses reverence for the capacities (forces and flows) of water that move and shift, exercising power as an agentic partner to the peopled waves. I question, how does this particular relational-self, in coexistence with Moana, provoke difference in human-thought-experience? The following image is my impression of Moana, molecular and rhizomic.

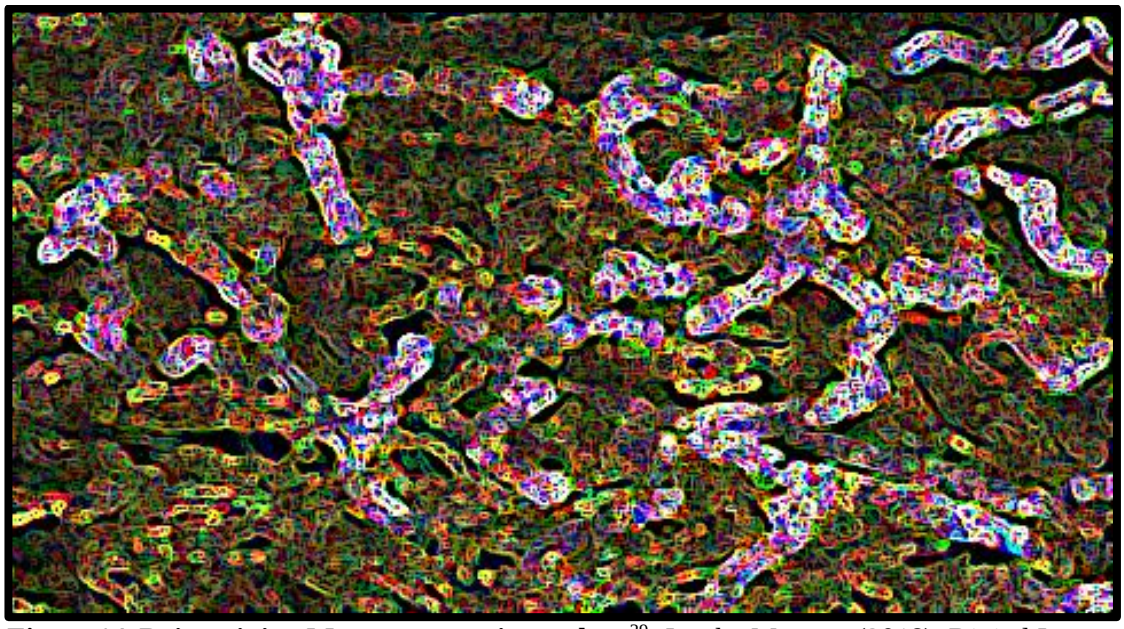

***Figure 14.*** **Reimagining Moana onto-epistemology**[39]**.** Jacoba Matapo, (2018). Digital Image.

For a moment, in this process of writing I will pull out components of Moana as a method for mobilising concepts, sketching Moana as an assemblage with varying composites for thinking differently in Pasifika education research.

[37] Vasa, an honorific Samoan term, refers to the ocean yet suggests more than simply a body of water, evokeing the entanglement of ethical relationships between human and non human, and a shared genealogy.
[38] Samoan term for sacred, forbidden or taboo.
[39] Moana onto-epistemology: A concept in mobilising Pacific Indigenous philosophy. The image depicts the lines of water, force, flows and trajectory – some dominate while others continuously break from. Voids are present, with matter – spaces to move in and through. Lines are ever-emerging and generative.

## Water

Human beings emerge from water ever-present in our primordial biology. The human body as an entity is fundamentally a composition of water. Our tears and sweat are salty water (Teaiwa, 2017). We share an embryonic connection with water. Water is life giving and in Pacific thinking has its own lifeforce or spirit as an agentic entity. Water in all its variations and sources has significance to the vitality of human life. For growth of the foetus, the placenta holding water nurtures the child through critical phases of development. Humanity has a reliance on water for living and survival and is illustrated in cultural practices around the world. Water has shaped human history, from migration, development of social and economic infrastructures, empires, states and nations. Hau'ofa (1999) cited in Hau'ofa & Juniper (2001) reminds us of our ethical obligation to waters and the flows that are akin to all within the Pacific region:

> The ocean shapes us at a physical level and a cultural level. The physical reality is it's the same water that washes here, that washes there, on all our shores. And you can extend the metaphor back and forth. We must protect it environmentally and culturally (p. 24).

Water as a concept is enmeshed in Pacific Indigenous conceptualisations of spirituality. For instance, *vaerua*[40] for Cook Islands Māori, positions water (vae) as two parts (rua). This conceptualising of personhood in spirit brings together two intersecting elements as a continuum; the flows of the incorporeal and corporeal bodies. The continuum of flows could also be seen in terms of delineating a dualist view of conscious and unconscious thought, as the corporeal body affects incorporeal bodies (and vice versa). For Pacific Indigenous peoples, water is also embedded in cultural practices. Water-being-knowing is expressed through dance, song, and artefacts.

*…her body moves in an expression of water as* vaivai[41] *(fluid) in dance, connects both dancer-others in a performative knowing-relationship with Moana…*

[40] Cook Islands Māori for spirit or spirituality.
[41] Samoan term for fluid, watery, soft.

## Water as experience:

Experience sets the context for thought. However it is not necessarily bound in one's own subjectivity or perception, to be rendered significant by representation. Experience is multidimensional and qualitative, and it is embedded in the real (actual) and virtual, where subjects are constituted in relations with experience itself[42]. The process of thinking is secondary to thought, as thought is subjectless (open to difference), made up of a network of relations (Semetsky, 2010). The body as a thought instrument acts as a conduit of both interiority and exteriority that traverses experience and experimentation.

*The warm body quickly immersed in cold salty water; the shock of the cold stunts a breath, waves fluctuate, the body jerks, muscles respond…*

*…thought-action in muscle memory*.

## Space

Space in Pacific thought has dynamic relations and is constituted through location, relationships, time, and matter[43] in a continuum that is inextricably connected. At the genesis of creation the void of time-space-matter generated potentiality for matter to self-organise. For Māori, this is referred to as *Te Kore*[44] the void or chaos. The Māori conception of Te Kore, conceptually challenges the notion of a 'void' as a lacking framed by an absence or nothingness. On the contrary, Te Kore (void) offers powerful-relation-between bodies in-process-creation that produces unlimited potential for creation.

***…in the beginning there was nothing…***

*…but how can something come from nothing?*

*…If I come from nothing, am I nothing?*

[42] By way of individuation via haeccity (exists along the plane of immanence – pure difference).
[43] Human and non-human

## Vā – Space/Time/Matter/Continuum

Different Pacific Indigenous groups live the philosophy of vā, as a relational ontology of being that connects experience in knowing, becoming and relating which includes human and non-human worlds (Enari & Matapo, 2020). Vā is the space that brings together, and the space between relations of entities (Wendt, 1999). Vā as conceptualised by Pasifika peoples in New Zealand demonstrates the versatility of a Pacific philosophy as nomadic (Anae, 2010; Tuagalu, 2008). The vā has been described in different variations, each tracing back to specific cultural ontologies. For instance, the Tongan and Samoan concepts of vā denote the spatiality of a 'between' which gives rise to an emergent yet context-specific set of relations that are not framed through Eurocentric humanistic tendencies. Thinking-vā in writing, I share this performative expression through poetry:

**Who am I?**
(Matapo, J. 2020)

I am the vā between the Pacific and Europe –

*I am the colonised and coloniser, born in lands trying to decolonise*

*English as a second language – or is it third?*

Vā is my language – my language-in-being

I am the vā in blood, muscle, bone and earth

*The visceral spaces of transnational Moana identity with ties to ancestral lands*

I am the vā – a relational continuum

*The reach of ancestors past-present in the vā*

***Figure 15.*** **Who am I?** Jacoba Matapo, (2020). Poem.

Another configuration of vā in Pasifika education is the research, policy partnership guidelines *Teu le va* (Airini et al., 2010), which means nurturing/safeguarding/maintaining the vā. This resource was developed as a guide for policy development in Pasifika education. *Teu le va* applied to the context of education policy-research-relations attends to the complexities of ethics for Pasifika peoples, taking seriously the spiritual and secular aspects of the social relationship.

Furthermore, Airini, Anae, and Mila-Schaaf (2010) suggest that *Teu le va* has the capacity to inform more equitable and empowering outcomes for Pasifika students. They also demonstrate the mobility of *Te le va*, as it brings together both Pasifika and Māori peoples as *teina-tuakana*[45] and *tuakana-teina* with shared histories and ties to Moana.

As they explain:

> At its core, *Teu le va* is about having a high-quality education system that is equitable, responsive and empowering to all. It acknowledges the tangata whenua status of Māori and the protection of Māori learners' rights through the Treaty of Waitangi. It also affirms the teina-tuakana relationship of Pacific nations peoples and Māori within Aotearoa–New Zealand and the tuakana-teina (Pasifika/Māori) relationship within the ancient histories of Te Moana Nui a Kiwa. *Teu le va* is a collective call to action for all to take responsibility for the success of all. Pasifika students' educational success is vital to Aotearoa–New Zealand's success in developing a strong economy and healthy society (Airini, et al., 2010, pp. 5-6).

At the centre of the education research-policy framework, *Teu le va* is an equity-based, responsive description of a notion of 'quality' education. *Teu le va* maintains a strong presence of a critical social-justice ethos for transformative outcomes for Pasifika learners. While, these critical conceptualisations are useful in highlighting social disparities, I wonder how a more radical reading of *Teu le va* may generate other ways of thinking vā in the education research-relationship to include the non-human as part of the social justice assemblage.

## Body

As a body of water, Moana or Oceania,[46] as Hau'ofa (1993) calls it, continues to be at the heart of Pacific epistemology in contemporary decolonising research. Hau'ofa (1993; 1998) reorients

[45] Māori concept of a sibling relationship. Tuakana refers to the older (more experienced) sibling and teina refers to the younger sibling (less experienced). The relationship of teina-tuakana/tuakana-teina is often applied to that of of teacher and learner, the roles being interchangable depending on the context and situation of the teaching and learning relationship (MoE, 2009b).

[46] In the 1990s, Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa published a series of essays advocating for a regional 'Oceanic' identity for Pacific peoples based on a shared heritage with Oceania. 'Oceania' is derived from *l'Océanie*, a French colonial label for the Pacific that Hau'ofa reorients to draw attention to the cosmological and ecological significance of the sea for Pacific peoples (Keown, 2008).

‘Oceania’ away from its colonial roots and uses the term to reinvigorate Pacific Island peoples’ Oceanic epistemologies. He refers to Oceania as a body cosmologically and ecologically bound to Pacific peoples. This image of Oceania confronts the colonial geographical representation of the Pacific as a collection of small or tiny Islands. The body of water that surrounds the Pacific Islands are also the home and heritage for Pacific peoples (Hau’ofa, 1993). From an Indigenous position, Oceania is no respecter of the demarcated Imperial boundaries and this emphasises the inter-subjectivity of Oceanic peoples in shared histories (Mateata-Allain cited in Keown, 2008). Ingersoll (2016) reminds us of Moana’s capacity to be affected, in that no part of the liquid-body is ever stable, yet it has capacities to endure:

> Something does endure within this space and time: relationships that draw together sea’s collective components through engagement […] Seascape epistemology is movement’s sound, it’s taste and color, and it is the fluctuation of a process that joins the world together (p. 20).

As a body of water, Moana is composed of heterogenous particles open to be affected in relation to other bodies.

## Body - Collective/Individual/Corporeal/Incorporeal

A body comes into being when a number of heterogenous parts or particles via interaction and relations compound to form a dominant relation which then becomes the essence or power of that existing body. Each body subsists of its own mode of organisation (Baugh, 2010a). The body can exist in various forms, from the collective body to the individual (human or non-human), each with its own territories. The body as a whole is composed of parts having capacity to be affected by other bodies. The territories of a body are not static and are open to relations, such as the environment or internal milieu (sense).

The affective capacities of the sea’s pull is conceptualised in Māori by Williams (cited in Spillar, Barclay-Ker & Panoho, 2015, p. 91).

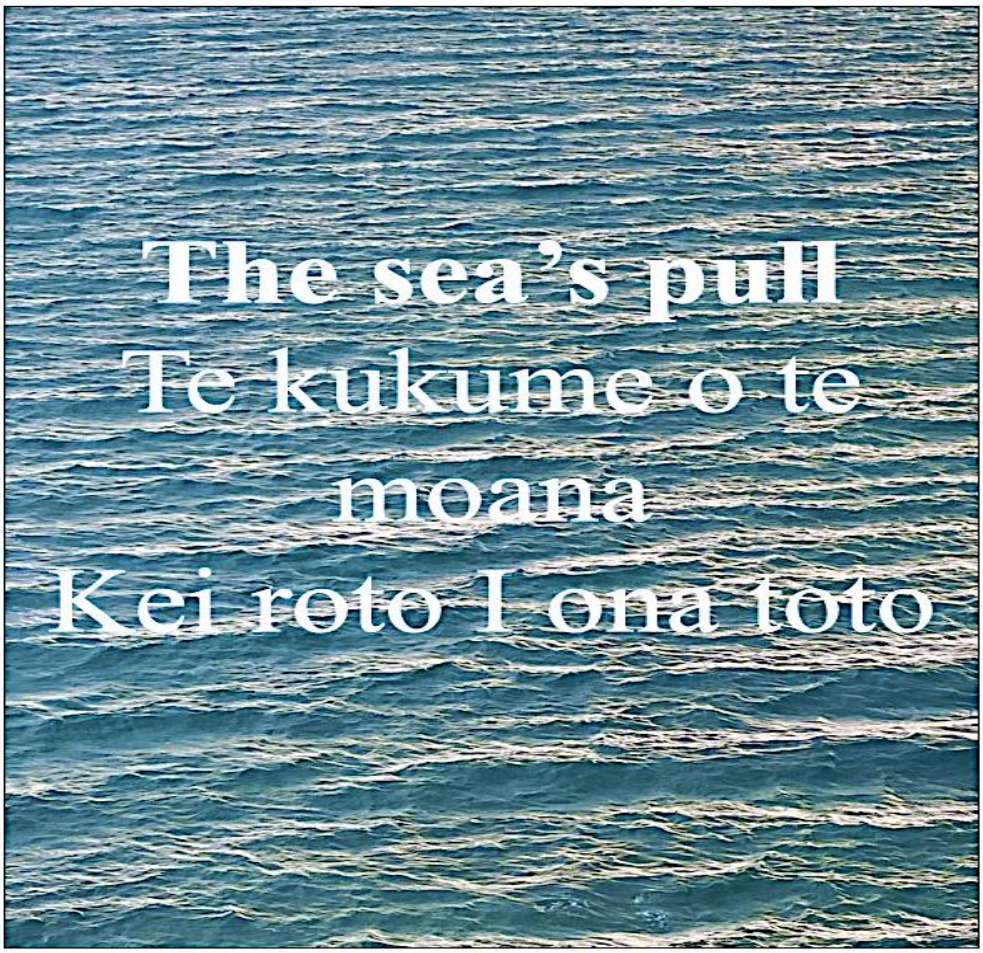


***Figure 16.*** **The sea's pull.** Jacoba Matapo and Williams (cited in Spillar, Barclay-Kerr & Panoho 2015, p. 91), (2018). Digital Image of Poem.

## Forces and Flows

The study of cosmology, the pull of the moon in shifting tides, is embedded in ancient Indigenous Pacific navigational epistemologies that recognise there are corporeal/incorporeal pulls that force water to move and shift. There are relations of body-affect-assemblage that are both active and reactive. Forces are constant and interact ceaselessly and, in doing so, constitute a dynamic world-in-flux (difference) that produces change or becoming. As Stagoll (2010) says "Force is contingent and infinite in the complex nature of lived reality" (p. 111). Forces exist as an inter-relationship with other forces and are temporary as they either pass out of existence or are in the process of becoming. Thus, no force can be repeated or represented to the same affect. In a capacity of becoming, products of forces may include physical, psychological, artistic, conceptual, social, spiritual, and economic, as "all of reality is an expression and consequence of interactions between forces, with each interaction revealed as an 'event' " (Stagoll, 2010, p. 111).

The flows of Moana produce force, generating both molar and molecular connections. The poem above (The seas pull), speaks to the flows and force of Moana having a molecular connection to blood flow and that, as such, they are generative. The relationship between both the flows and forces of Moana (waters) and the body or capacity of water-in-body is processual and constant. Bringing this concept of 'flow' into the process of analysis within this thesis I draw upon Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of molar and molecular flows. The molar connections generated through flows become those which are already represented or identified in thinking. These are the segmentary lines that are over-coded (characterised) under a dominant structure, for example, social class, capitalism or knowledge disciplines. The molar lines (or flows) are what re-territorialises thought from virtual (thought-experience) to actual. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) identify this concept of 'molar' as macropolitical. The molecular, on the other hand, is concerned with the process of creation and creativity and is what breaks from but never completely separates from the molar. The molecular is what deterritorialises molar rigid segmentarity[47]. Although it may seem that both the molecular and molar flows are in binary opposition, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest neither operate separately. "Every society, and every individual, are thus plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the other molecular" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p 213).

## Rhizome: Difference-in-being

The rhizome concept of epistemology introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) includes plateaus and lines of flight that are nomadic in the way they work to disrupt linear notions of inquiry. The rhizome is always interconnected and processual through an assemblage from which emerge multiple entries and exit points. The formations of rhizome bring together context and concept within a multiplicity of inseparable components. The rhizome moves fluidly in the same way as we have envisaged the capacities of Moana (as conceptualised in the previous section). The rhizomic overlapping of the writing-analysis-research assemblage supports the

[47] Segmentarity describes the clear cut and defined parameters of an object or subject identity.

conceptualising process of this thesis, particularly in ways that are affirming and conducive to Pacific Indigenous philosophy in thinking-difference and subjectivity. Unlike analytical modes presented in psychoanalysis and metacognition, the rhizome presents possibilities for analysis that are an alternative to a representation of thought.

The rhizome as described by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), produces new images of thought as 'imaginary' and is not to be conceived as one entity. The movement of rhizome and thinking difference is plugged-in and functions in a virtual and actual capacity. So, to imagine, opens opportunities for concept creation. The assemblage of difference-in-thought, deterritorialises and reterritorialises in actual-virtual interaction (Sellars, 2015). In the process of writing this thesis, the rhizome engages researcher-research-context-concept to express experience of research that includes the actual and virtual-thought of an experience. This process of rhizomic thinking, is as much personal as it is collective in agency and relations.

## Assemblage and rhizome

The concept of assemblage developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refers to a process of temporary arrangements or constellations of objects, expressions, bodies, qualities and territories that create new ways of functioning. The assemblage is a multiplicity shaped by a wide range of flows and emerges from the arranging process of heterogenous elements (Livesey, 2010). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) there are two axes to an assemblage, a vertical axis that positions territory/spatial and a horizontal axis that include forms of content and forms of expression. The assemblage as productive force (an unconscious production as real) involves complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to create new ways of functioning. Masney & Cole (2012) acknowledge that an assemblage doesn't just happen, it arises from untimely encounters and the sensations that attend these encounters.

The following image depicts both axes of the assemblage.

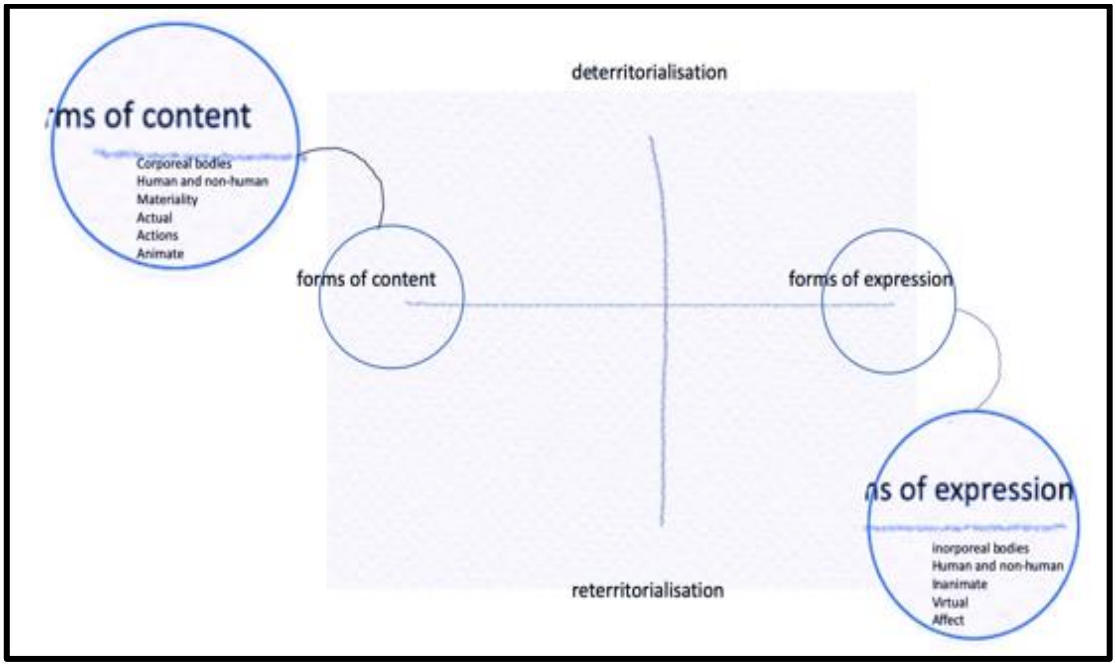


***Figure 17.*** **The assemblage axis as a processual continuum.** Jacoba Matapo, (adapted from Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), (2020). Digital Image.

**Musumusu**

Engaging in the writing process of this thesis and reconfiguring my relationship as rhizomic, immersed in multiplicity of subject-context-concept, I wonder how, as a researcher, I am plugged-in to the writing assemblage. Traversing experience of virtual and thought actual that is both embodied and embedded. I am reminded of the hologram that Meyer (2013) conceptualised as an Indigenous epistemology; the virtual in Indigenous thinking for me generates connection as a relational ontology in matter, the incorporeal and corporeal bodies that affect difference in my thinking and becoming. What is knowing in the body, before thought, takes the trajectory of a priori …

**pause –**

the rain is pounding outside and the warmth wraps my shoulders as the sunburn throbs. I'm sitting in my room in Aitutaki, trying to express my thinking-feeling-material, what breaks from the usual structure of writing or reflecting…

**pause –**

the fresh coconut oil scent takes me back to Samoa – oh, I miss home. I wonder if knowing is really about (un)knowing and...how does this regard for unknown present as affirmative and agentic in Pacific Indigenous thought…?

**pause –**

how have I managed to traverse two Pacific Islands simultaneously in my (undoing) of this embodied experience of writing, expressing?

The rhizome-in-thought already exists and for me as a writer (and you as the reader), tensions lie in semiotics and the limitations of the representationalism in textualised forms. A rhizome functions to disrupt and deterritorialise concepts to open up and generate different ways of thinking-sensing-becoming (Masney, 2013). Features of the rhizome include the virtual-actual interaction, immanence, difference and becoming. Each of these concepts, constitutes part of a milieu grounded upon the place of life and experience, an empirical transcendentalism where the experience is not grounded in the rationality of the individual but includes the virtual-thought experience (Deleuze, 1994; Masney, 2013). The processual movement of the rhizome works to decentre subject and counter representation and interpretation. Rhizomic thought is a feature of immanence in concept creation. Thus, rhizomic thinking could be seen as a way to disturb methodology offering rhizomic pathways that deterritorialise and reterritorialise image-of-thought (constituting a mobility of philosophy). The rhizome generates connections between organisations of power, semiotic chains and social struggles, which continue at any given point without one particular location of entry or departure (Masney, 2013). The rhizome always has multiple entry and exit points; thus, the complexity of the rhizome is more than an analysis tool as it is open to virtual-thought experience (Deleuze, 1994; Masney, 2013). Having traversed notions of Moana epistemology and rhizome as a method-process in research, I move on to present key tensions as a Samoan/Pasifika researcher.

## Indigenising research: The new-old ontologies in humanities and education

Precolonial Pacific Indigenous thinking has never been anthropocentric and, from this frame the human-subject has only ever co-existed in a shared cosmogony with the natural world, constituted in spirit-body-knowing-becoming. This worlded ontology (Mika, 2017), grounded in experience is shared in agentic and affirming forces that generate interconnection with world (human and non- human) towards a worlded-being-knowing. There is an interdependence between species, the vā that is shared in interactive ecologies that are expressive and process-oriented. This interdependence produces intersubjectivity for both human and non-human (Bignall & Rigney, 2019). This ontology (co-existing) brings the privileging of humanistic ideals and philosophy into question.

## Different knowledge traditions: Indigenising the posthuman

Writings of Pacific Indigenous scholars navigate different knowledge traditions and epistemological terrains. However, the political act of decolonising philosophy in postcolonial contexts seems to unite their efforts across various disciplines. Posthuman theorising, which draws upon the works of Deleuze and Guattari, shows the potential-mobility of philosophy as concept creation (process-ontology in concept creation).

The main intent of posthuman philosophical thought is to advance an anti-Imperial posthumanism, which engages process ontology (immanence) and an affirmative difference in thought-experience. As a Samoan-Pasifika-researcher-becoming, I am personally able to 'plug-in' avenues in such philosophical concepts, in my thinking-Indigenous -thought-experience. This does not mean that I have permission to conflate posthuman philosophy with Pacific Indigenous thought, rather, my ability to access these philosophical concepts opens a process-engagement in research to confront constraints in privileged knowledges, in human exceptionalism and even in writing-language-semiotics as a striated[48] convention.

> ***Pause-in-writing…***
>
> *This leads me to ask:*
>
> *How can both Indigenous philosophy and posthuman theory work together to affirm specificity in Pacific Indigenous knowledge, which is embedded in context, culture, genealogy, expression and cosmogony?*

For too long, Pacific Indigenous peoples, Indigenous ontology and epistemology have been 'othered' through a European Imperialist habit of thought which produces a negative ontology of difference (dialectic philosophy). Common philosophies of transformation including critical theory and deconstructionism are problematic as they associate difference with a form of

[48] Striation is that which is stratified. In this case, striation is a geopolitical concept that can be used to critique social and political positions and organisations of power, such as the state-machine; an exterior milieu and that which affects both interriority and exterriority of being.

negativity (e.g. desire[49] as lack) (Bignall, 2010). This negative ontology towards difference is also expressed in Pasifika education research, through the guise of equity provision, culturally 'responsive' pedagogy and so forth, in which the difference is construed as a problem. The accountability of the dominant class and associated measures of difference are not fully considered. Consequently, Pasifika engagement in education as difference (lacking) is conceptualised as deficit. A radical change is needed in Pasifika education research to alter the course of deficit-thinking-being that has for more than forty years instigated reactive engagement to transform Pasifika peoples in education. Pacific Indigenous philosophy and posthuman thought, when applied to the context of Pasifika education research, may provide a foundation for this bold re-positioning of our current education research priorities that continue to engender Eurocentrism even though they claim to address inequity. Bignall and Rigney (2019) argue for the value of resistance in posthuman thought, particularly in confronting "Eurocentrism, modern and imperial formations of power, knowledge and subjectivity" (p. 160).

My engagement with both Indigenous and posthuman philosophy has provoked my questioning of the position of the human subject and clearly confronts Kant's metaphysics (deductive a priori) and Descartes's mind body dualism. I also refer here to Deleuze's philosophy of time that draws upon Bergson's philosophy of past events co-existing (virtual bloc of past events) as more than mere memory. Time, in this conceptualisation includes affective conditions of time-thought-memory, in which the virtual whole produces conditions for actualisation of the present (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The Newtonian linear conventional image of time is thus contested in my own research(er) becoming when thinking, sensing, experiencing Pacific Indigenous philosophy alongside posthuman thought. One's capacity and modes of thought engage in and with the world and are open to the unconscious as they are to the conscious, and the thresholds between.

[49] Deleuze and Guattari explored difference through their concept of desire and of machinic assemblages of desire thathighlights/illuminates the relations of the in- between of what assembles. Desire in this context is not to be associated with libidinal lack. Rather, desire as a force involves new assemblages that emerge from the milieu of many assemblages (Matapo & Roder, 2018).

Tui Atua (2009a), explains a relational ontology of *harmony* that connects thresholds between human and non-human life. *Harmony*, through relational ontology positions Samoan Indigenous knowledge as open to past, present and future, situated in the world, each other, the cosmos, and the (un)knowable. He states:

> "Harmony in Samoan life recognises that all living things are equal. Human life is equivalent and complementary to cosmic, plant and animal life, In the balance of life, all living things share equal status and power. Man is no less powerful or greater than the heavens, the trees the fish or cattle and vice versa. In the organisation of life, the relationship between man and the cosmos, man and the environment, man and man and himself is, each and together, premised on the search for balance, peace and harmony (p. 104).

From a Samoan-Pasifika Indigenous researchers view, this regard for the unknown also suggests an openness towards what is unknown about the multiplicities of the human subject. I refer here to an ontology of (un)knowing, where there is an openness of human-relations to all things. I am reminded of this by the words shared by Meyer (2014) "A'ohe pau ka 'ike I ka hālau ho'okahi" (p 152) which refers to knowledge as infinite, effulgent, and never-ending. From a Samoan view, Tui Atua acknowledges that the more you think you know the less you know (Tui Atua, 2014). The human subject in all its complex configurations and capacities traverse and affect human-worlded experience. As philosopher Spinoza reminds us, "We are yet to know, what a body can do?" The human subject in many Pacific and education research discourses remain uncontested, taken for granted in its relation to Indigenous onto-epistemology.

*Entangling of fanua and being*

I had heard of this place, in many a story-
where the green leaves are curled before opening.
The swift cut of the blade, clearing a path
my grandfather laboured in earth,
and earth laboured in him.
Hand in soil,
deep below where the moisture rests.
He somehow knew.
Stretched out hands below the earth
reach knowing –
earths knowing.
Entangling of fanua
malamalama in fanau
Would he know of his influence?
The impression in soil
that his grandchild would someday walk.
His hands in soil,
that hold me tight,
that reach for my belonging
He somehow knew.

***Figure 18.*** **Entangling of fanua and being.** Jacoba Matapo, (2019). Photograph and Poem. Saaga, Siumu, Upolu, Samoa.

## *Creativity-in-expression, resisting representation: Researcher performative engagement in-Pacific-philosophy*

**Musumusu**
Deeply etched into grandfather's skin, the story of his ancestors.
His grandson's small fingers following the lines in his thighs, sitting next to him…

*It must have hurt*

"A'o[50] la'i titi le tama sa tā lana pe'ā[51]" – his son says as he watches the child following the lines… as if to say grandfather was young and was not sure of his faith.

*It must have hurt*

[50] Translated expression: He was a young man, so I heard, when he had the tattoo.

[51] Traditional Samoan male tattoo (associated with a chiefly title).

Grandfather still asleep, as his grandson follows the lines in his thighs – his old skin, soft and supple still holding the shape of the tatau… he is the matai of the aiga and has always worn his tatau unapologetically….

*It must have hurt*

~~…pause in writing as tears well up, an(other) sense-memory…~~

His thighs were never vaivai, I believed the tatau wore him – keeping him strong-in-place yet fluid enough to move between Church and the agānu'u[52]. Today, none of his sons bare the mark of the tatau.

*It must have hurt*

A man of faith and at his passing – still holding his tatau firmly in place as his body rest in the church…

*It must have hurt*

His grandson (now a man), wonders how his grandfather felt – holding his tatau firmly in his thighs, and his Christian faith firmly in his heart…

*It must have hurt*

## Fagogo

Another dynamic aspect of storying which I have merged into my performative expressions of musumusu and poetry is that of fagogo[53]. The fagogo is an ancient Samoan practice of telling stories. The fagogo is performative and is both the context-content of the story and the relations between the teller of stories and the receiver. Fagogo is relational and intimate practice and is the vehicle by which stories are told (Fuata'i, 2014). The content of the stories communicates Samoan Indigenous thought, where stories of human and non-human co-create, where genealogies are told and where storying soothes, calms and often puts young children to sleep. The intent of the fagogo is not about placing a static meaning or mode of representation upon the content of any given story: the fagogo could change depending on the time or context. The fagogo does not present story as fact or fiction; these dualities are not inscribed in fagogo. Fagogo can be shared in oral modes or written modes (Fuata'i, 2014).

I share an example of how fagogo can be co-created:

[52] The norms, laws and customs which apply generally to Samoan villages, districts or country (Suaalii-Sauni et al., 2014).
[53] Fagogo – Special in the Samoan context as it connates a tale or telling of tales (Fuata'i, 2014).

> Night had come as aunty lay on the mat with her two young children squeezing for room on her tired left arm.
>
> I could see they were restless, and aunty wanted to sleep.
>
> With her other arm, aunty pulls the very thin sheet over the children and opens the fagogo by stating...
> "Do you know that an eel fell in love with Sina[54]".
>
> "We saw the eel today" the children abruptly respond
>
> *...the fagogo continues...*

Words have their own life-force and once a word is spoken there are forces that vibrate and create their own energy. We see this in fagogo and in other Pacific chants and allegory. Hawaiian Indigenous knowledge custodian Mahealani (2016) performs (in her video) an example of the energy vibration of language in the word *Aloha*[55]. In her work, the Hawaiian ancestors engineered their language to express the vibrations of a higher form or frequency, thus the 'ha' which incapsulates this vibration is incorporated into the word Alo-ha (Mahealani, 2016). The frequent repetition of this word, Aloha, continues the expression of 'ha' and reverberates ongoing connection with Hawaiian ancestors. The embodied expression of 'ha' as vibration offers another window to view different understandings of the forces and flows of language.

The position of language and power is also reconceptualised within Posthuman thought; that language is not only a human capacity. Pennycook (2018) captures the tensions of language associated to the privileging of 'comprehensible dialogue' between the 'rational human subjects'. She explains:

> A post-humanist applied linguistics does not assume rational human subjects engaged in mutually comprehensible dialogue; the multimodal and multisensory semiotic practices of the everyday include the dynamic relations between semiotic resources, activities, artefacts, and space. No longer, from this point of view, do we need to think in terms of competence as an individual capacity, of identity as personal, of languages as entities we acquire, or of intercultural communication as uniquely human. Posthumanist thought urges us not just to broaden an understanding of communication but to relocate where social semiotics occurs (p. 446).

[54] Sina (The name of a Samoan woman) and the eel is the Samoan story about the creation of the first coconut tree in Samoa.
[55] Hawaiian concept of love

## Performativity as expression

This section follows on from the tensions of language raised by Pennycook (2018) which has had significant repercussions on Pacific scholarship (Indigenous and non-indigenous) in understanding the power and limits of textualised language.

- *What is enduring in written language?*
- *How does textualized language hold meaning, representation and power?*

These critical questions problematise textualised language as universal modes of representation. Linguistic codes work in any given society as regimes of signs, containing both formalisation of expression and formalisation of content (Holland, 2013; St Pierre, 2015). One example of power in linguistic codes is that of binarisation, where difference is differentiated by one or the other following an either/or logic that conforms to normative representationalism. In the history of anthropologic research conducted in the Pacific region, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there are many examples of how Pacific language and its nuances were misinterpreted. Language from an Indigenous point of reference became reified to suit a Eurocentric moral and social semiotic configurations. In regard to Christianity, imposed upon Samoan Indigenous religion at the time of colonisation, Rakuita (2014) writes:

> The church, for instance, brought a 'Word' already clad in the vocabulary and mental attire of the most vibrant European cultural practices of the time. Our ways of life were almost immediately severed from the moorings of their contexts, as the demonization of our place-based religions came into vogue (p, 160).

Posthuman thought questions what is seen both outside and inside (interiority and exteriority) and how thinking occurs as well as what part the world plays in language and cognition (Barad, 2007). Linguistic structures as representational reflect pre-existing phenomena and are the essence of social constructivism. Predetermined structures of language inform a particular understanding of the world; an ontological reality of substance (Barad, 2003). By way of posthuman thinking, the power of language is interrogated, particularly the so-called boundaries between human and non-human, such as artefacts, natural world and animals. If posthuman thought allows a breaking

down of distinctions between interiority and exteriority, then understandings of cognition can be transformed; subject and language are no longer properties of individual humans, but are distributed across places, artefacts and people (Pennycook, 2018).

The place of language in relationship to knowledge (knowing) and representation (signification) has its own set of rules[56] that influence thought processes. Master narratives be they cultural, philosophical or scientific are constituted upon such language games (Wittgenstein cited in Rakuita, 2014). Rakuita (2014) problematises the way in which European language games have influenced Indigenous thinking and knowing in Oceania. She states:

> The problem besetting thinking and knowing in Oceania lies in the way we have come to engage with these language games. Language games both enable and limit the scope of our thought processes. In an atmosphere where our Indigenous vocabularies have been hijacked to serve the interests of language games that are not anchored within the Indigenous life-worlds of Oceania, one is hard pressed to articulate oneself. What ensues is loss of clarity as multiple meanings arise out of talk, and confusion is entrenched in our thought processes (pp. 161-162).

Confronting the power of language in all its variations in philosophy and theorisation, Barad (2003), questions the place of matter or the absence of matter in thinking that continues to privilege language signification over materiality. As she bluntly puts it: "Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter." (Barad, 2003, p. 801). The argument raised by Barad (2003) could be more specific to the constraints of European languages, which stems from its own traditions and etymologies. In her critique of the power of language, signification and representation, Barad (2003) asks, "How did language become more trustworthy than matter?" (p. 801). The less-significant position of matter as argued by Barad (2003) contests the power of language as representational (explained in part two of this section).

[56] Vocabulary provides language with definition and validity

For Pacific Indigenous thought, language as experience in and with world is deeply rooted in-material, whereby matter does matter, as knowing and being (in and with world) are inextricably linked to all modes of Pacific Indigenous language-expression. Epeli Hau'ofa in a 1999 interview conceptualises the power of Indigenous arts practice:

> Our songs are full of allusions to the beauty of nature, our language is blessed with a great capacity for capturing the most subtle shifts in mood and the most minute changes in the state of the sky and the wind and the sea and the trees. The bodies of our dancers are adorned with leaves and flowers and anointed with the perfumed oils of life. All these things which provide quality and joy to our national existence and a richness and depth to our culture are based on our generously endowed land and sea.... If you want to communicate with people you have to touch them, touch their sensitivities (Hau'ofa & Juniper, 2001, p 22).

With posthuman thought, contesting the power of representation in language generates other modes of expression, which are taken up within this thesis. Through the chapters, imagery, poetry and storying (as previously mentioned) are presented as ways of expressing emergent understandings of being and knowing, for research(er) to think-other. Performative alternatives to textualised language modes offer movement away from representationalism in thinking, thus opening spaces for thought outside predetermined descriptions of reality (St Pierre, 2000). Performativity challenges a dichotomous mind body dualism, bringing the body into the thinking assemblage, such that matter (materiality) comes together in forces and flows with body-brain-being.

Pacific-Indigenous -knowing-in-more-than-textualised-language

There are various sense-languages for Pacific-Indigenous thought. These are embodied and material. Cultural and ceremonial events are common contexts for cultural exchange, an interactions between bodies of history, story, and material in social spaces. Examples are the woven pandanus leaves, the *siapo*[57] printed on bark-cloth, the carved deity, the stitching of the

[57] Siapo (Samoan), ngatu (Tongan), or masi (Fijiian) is a cloth made from the bark of the paper Mulberry tree and is a highly regarded art form within the region (Krämer, 1995).

tivaevae[58], the tatau etched in skin and the majestic dance of the *taualuga*[59]. Each Pacific arts practice carries Indigenous thought, not only in the act or event of the arts practice itself, but also in the making process, which is usually a collective practice. For instance, from a New Zealand perspective, Tongan communities maintain the practice of *Kava*[60] ceremony as a performative and grounded collective commitment to *ngāue*[61] the relationality with people and place.

Pacific arts unlike textualized language, express Indigenous thought in an embodied way, where concepts are danced through the fingers and arms, from the movement of the head to gliding feet across the floor. These modes of expression *are* Pacific languages, communicating stories, genealogy, culture and knowledge. Throughout the thesis, images are presented as an image-of-thought-allegory, to provoke difference in thinking Pacific Indigenous knowing. The imagery, as provocation for thought-experience in story, invites multiplicity of rhizomic-forces, and whenever you re(view) the same image, the image is not the same-thought-experience. This becomes a deterritorialising process that, once stable (that is, once the new image of thought becomes signified), it shifts again into a reterritorialising one. This explanation, however, is not to be taken as a linear process, as both reterritorialising and deterritorialising are not binary oppositions and are open and heterogenous. Thinking rhizomically, offers insights to the affective capacity of performativity. Part two of this chapter continues to discuss rhizome in further detail.

## Part two: Pacific Indigenous and posthuman theory (new-old ontologies)

A personal challenge (as researcher) in bringing both Pacific Indigenous philosophy into conversation with critical posthuman theory is to exercise critique without falling back into the dialectic-lack, or critical modes of inquiry that ground notions of transcendentalism. This section will traverse concepts presented in Pasifika education research and mobilise Pacific Indigenous

[58] Cook Islands traditional quilt. Unique to each district and family and are often gifted during significant life milestones such as birth, marriage and birthdays (Küchler & Eimke, 2009).
[59] Taualuga (Samoan dance) can be performed by either the son or daughter of the chief and is considered the apex of dance performance. The taualuga has been adapted across the Western Polynesia region (Krämer, 1995).
[60] Kava is a traditional Tongan cultural ceremony where the root of the kava plant is crushed and then diluted with water. The ceremony is for men and follows cutlrual protocols and custom (Teisina, 2011).
[61] Ngāue can be noun or verb and refers to working towards improvement or taking responsibility (Teisina, 2011)

philosophies as generative alongside posthuman philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari remind us that philosophy is a creative process, stating: "That is, philosophy is not a simple art of forming, inventing, or fabricating concepts, because concepts are not necessarily forms, discoveries, or products. More rigorously, philosophy is the discipline that involves *creating* concepts" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 5). This chapter draws upon Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of immanence (which is foundational to Braidotti's critical posthuman theory). The trajectory of critical posthuman theory traces back to the ontological insights presented in Deleuze and Guattari's critique of the limits of western philosophy, rejecting transcendental subjectivism[62]. Their ideas of generative philosophy build upon the poststructuralist movement to evoke a reimagining of philosophy as process ontology moving thought-creation beyond the representationalism of semiotics and the constraints of textualised language (explained in detail later in the chapter).

I will dwell on some of the elements from the history of western philosophy that continue to impact significantly on the philosophy of education and on education research today. In doing so, I aim to make visible the philosophical trajectories that inform the critical posthuman theory taken up within this analysis. Posthuman theorising as heterogenous, offers differentiation in difference and shifts thought towards a process ontology that brings alternatives to becoming-inter-subjectivity.

This section provides a brief historical account of the academic disciplines of 'humanities' and 'social sciences' which position the study of human experience and *being* through various networks of relations and fields (social, cultural, political, historical, human geography, religion, philosophy, literature and art). The history of the study of humanities in academia can be traced back to ancient Greece (600 BC), and the works of Pythagoras, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plato,

[62] In essence, trancendental subjectivity stems from Husserl's philosophical conceptualisation of phenomology, which demarcates the notion of *being* into two categories, one of which is the region of reality and the world and the other is the pure ego of life (Baruch, 2004). Transcendental subjectivity characterises the concrete field of lived experience as immanent, yet relies on consciousness to order and prescribe meaning (to object) to legitimise the source of cognition. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) challenge this position through their concept of radical immanence (process ontology).

Aristotle and others are echoed across western philosophy and culture today. Conventional disciplines associated with humanities are: philosophy, languages and literature, linguistics, religion, history and the arts. Braidotti (2019) argues that the disciplines within the humanities have neglected to critique configurations of 'man', which she proposes, have been left to the anthropologists to define. Social sciences, on the other hand stem from positivist philosophies of science and have evolved, cutting across various disciplines to include anthropology, history, political science, psychology, and sociology. All of these disciplines are in some way engaged in defining the configurations of the 'human', however the human subject is never a neutral term. As Braidotti (2019) warns, the human subject indexes access to rights, credibility, gender, race and the struggles to be human, thus it is not univocal.

There are significant contextual factors that need to be taken into account in terms of the philosophical trajectories of contemporary philosophy. The advancement of technology has shifted boundaries in knowledge production and labour flows. Other factors influencing these trajectories are of a planetary nature. The ongoing destruction caused by capitalist economies and neo-liberal *modes-of-being* all impact the environment and biodiversity in unsustainable ways (Matapo, 2021). These *modes-of-being* work to produce subjectivities of a capitalist nature, whereby dependency of (human) life relies on, and is constituted in, consumer-relations. As a Samoan/Pasifika researcher, I deem these specific contextual factors highly relevant to the environmental sustainability of our Pacific regions. Bringing Pacific Indigenous philosophy into conversation with critical posthuman theory generates further insights to the ontologies that contest the hierarchical nature of the human subject and the Anthropocene. Posthuman philosophy shifts us away from the basic premise of social sciences research; it rejects the idea that humans are the only species capable of producing knowledge (Ulmer, 2017). This is a position also taken up by various Pacific Indigenous scholars such as Hau'ofa (2008), Thaman (2003) and Nabobo-Baba (2008). Posthuman philosophy decentres a humanist position to create openings for other things, forms, objects, beings, and phenomena to know arguing for interconnection with environments. Methodological thinking which adopts this position, fosters interconnections in the research process. This approach departs from human-centred research that insufficiently

(re)produces fragmented representations of the interplay between and interactions among society, culture, ecology and geology (Ulmer, 2017).

When taking up posthuman critical theory, it is important to discern distinct features that are not part of the posthuman condition. As Braidotti (2016) explains, "The posthuman subject is not postmodern, because it does not rely on any anti-foundationalist premises. Nor is it deconstructivist, because it does not function within the linguistic turn or mediation" (p. 24). The posthuman is vitalist, materialist, embodied and embedded, firmly located yet multifaceted in an immanent relational ontology. Posthuman thought inscribes the contemporary subject in the conditions of its own historicity, thus life is neither a transcendental notion nor a representation of meaning. Posthuman thought expresses itself as a multiplicity of encounters, events and acts (Pearson 1999). Immanent relational ontology marks a revitalisation of the ways in which analysis is practiced between discourse and materiality, in contrast to the privileging of discursive tenets of representation within social-constructivist theories. The ontological turn[63] (immanent relational ontology) offers relations of difference: a different-in-being-in-research, rather than a simple understanding of cultural or social differentiation (Vigh & Sausdal cited in Zembylas, 2017). For research, the ontological turn becomes an opening for multiple realities rather than representations of a one world view. The ontological turn has not evolved separate from the development of 'post' paradigms such as postmodernism, poststructuralism, post foundationalism, and posthumanism. All of these 'post' paradigms call into question the reification of being and the associated ontological commitments and have thus created openings for political and methodological shifts in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences. Bennet (2016) aptly describes the methodological contribution 'posthumanisms' affords educational research:

> Posthumanism's methodological contribution to educational research is thus its holistic attentiveness to our entanglement with nonhuman things, and to both the being of and our storying of those things […] the narrative and other practices

[63] The ontological turn provides a contemporary approach to thinking-metaphysics, calling into question dualisms between, for example, discourse/materiality, trancendental/empirical, representation/difference, virtual/actual. The conceptualising of the ontological turn, particularly taken up by philosophers Deleuze and Guattari, has influenced emerging bodies of thought - new materialism, posthuman philosophy and post-anthropecentrism (to name a few).

through which we learn to live within the world, its resistances and affordances (pp. 70-71).

## Onto-epistemology of research(er)

**Vignette:** **Walking-theory-walking-research-talk.**

As part of my research routine that has developed over the years as a doctoral student, I often go for long walks and listen to articles as I walk. For me, this process of research is as much about exercising intellectual muscles that flex and breathe life into being. To reimagine subjectivity as researcher in body-research-resistance-assemblage, I share with you a walking-theory-research event audio recorded in July, 2018:

As I am recording [while walking], I am talking through key concepts introduced by Carol Taylor (2016) and I guess what is central to the critique is how education has come to essentialise humanist theory. She argues the need to reconfigure the human-subject not as presented in humanist-universalistic ideology.

**Pause for breath…**

By putting posthumanist theory to work in educational research, she says… theory to work – easier said than done! This is as much about breaking habits in thinking, I guess, noticing when thought shifts from one trajectory to another [inaudible mumbling].

**Muffled sound of the microphone rubbing against my jumper**

She says posthuman theorising is both daunting and exciting, as it is about imagining and re-inventing and doing things differently…glad she mentioned daunting...

**Laughing at myself…**

Well, it is daunting, but there is potentiality, too. I am trying to argue – that applying Pacific philosophy in a process of reconceptualising Pasifika education research, new possibilities will emerge. Why am I interested in problematising the guise of humanism and humanist approaches that inform Pasifika education research? [inaudible mumbling] Why am I uncomfortable about humanism that excludes non-humans, the so-called other than human?

**Loud footsteps on the concrete [void] several cars pass by…**

Yea, this links to the problems that Deleuze interrogated in his philosophy, which I know many contemporary scholars have experimented with to create space to think alternatively about human subjectivity. *Just remember to write these down okay*… there are some key aspects here; shifting humanist ontology to one that entails processual ontologies– so that's what I'm going to be coming back to in terms of onto-epistemology, which is all part of Deleuze's different categories of rhizome, and the virtual [that experience is context-physical and virtual]. A point that is integral to my research is the mobilising of Pacific Indigenous philosophy and the relationship to the posthuman [inaudible mumbling].

**Pause for breath…**

> I have to ask myself, what has drawn me towards the works of Deleuze and Guattari and more recently Rosi Braidotti? Gee, I ask myself more questions than anyone I know!
>
> **Laughing at myself again…**
>
> I think for me as an emerging Pacific researcher, it is the ontological position of my personhood. That in the history of western philosophy, evolution of knowledge and the relationship to knowledge has privileged a particular human subject, the great chain of being with its hierarchy of human-over-others, over material – over non-living others...I have said all this before. But from an Indigenous perspective it means an ongoing challenge in my ways of relating with the world and knowledge, particularly in an academic leadership role, too. I've become more and more sceptical of the so-called human capacity being venerated more than earth, waters, or cosmos capacity in knowing. I find myself opening up to heterogenous knowledge pathways, which I hope will produce radical and generative avenues for Pasifika education research…hmmm that was a good walking-talking session, now just remember to transcribe these notes [end of recording].

Koro-Ljungberg (2015) explains onto-epistemology as a theoretical choice that is not detached from the backgrounds, values, beliefs and affect(s)[64] of the researcher or the research. Onto-epistemology situates the researcher as part of the research assemblage, rather than as an outside observer separate from the object of observation. An onto-epistemological worldview in contemporary philosophy signals to the mutuality and inter-dependant processes of knowing with world. In research, onto-epistemology puts to work complex relations that are always present in world, acknowledging the substance shared by human and non-human (Taguchi, 2009). Onto-epistemology offers a complete reconceptualisation of the research-thinking-writing-assemblage, where ontology challenges transcendental ideals of separation that distinguish human from something beyond, as universally true or unchangeable (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Taguchi, 2009).

The transcendental human subject standpoint influences the human role in research as interpreter and observer that sits outside the complex mutations of difference in ongoing life to submit judgement of a perspective. When thinking onto-epistemology, rhizomic thinking is particularly

[64] Deleuze furthers Spinoza's concept of *affect* as more than sense-experience, emotion or cognition. Affect operates within an assemblage to generate relations, manipulate meaning, inform desire (not as lack), and generate intensity as affective forces (Colman, 2010).

useful in reconstituting complexity as a network-of-relations in Pacific Indigenous thinking and theorising (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Utilising rhizomic thinking in the writing-thinking-assemblage takes seriously the entangled and interconnected materialities of research as a processual decentring of a humanist position. Pacific Indigenous philosophy offers radical ways to think decentred humanist ontologies. Within Pacific epistemologies are relational ecologies of knowledge production. Pacific philosophy evokes thinking-relationality of people(s) collectively and genealogically bound to earth, planet and cosmos; this generates ethical reconfigurations of self as a co-existence of being. I present the following section as an expression of reconfigurations of being-bacteria-assemblage, through a Samoan account of creation.

## Research(er) expressions of Samoan cosmogony

Connexions to Pacific episteme are evident in Samoan accounts of creation. The co-evolution of human-becoming-matter bound (at creation) the 'human' through biological and physiological relations with the natural world including the genesis of human life through bacteria-maggot assemblage. Through *gagana*[65] Samoa, specific parts of the body are named in relation to the co-creation and co-evolution of human life.

Tui Atua (2014) describes the embodiment of *Tuli*[66]'s work in the physical-body-assemblage:

> Man is God-descended and there are genealogical links between the sun, the moon, the seas, the rocks the earth […] earth and all living organisms, including human, originated from a 'big bang', the tumultuous separation of Lagi (heaven) and Papa (rock). […] Following the separation […] god Tagaloa sent his messenger Tuli (plover) to Papa to help create plants and trees. Tuli is also attributed with discovering and germinating the lands of Samoa, Tonga and Fiji. Tuli, on Tagaloa's instructions, then designated the human form from ilo (bacteria that became maggots). Samoans named the ankle tuli vae and the elbow tuli lima in recognition of the work of Tuli (p. 16).

[65] Samoan language
[66] Tuli is the plover in the Samoan creation story, the messenger sent by god Tagaloa.

***Figure 19.*** **Tuli's generative molecular life formation.** Author's impression of Tuli's generative molecular life formation: Bacteria-maggot-bodied-cosmos-assemblage. Jacoba Matapo, (2020). Digital Image.

At a molecular level, Tuli generates new life-formations from the very DNA[67] of bacteria-maggot-bodied-assemblage, thus 'human' corporeal life comes into being. The image of 'Tuli's generative molecular life formation' reconfigures a different set of relations of the 'human' and contests notions of the anthropocentric nature of human with world. The image-expression illustrates the molecular flows of life-genesis and the complexity of relations as situated and embodied within a Samoan context.

The molecular as part of the rhizome is discussed in further detail throughout this section. Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomic maps engage with three types of lines that assist in understanding the various capacities and forces within the socius. These rhizomic lines are molar lines, molecular lines and lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Molar lines express binary positions that are dualistic oppositions and are rigid in structure. Molar lines operate to order a

[67] Double helix molecule compound that emcompasses genetic instuction for development

system and simultaneously produce a second line of segmentarity where the molecular disperses ‘territorial and lineal segmentations’. The supple fabric of segmentarity holds the rigid molar lines. These lines, at a micropolitical level, compliment the work of molar lines (Albrecht & Crane, 2008). The molar and molecular lines, like the macro and micro, are inseparable entities and although they may not have the same terms or relations, they coexist, crossing over into each other, producing difference through continuum(s) as opposed to modernist binaries (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Micro-politics include both macro (societal beliefs) and micro (the individual) and are relational and transversal and consist of connections between bodies, movement, ideas and material (Blaise, 2013). The following depicts research(er) rhizomic mapping.

*Research(er) – Imagery of Rhizomic mapping*

***Figure 20.*** **Research(er) – Imagery of Rhizomic mapping.** Jacoba Matapo, (2018). Digital Image.

There is always something that flows or flees in rhizomic thought, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest “[what] escapes the binary organisations, the resonance apparatus, and the overcoding machine” (p. 216). What escapes traditional political entities by thinking rhizomically are the given political identities. What emerges by way of the rhizome are fluid and changeable (what

escapes) lines of flight that are immanent from and within macropolitics and micropolitics (May, 2005). This study positions Pacific Indigenous philosophy in Pasifika education research to function along line(s) of flight, traversing collective and individual subjectivities to push macropolitical boundaries through a processual ontology.

## Processual ontologies: Distinguising between Immanence and transcendence

Although both concepts are about relations, there is a clear distinction between immanence and transcendence. Immanence in philosophy privileges 'relations-in' and transcendental philosophy is concerned with 'relation-to' (Williams, 2010). Both are concepts of metaphysics, however, both assume very different principles of philosophy. Deleuze's philosophy of immanence is an integral feature of posthuman theorising within this thesis, mainly in its resistance to transcendental metaphysics and the separation of the body-mind-spirit-context assemblage. An immanent process requires connectivity between relations, which are together differentiating and identifying (in the rhizome – deterritorialising and reterritorialising). Connectivity is not between identities (e.g. object, subject, faculties) and what is presupposed through a particular 'image of thought' and its representation. Connectivity is the interrelation of the virtual and actual (Williams, 2010). Deleuze and Guattari (1987), in their theorising contested Hegelian dialectics negation and dependency on representation and identity in philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari critique the dependency of representation on identity. They extend this image of thought to operate with the unconscious involving pure differences that cannot be represented.

Williams (2010) describes these limits of representation and identity utilising Deleuze's immanent process ontology:

> So what concerns Deleuze is not only the claim that truths and goods must be represented, but also the belief that thought is dependent on representation and on identity for its path to the good and the true. His critiques of other philosophers often depend on showing how this image of thought is operating unconsciously and damagingly in their works. The damage is caused because reality is a process of becoming, which involves pure differences that cannot be represented. By turning us away from reality, the commitment to identity in representation furthers an illusion that leads us to repress processes of becoming at work in our own existence. The effects of these processes become all the more difficult to work with, once that repression has taken place. In terms of identity, Deleuze's

> philosophy can be seen as a critical attempt to cure us of the self-destructive dependence on identity (p. 127).

Within a processual ontological position, life is viewed as interconnected, transversal, relational and open-ended. Process ontology takes seriously the different ways networks of relations operate and continue to relate. From a posthuman standpoint, process ontology (as a way of existing) emphasises the non/human and the different ways non/human continue to relate with and among each other (Ulmer, 2017). Process ontology is concerned with connectivity and remains in motion and is less concerned with questions regarding the teleological purpose of non-human/human. Frames of connectivity follow the philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Alfred North Whitehead (1978), who have prioritised creative experimentation over fixing definitive answers, to elevate process over product in philosophy.

## Posthuman trajectories

The posthuman challenge entails affirmative engagement in different discursive frameworks that produce novel ideas in the conceptualising of the human subject. Braidotti (2013) signals to the emancipatory movements of postmodernity, driven by the "resurgent others; the women's right movement; the anti-racism movement; and decolonisation" (p. 37). This research, engaging with Pacific Indigenous philosophy, echoes the efforts of Pacific researchers to decolonise Indigenous knowledge. Postmodernity marks the uncertainties of humanism, and these political and social movements indicate the crisis of the human subject as the centre or dominant subject-position (Braidotti, 2013). These undertakings are not simply anti-humanist movements, but transpose the human-subject to an altogether novel, posthuman profusion of ways to be (Braidotti, 2013). Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of becoming[68], suggests a movement of subject-position, whereby becoming minoritarian[69] shapes alternative views and new formations of subjectivity (Braidotti, 2011).

[68] Becoming, along with difference are key tenets to the corpus of Deleuze's philosophy. Becoming engages an ontology of difference to conceive the world anew as a continuum of immanent networks of relations (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

[69] Minoritarian - A political action; challenges power and domination of predominant norms (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

## Posthuman and anti-humanism

There is a convergence in the philosophy of the posthuman turn that is anti-humanist and post-anthropocentrist in that it rejects a human hierarchy of species, and at various times it cuts across different but specific philosophical genealogies. Anti-humanism focuses on the critique of a humanist idea of 'man' as universal representation of the human and post-anthropocentrism criticises the hierarchy of species and aims towards ecological justice. The posthuman communicates a critical consensus, that there is no simple (one truth) construct for 'original humanicity' (Kirby, 2011 cited in Braidotti, 2016, p. 14). Building on poststructuralist philosophy posthuman critical theory opens novel and complex directions (Wolfe, 2010 cited in Braidotti, 2016) that move critical debates away from anti-humanism and makes possible an array of different posthumanist perspectives. Foucault's critique illuminated the moral crisis and inequities of humanist ideals. Posthuman philosophy calls the human subject into questions and in so doing also challenges assumptions of humanist superiority that continue to place 'man' at the foundation of world history.

Embedded in humanist philosophy are rationalist ideals that relate human relationship to world as sovereignty or ownership of land that are steeped in European political and economic theory. To Braidotti (2013) posthuman studies traverse the "ethical relations, norms and values that may be worthy of the complexity of our time" (p. 13). Pasifika education research increasingly calls into question such ethical relations, such as the position of Pasifika peoples depicted as 'victims' or 'deficient' in contrast to social norms and dominant groups.

## Postcolonial and posthuman critical theory

Indigenous scholarship since the 1960s, increasingly critiques humanism, the Eurocentric position, and the effects of colonialism. Postcolonial scholars such as Fanon (1967), originally from Algeria, Hau'ofa (1993; 2008), from Tonga, and Samoan scholar Anae (2017), have described the impact of colonisation upon the marginalised-other, the Autochthonous-subject. Scholars, Hau'ofa (1993), Vaai (2017) and Anae (2017) amongst others, affirm the significance of culture as embedded and embodied, and the way in which inter-subjectivities of Pacific peoples

are constituted by ties to ancestral lands, histories and Indigenous knowing. Through a postcolonial critique of humanism, the lofty claims entrenched in European humanism are now understood as a colonising mechanism to justify the racist acts of violence against Pacific Indigenous peoples. Postcolonial studies hold Europeans accountable for the uses and abuses of colonial histories, including domination over Indigenous cultures. However, many do not fully reject the essential humanist supposition, as Braidotti (2016) notes:

> The posthuman cannot be said to be a new universal, not only because universalism has lost a great deal of its appeal as a result of the fundamental critics made by postcolonial, feminist and poststructuralist theories, but also because we are not human in the same way or to the same extent to begin with. Both methodologically and politically, a posthuman approach requires therefore careful cartographies of the different degrees and the extent to which any one of us can be said to be human (p. 15).

Posthuman critical theory builds upon the premise that the 'human subject' is never a neutral term, and unlike postcolonial theory uses a different sort of composition to address the hierarchy of human entitlement and privilege connected to the humanist tradition and anthropocentric exceptionalism (Braidotti, 2013). Critical posthuman thought and postcolonial theories dispute is the universal mode of 'man'. Braidotti (2013) argues that this image of 'man', the urbanised, masculine, white, standard-speaking language, heterosexual man is inscribed as a full citizen and is an essentialised position of the human-subject. 'Man' as the representative, hierarchical, and hegemonic species is now challenged by different ecologies of becoming and different modes of belonging. Braidotti (2013) illuminates the difficulty of distancing the European humanism from our species; how attached one may be to humanist thinking in all its multi-layered complex relations of power and engagement with the Anthropos. Taking on a posthumanist position involves holding seriously different perspectives not as different versions of a common point of view. Posthumanist thought opens a re-imagining of the human subject within humanities and social studies, confronting assumptions of empirical material and how material is understood in relation to forces, overarching spheres or commonality. Braidotti (2016) states:

> The first critical parameter of my cartography is the rejection of 'closed' systems of thought, which already pre-empt the conclusion of what a transition to a posthuman world may look like. I do not think we are justified in taking the posthuman as an intrinsically liberatory or progressive category, nor can we

> embrace the equation between the 'posthuman' and post-power/gender/race/class positions, without taking into account enduring power differentials (p. 17).

Posthuman thought, as a branch of complexity theory, is not post-political. It requires distance from familiar habits of thought, that is, not to be associated to the kind of consciousness-raising that sustains Marxist critical thinking. This is crucial to the ethics and politics of enquiry that demand respect for the complexities of the real-life world we are living in. Entering a 'posthuman' universe requires critical heterogenous cartographies, not a unitary, or universal mode of thought. It requires a nomadic assemblage that is relational, affirmative and transversal[70] (Braidotti, 1994; 2006; 2011). 'Posthuman' presently covers a vast array of diverse positions, including opportunities for Indigeneity in transforming colonial ecologies (Bignall & Rigney, 2019).

## Pacific research: A posthuman critique

The discussion of applying posthuman theorising to identity-bound issues may seem paradoxical: how do you write from within a culturally specific epistemology while simultaneously troubling the representations or constructs that define it? The challenge for Pasifika education research is not to introduce or reintroduce a traditional humanist value-laden position into contemporary transformations, such as an essentialising basic mode of reference for subjectivity. In terms of Pasifika education research, critical posthuman thought questions how traditional humanist values are traversed in association with teleological Christian values and beliefs which pre-empt particular ethical and moral commitments in behaviour in the research process. There must be a shift of paradigm to illuminate the historical conditions of that human-subject, as subjectivity is highly complex and has to be redefined as an expanded relational-self. The relational capacity here does not only refer to human relations, for example, a post-anthropocentric subject not contained within our species. It includes non-anthropomorphic elements which constitute the human vital force of life as a transversal force, cutting across and reconnecting previously segregated species, domains and categories (Braidotti, 2018). This work of theorising

[70] Transversal or transversality signals to thought movement, the way in which various theoretical fields cut across and intersect through practical and political struggles. Transversality functions as an exchanger between different theoretical fields (Baugh, 2010b).

transversally emphasises a process ontology, a relational-self network across interspecies, that is worlded and intersubjective.

An example of domains in the natural world that stand in contrast to the so-called human privilege of rational thinking, I call upon the poetry of Konai Helu Thaman (2003, pp. 14-15), who positions knowing as a cross-species capacity. She writes:

**Thinking**

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

Thinking with different frames as Thaman (2003) prompts in her poetry, I wonder how a more complex vision of the human-subject may be introduced through a materialist process ontology. Through materialist process ontology, thinking as a process never remains static; it remains open and relational to self-other entities such as spirit (affect), time-space, context, and embodiment. Thinking with different frames defies social constructivist binary oppositions (such as the study of interaction between human experience and behaviour patterns). When this is replaced by rhizomatic dynamics, there are openings of difference-in-thought and the notion of experience can include virtual thought, what is traversed-sensed-felt in the mind-body-spirit assemblage (Deleuze 1994; Williams 2005). Here within the nature-culture continuum, power is destabilised, where it is both a productive force and restrictive entity. Thinking via open rhizomatic pathways,

places the human subject in a co-relationship of dynamic materialist vitalism[71] as a continuum of modulations in a monistic universe.

Feminist Deleuzian, new-materialist scholars such as Braidotti, Barad, and Harroway from an othered position within humanities, build on monistic philosophy and have conceptualised it as 'vital politics', premised on the idea that matter, including specific expression or modes of matter (including human embodiment), is intelligent and self-organizing. Moreover, many scholars agree that matter is not dialectically opposed to culture, nor to technological mediation, and is, rather, continuous with them (Braidotti 1994; Colebrook, 2004a; 2004b; Grosz 1994). In thinking with this approach, as researcher I am able to examine ethnic-specific concepts in Pacific Indigenous philosophy, to engage politics of location in terms of radical immanence with an emphasis on the embedded and embodied, and affective and relational, structures of subjectivity (Braidotti 2006; 2013). By way of rhizomic thinking-writing-becoming, I aim to reimagine emergent possibilities that contest binary oppositions, such as nature/culture and human/nonhuman. Indigenous philosophy and posthuman thought may generate spaces for non-hierarchical and more egalitarian relationship to species (other-than-human) which offer alternative and novel insights to the reading and theorising of Pasifika education research.

[71] Vitalism, in the context of posthuman thinking, is inclusive of both incorporeal and corporeal bodies, unlike vitalism that essentialises separation of being and object in dualistic opposition.

# Chapter seven: Reimagining Pasifika education research

This chapter draws upon historical texts of Pacific/Pasifika education research and is not intended to be read as a chronology. Rather, what is presented is a careful reading through Moana-rhizoanalysis (a process-ontology) to navigate Pasifika ways of knowing and being as they are represented within the discourse. The poetry and imagery throughout the chapter present an interplay of Moana-rhizoanalysis to reconceptualise Pasifika education research. Within the chapter, particular features differentiate Pacific Indigenous education and the ways in which Pacific Indigenous philosophy contributes to contemporary Pasifika education within New Zealand.

## Part One: Pacific Research

The preceding chapters have explored the ways in which Indigenous knowledge for Pacific peoples co-evolved together with Indigenous culture, with the natural world, and included understandings of self in relation to world, co-agentic and co-existing. Within three hundred years or less, European cultures entered the Pacific territory and infiltrated knowledge systems, beliefs systems, Pacific subjectivity concerning knowing self and the way Pacific peoples think, learn, and communicate (Thaman, 2014). Eurocentric knowledge systems penetrated and imposed their knowledge systems to dismiss and marginalise Pacific Indigenous knowledge, disregarding the contribution of these systems to, for example, the many successful seafaring voyages Indigenous peoples made across the Pacific (Thaman, 2014). The important contributions of Pacific scholars vested in decolonising and revitalising Indigenous knowledge systems have been taken up more widely in the last four decades. Pacific Islands descendants continue to argue for the significance of protecting these knowledge and values systems, which are essential to the continuity and survival of cultures (Thaman, 2014). This section presents historical and socio-political trajectories that influence Pasifika education research today.

## *Truth-telling*

The truth-telling tyrants
Tell their truth
To them
Their theories
Their timeless tales
Their theologies
Their technology
Their tragedies
Their triumphs
Their trustworthy treaties
Their travelled trails
Their topologies
Their Trump
Tailoring truth

To them
Their truths tire
Their trust,
taken
Trepidation

To them
Time teaches truth
To them
Tales teach theory
To them
triumph takes tragedy
To them
the terrain teaches typologies
To them
Trails traverse thought
To them
Topography talks to Technology
To them
the tyrant takes.

Together,
Tackling treacherous tides
Together,
Truth takes tangled trajectories
Together,
Time teaches teleology

Together,
The tyrant transforms.

Poem by author Jacoba Matapo (2020).

## Anthropology and Archaeology discourse: Traversing politics of difference

In archaeology and anthropology literature, much has been documented about the human activity, cultural landscapes, material cultures, and ethnic and social differences across Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. Substantial research on Pacific peoples and places have emerged from within the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology (which stems from anthropology), their epistemologies foreign to the Pacific locations on which their studies were conducted. Research methods utilised in anthropological Pacific research within the early 1800s and1900s used scientific and socio-cultural methodologies. The observations, findings and interpretations presented by non-Indigenous researchers, demonstrate an awareness of Pacific political and social structures, although the social ontologies were not fully understood by observers. As Wassman (1998) mentions, the traditional Pacific hierarchy was well-established within Pacific social structures pre-colonisation and was distinctive within Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. Melanesia settled around 50,000 years ago, is culturally diverse; its people range in stature from tall to diminutive, in colour from light brown to deep black. Unlike Polynesians, Melanesians were not as well travelled and were ruled by 'big men', as dubbed by Western anthropologists, rather than ‘chiefs’ (Keown, 2009). The role of ‘chief’ within a collective construct carries weight in terms of social responsibility and an ethic of care. In contrast, terms coined by anthropologists such as ‘big men’ were given in reference to European social constructs of power and influence.

Another critical distinction shared between Micronesia and Polynesia are similarities in material culture, including the construction of sea vessels, and the practice of sea voyaging. Indigenous knowledge of navigation between Polynesian Islands Tonga and Samoa are closely connected where the experience of navigation has been traced to specific lineages (Salesa, 2014; Watson-Verran & Turnbull, 1995). Defined techniques and specialised navigation knowledge were seen in Samoa and Tonga producing ramifications for specific knowledges, including the political economy. The seafaring vessel designs between Samoa and Tonga share distinct similarities, including hull-shape, sail design and rigging, a material cultural manifestation of an assemblage

of Pacific navigation knowledge through exchange and relationality (Campbell, 2005). The assemblage of Pacific Indigenous knowledge is also evident in oratory traditions, as socially constructed assemblages of enunciation (social expression). The oral tradition as Pacific Indigenous literature reveals a complexity of genealogical pathways demonstrating interconnected histories for all Pacific people (Havea, 2014; Henare, 2007; Keown, 2009; Wassman, 1998).

Juxtaposing Pacific Indigenous literature and western anthropological constructs of the Pacific, reveals misconstrued representations. This includes a study by Mead (1928) that had not produced accurate accounts of Indigenous cultural knowledge. Pacific writers, including Albert Wendt, resisted Mead's representations of Samoan culture and published numerous works creating dialogue to challenge them. These historical discourses associated with foundational and modernist paradigms imposed westernised norms on the inference of Pacific ways of knowing and being (Keown, 2009; Quanchi, 2004; Wassman, 1998).

In resisting Pacific cultural knowledge monopolised by Western experts, Epeli Hau'ofa contested conditions of knowledge production in anthropological discourse. Epeli Hau'ofa's essay titled our sea of Islands identifies how colonialism has subjugated Pacific knowledge by continuing colonial social stratification in education and research (Hau'ofa, 1994). He contends narrow views that isolate the Pacific in economic and geographical boundaries, which borders were boundless before Caption Cook's apotheosis. The waters of the Moana bring together people, Indigenous knowledge, histories and genealogies. Hau'ofa, 1994 asserts the position of myths in conceptualisations of Pacific Indigenous thinking, he states:

> But if we look at the myths, legends and oral traditions, and the cosmologies of the peoples of Oceania, it will become evident that they did not conceive of their world in such microscopic proportions. Their universe comprised not only of land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that

> people could count on to guide their way across the seas. Their world is anything but tiny…smallness is a state of mind (p. 7).

Wendt (1976) and Keown (2009) explain how both New Zealand and Australia are both settler colonies with Indigenous populations. This dynamic relationship between these two populations adds further tensions in negotiating multiple perspectives that are conducive to both western and Indigenous paradigms. Friedman (1998) suggests that each culture's idea of enduring, clear, sharp, territorial entities contradict reality, as there have always been interactions, and diffusion of ideas, beliefs, habits and things between groupings of peoples. The idea of Pacific culture as a pure 'untouched' entity is a product of a western conceptualisation (Friedman, 1998).

Pasifika research within New Zealand has been on the rise since the early 1990s, partly because of the social justice movements that have grown out of critical inquiries in qualitative research and partly because of the financial investments of government agencies funding Pasifika research and Pasifika education research (see chapter three). The broader political interest of agencies such as the Health Research Council, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development to use empirical data to inform policy development, particularly research recognised as effective in addressing the socio-economic disparities in the lives of Pasifika peoples is behind such funding. The burgeoning engagement in Pasifika research of the 90s led to the development of a range of New Zealand authorities, Pacific research guidelines and later academic institutional Pacific research guidelines (discussed further in a later section). The education research guidelines presented by the Ministry of Education (2001) are explicit in detailing the importance of cultural values, practices, consultation and integration of Pacific methodologies. Processes of research described within the guidelines follow conventional institutional methods of research practice entrenched in a humanistic focus on knowledge exchange and co-construction.

The following section identifies tensions in literature and some of the conditions of representation of Pacific cultural knowledge, including Pacific Indigenous knowledge production and the place of formal education in perpetuating a marginalising of Indigenous knowledge systems.

## Pacific Indigenous Knowledge: Colonisation and education

*How can researcher write from **within** PIKS modes-of-being to counter deficit theorisations of Pacific knowledge presented in Pasifika education research?*

Koya-Vaka'uta (2017) argues that PIKS draws upon specific Pacific genealogies to location, ancestral knowing and the collective. In the social, spiritual and embodied context of Pacific Indigenous knowledge systems, relational ontologies are a continuum of relations to place, time, and space. Particular examples from a Samoan and Tongan perspective are the notion of sacred spaces, vā *Tapuia* (Samoa) and *Veitapui* (Tonga) that refer to a philosophy of life grounded upon harmony and balance (Koya-Vaka'uta, 2017), where ethical relationships are negotiated and renegotiated. Konai Thaman (2013) and Ratuva (2009) warn of the danger Pacific Islands peoples face of losing Indigenous knowledge, particularly Indigenous local knowledges. In the context of education, Pacific knowledge systems and values and the processes associated with their transmission and learning need to be taken seriously (Thaman, 2014a; 2014b) to decolonise the educational institution and affirm Pacific Indigenous philosophy. The following poem expresses an image of knowledge as inaccessible, sacred, or even esoteric. It could apply to both the modern politics of Pacific Indigenous knowledges and western knowledges.

### *What value is placed on knowledge?*

I saw a book
With a golden edge
Double bound leather cover
Red intricate stitching
With embossed detail
Thick and heavy
Looked very important
Behind the red tape,
A historical text
Can I touch it?
No – it's worth its weight in gold!

Poem by author Jacoba Matapo (2020).

Research on Pacific peoples is very different from researching from within Pacific onto-epistemology. Modes of inquiry (subject and object) in dualist terms often oppose the collective intersubjectivity of being, including the differences between Pacific Islands peoples. For instance, Douglas' (1999) critique of ethnohistorical text between the eighteenth and nineteenth-century colonial discourses presented western iniquitousness in the codification of the Pacific race. In his writings, Douglas (1999) explains how generally lighter-skinned Polynesians and Micronesians were commonly considered 'racially, morally and politically superior' to the more-darker skinned Melanesians and the Australian Aborigines. The representation of Pacific peoples and culture within nineteenth and early twentieth century European discourse continued to favour western hegemony by persistently categorising contrasts between Polynesia and Micronesia, homes of the fairer-skinned, and Melanesia, home of the darker-skinned.

Foucault (1980), in his historical critique of the symbolic function of ‘noble blood’ as a creation of biological racism, argued that it functioned to separate class social privilege based upon blood heredity. In the nineteenth century, the degeneracy of those who were not of noble blood later served socialist racism as a political ideology, rather than a scientific one (Foucault, 1980). Racism is steeped in the humanist hierarchy and splits common humanity, separating human and infrahuman by assuming they hold a different moral status and ethics. In exposing the history of racism, Braidotti (2013) lucidly states that racism "[…] reduces non-whites to a subhuman ontological status that exposes them to murderous violence" (p. 47). The European Imperial effect upon the legacy of humanisms and what counts as human is inscribed into the dehumanising colonisation processes.

In Bhabha's (1994) analysis of colonialism and the colonial condition, he stipulates that the Enlightenment ideal of 'man' culturally alienates and depersonalises thought processes to be established as part of a pre-given image of human knowledge. Such cultural alienation bears down on one's subjectivity, generating an ambivalence of psychic identification. The Eurocentric gaze,

particularly in research, has documented Pacific Indigenous peoples as cannibals, intellectually deficient and uncivilised (Otto, 1998). In her critique of western anthropology discourse, Keown (2009) states that Polynesia was often presented as fertile, gorgeous, paradisiacal and idyllic, while Melanesian islands were represented as decaying and hellish, populated with people were depicted as culturally backward and hostile. This image, portrayed in anthropological literature, favoured an evolutionary social model that generated a 'lesser than' dichotomy within the Pacific. Evolutionary social models and theoretical applications relevant to Darwinism had marginalised Melanesian social structure, culture and people as inferior to Polynesian (Wassman, 1998). The following poem repositions the Eurocentric gaze upon the Melanesian Islands as described by Keown (2009).

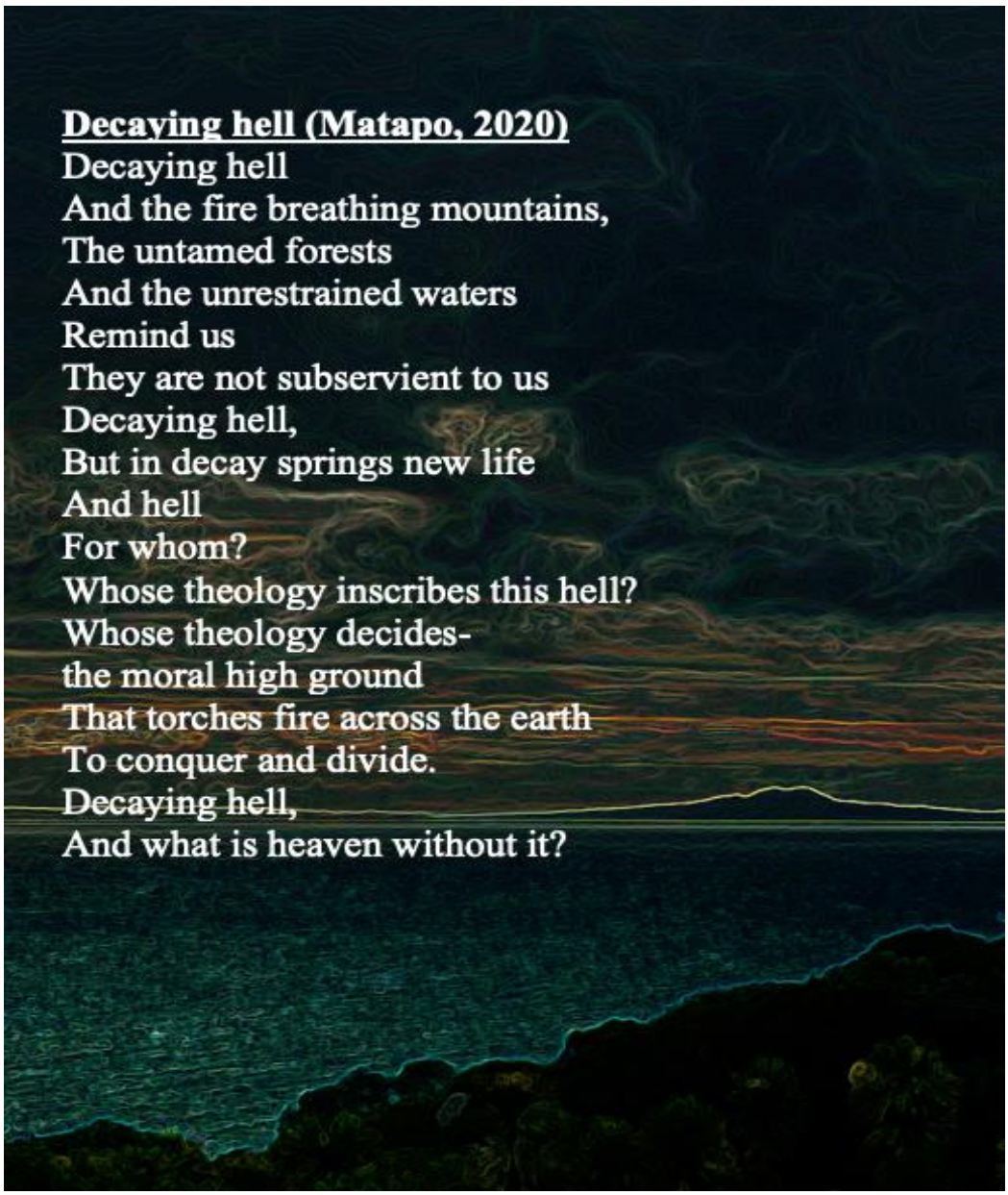


***Figure 21.*** **Decaying hell.** Digital image and poem by author Jacoba Matapo (2020).

Quanchi (2004) highlights the importance of Pacific Indigenous research that is locally valued and considerate of Pacific Indigenous ways of thinking, learning and organising knowledge. Over the last two decades, there has been an emergence of Pacific Island scholars in Oceania interested in affirming and revitalising Indigenous epistemologies. Quanchi (2004) notes: "This is an affirmation of the long tenure of Oceanic peoples, and they're continuing to flourish despite Oceania becoming an arena for superpower rivalry and posturing in the colonial and post-colonial era" (p. 3). In a colloquium keynote address, Thaman (2003) expressed concern for the lack of research in the decolonising of Pacific studies. Indigenous Pacific research has widely studied the

impact of colonisation in domains of economy, environments, social structures and politics; however, little attention has been given to the effects of colonialism on people's minds. This includes, according to Thaman (2003) "their ways of knowing, their views of who and what they are, and what they consider to be worthwhile to teach and to learn" (p. 2). She reiterates: "decolonising formal education involves accepting Indigenous knowledge and alternative ways of seeing the world" (Thaman, 2003, p. 10).

Epeli Hau'ofa's (2001) adds his critique on the way in which Pacific Indigenous culture has been perceived through anthropological paradigms. He cautions against the fixing of Pacific cultural constructs to a 'pure' past tradition. An untainted depiction of culture fails to consider already dynamic, fluid, and inter-subjective realities. He explains his critique of anthropology in reference to his text, *Our Sea of Islands:*

> In "Our Sea of Islands" I point out that our past holds constant travel, constant interplay of cultures, and that the coming of the Europeans was just one aspect, just broadening that. It was nothing new. It was new in the sense that there were more powerful groups moving in but movement was always there. So things were in ferment all the time, people going, coming. But somehow or other we have this notion of stasis, assisted in part by anthropologists, who wanted at one stage to record traditional cultures before they disappeared. That's the worst thing, record the cultures before they disappear; the idea is that they're going to disappear anyway. But we can change culture and change that idea. Although anthropologists deny it, they still hide behind the idea that there was once a pristine culture, untouched, untrammelled. Since a lot of us were educated by these people, we sort of believed it. We helped put cages around traditional culture (Hau'ofa cited in Hau'ofa & Juniper, 2001, p. 21).

## Re-Thinking Pacific Education Initiative by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP): Pacific education scholarship within the region

Resisting the anthropological research approaches (and narratives) taken up in the Pacific region historically, Pacific scholars developed the RPEIPP initiative. This initiative came about as an idea at an inaugural symposium on the research into delivery of aid to Pacific education as part of the Research Unit of Pacific Education (RUPIE) at the University of Auckland in December 2000. What emerged from this event, as a result of a conversation between Pacific scholars Professor Konai Helu Thaman, Dr Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki and Dr Kabini Sanga, was the need

for a forum without donor partners that would allow for Pacific educators to speak openly and freely about Pacific conceptualisations of education (Taufe'ulungaki, 2014). These Pacific scholars recognised that the pressing issues in education were exacerbated by the constant imposing of outside and irrelevant Eurocentric education frameworks within the Pacific region. The implications of borrowed education approaches, including education research methodologies, were incongruous for Pacific contexts and peoples (Taufe'ulungaki, 2014). In their research, these Pacific education scholars have also acknowledged that despite having more than 30 years of investment (both Pacific countries themselves and donor investments), Pacific Island nations were still struggling with the same issues in education (Sanga, 2014a; Thaman, 2014a; Taufe'ulungaki, 2014).

**Musumusu**

*RPEIPP as a Moana(n) movement*

I would like to shift now, to an experience of my emerging-researcher engagement with RPEIPP. This experience demonstrates the mobility of *Moana* as an onto-epistemology for Pacific Indigenous scholars to rethink relationality, history and subjectivity. I was fortunate to be a part of a recent exchange of Pacific scholars at a fono[72] for emerging Pacific researchers held in the University of Auckland. This particular forum engaged experienced Pacific scholars alongside emerging Pacific researchers to join efforts in strengthening Pacific education research across and through Moana. Tongan scholars Dr Dave Fa'avae (Waikato University) and Mo'ale Otunuku (University of the South Pacific) signalled to the vital contribution of the history of RPEIPP across Moana, and how in more recent years it has grown and strengthened ties to Micronesia. From this forum, I was able to interrogate notions of education alongside like-minded Pasifika education scholars who are (like me) attempting to think radically about the taken-for-granted methods and methodologies used to transform Pasifika education. These conversations were part of the *He Vaka Moana* research initiative, which I am part of (see Matapo & Baice, 2020).

The significance of RPEIPP continues today with aims to decolonise Pacific education and Pacific education research and call into question the purpose of education and the nature of knowledge that is privileged in education within the Pacific region (Sanga, 2012). Such initiatives have helped to revitalise and reclaim Pacific Indigenous histories. The body of scholarship from Pacific Indigenous researchers draws upon the call of Hau'ofa (2008) to reimagine Pacific regionalism;

[72] A meeting, usually formal, with intent or purpose – Samoan.

to rewrite history in repositioning the waters (Moana) alongside land (fanua) at the heart of Pacific Indigenous identity, thinking and genealogy.

## Problematising Pacific education research

Pacific scholars continue to challenge the ways in which Pacific peoples and epistemologies are represented within education research (Vaka'uta & Koya, 2014). The politics of research dissemination and the tensions around intellectual property of Indigenous knowledge systems must be interrogated. Thaman (2014) provides particular examples around bio-piracy shaped by western-style intellectual property rights. The notion of property rights result in the privatisation of the physical and intellectual resources of Indigenous peoples, which then monopolises any forms of new technology arising from these resources. Thaman (2014a) has indicated that Pacific Universities like USP remain strong and their position around western scientific traditions in higher education and research (despite Pacific Island nations becoming independent). Thaman (2014b) elucidates the tension for local Pacific knowledge in higher Education when institutional structures and curricula remain unchallenged. From a New Zealand perspective, Mara et al. (2014) have also challenged the colonial history of the education of Pasifika peoples that arose from an assimilationist policy, and, although unsuccessful and unsustainable, continues to inform a legacy for the education future of New Zealand as a whole. The devaluing of Pacific Indigenous knowledge systems in Pacific higher education institutions makes it difficult to take seriously the valuable contribution these systems can make to knowledge. PIKS continues to sit on the periphery of education philosophy. To ensure a future for Pacific Indigenous knowledge, Thaman (2014a), Matapo & Baice (2020), and Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017) amongst others, argue for a decolonising process that systemically values and embeds Pacific Indigenous knowledge within Pacific region institutions. Tualaulelei and McFall-McCaffery (2019) have argued that: "[…] Pacific knowledge-seeking and knowledge creation are not limited to the academy" (p. 196). I would also add to this that the validation of knowledge in terms of its rigour, credibility and measure are also not limited to the academy.

In her 2016, Aronui Lecture for the Royal Society of New Zealand, Konai Helu-Thaman discussed the challenges for Pacific epistemology in education and research. She identified some of the tensions for Pacific scholarship, including the validity of Pacific research methodologies within the academy and the ongoing epistemological silencing and appropriation of Pacific knowledge and products. The table provides a summary of the challenges faced by researchers of Pacific education.

**Table 3**

**Pacific Indigenous epistemology: Challenges in education and research in the region**

- Lack of resources (human and material) to assist potential researchers
- Politics of education and continuing dependence on foreign intellectual and financial resources
- Cautious acknowledgement by both Pacific and non-Pacific scholars of the validity of Pacific research and Pacific research frameworks
- The continued marginalisation of Pacific ways of thinking, living, doing in formal education – especially higher education
- Epistemological silencing and continuing appropriation of Pacific knowledge and products
- Over-emphasis of global knowledge versus local and Indigenous knowledge and life-ways (individual versus collective)
- General fear of taking risks within the academy

*Note.* Adapted from Thaman, 2016.

## Problematising the Politics of Pasifika education research in New Zealand

The Pasifika Education research guidelines published by MoE in 2001 came at a time in New Zealand when the disparities of education outcomes for Pasifika learners across education sectors were becoming increasingly apparent. In response to this education disparity, the MoE set out to understand the implications for Pasifika peoples in education. Community consultation and a range of key Pasifika research reports were commissioned (identified in chapter two), as there seemed to be little published in the field of Pasifika education research at the time. What was needed to inform and guide future directions for Pasifika education research were specific guidelines to ensure research with Pasifika peoples in the context of education were indeed culturally and ethically grounded – from a position that takes the aspirations of Pasifika peoples

seriously as well as builds evidence-based research that elucidates effective education praxis and pedagogy to bridge policy with practice (Anae et al., 2001).

The authors of the 2001 Pasifika Education Research Guidelines begin with the premise that education within New Zealand is steeped in western values and belief systems, thus assuming a particular subjectivity for learners in education that is not always relevant to the Pacific knowledge systems ontologies that shape Pasifika peoples constructs of reality. The guidelines invite researchers (Pasifika and non-Pacific) within the context of Pasifika education research to interrogate regimes of truth presented within education that continue to underserve and marginalise Pacific knowledge systems, values and structures. In doing so, the guidelines challenge deficit theorisations of Pasifika student success. The emphasis is not placed on 'blaming' the student for their position of 'lack' (social, class, language, competency etc.) as the catalyst for underachievement. Instead, the guidelines invite Pasifika education researchers to take social responsibility in reclaiming a vision for Pacific knowledges and values to be taken seriously within the context of education.

The Pasifika Education Research Guidelines present the politics of education as part of the research conversation in which the neoliberal agendas that permeate education institutions are challenged as part of organisational strategic priorities. Ever-present within New Zealand education institutions is the destructive power of market-driven developments that cascade through all political and systemic layers (and actors). Anae et al. (2001) warn of the tensions for Pasifika education positioned within western education paradigms. These are:

- Western democratic principles of individual rights and freedoms as the foundational and ideal epitome of society
- Market-driven economies and ideology
- Capitalist paradigms
- Focus on the individual as opposed to the collective
- Monocultural methodologies and frameworks
- Androcentric nature of western societies
- Anthropocentric nature of western education systems and pedagogy (culture/nature divide)

(adapted from Anae et al., 2001, p. 12).

The guidelines encourage research considerations to go beyond Eurocentric western structures of knowledge and education by providing insights for Pacific research(ers) to engage more openly with and in Pacific onto-epistemologies. Throughout the Pasifika Education Research Guidelines, there is an affirming of relationality in research processes; the embedding of Pacific values, belief systems and knowledge sharing are collectively constituted. Anae et al., (2001) states:

> The guidelines thus point to the need for Pacific research(ers) to create our pedagogy and symbolic orders, our own sources of identity, authority, mediating structures and appropriate standards in development and education, which are rooted in our own (Pacific) values, assumptions, knowledges, processes and practices, and particularly those values which support sustainability and equity of benefits, not only measured in economic terms. The starting point of any research proposal should also be pro-Pacific and reflect a non-exploitative research and research process environment (p. 13).

How Pacific values underpin the guidelines are presented through a common shared values system. The guidelines also caution research(ers) to be critical of specific cultural differences between Pacific groups. How values play out in the relationship, interaction, communication and ways of being and knowing the world vary from different cultural contexts. The general features of the 'Pacific Way' (Crocombe cited in Anae., et al., 2001) describe social behaviours that are common cultural practices across the Pacific region and within a New Zealand transnational Pasifika perspective. The 'Pacific Way' defined within the guidelines incorporate examples of social protocols, morally grounded within common shared values system, such as openness to negotiation (connecting back to historical traditions of Pacific oral language histories), the inseparability of church and culture (the adaptation of Christian morals) and the significance of generosity of time, property and labour (based upon a collective ethos).

When modes of 'being' are presented as a 'Pacific Way', the position of values systems within Pacific cultures turn expression of research (what is actioned through the research assemblage) into a teleological event. The determinants of the research(er) in Pasifika Education Research ends up becoming the 'stuff' of method, centred around the practice of ‘appropriate’ behaviours which position Pacific Indigenous Knowledge Systems, the onto-epistemologies, on the periphery

of the research(er) engagement. The guidelines are not intentionally designed to engage in 'other' ways of knowing in Pacific Indigenous epistemology, however, but to provide insights to the complexities research(ers) must consider in the social sphere; implementing and theorising in the context of Pasifika education research.

From the early 2000s onwards, Pasifika Education Research has steadily grown (Coxon & Samu, 2010). This includes Pasifika Education Research taken up by postgraduate students across New Zealand that explore Pasifika students' engagement in education across all sectors (early childhood, compulsory schooling and Tertiary education). Burnett (2012) analysed the bibliographic index of Pacific theses in New Zealand universities. His study of postgraduate student choices in Pacific research highlighted the increase in postgraduate thesis in Pasifika education after 1990. He indicates that on average, from 1970 to 1990 there were approximately two to three theses completed each year nationally. At the time of his analyses in 2012, this number had increased to an average of ten theses per year (Burnett, 2012; Burnett & Lingam, 2012).

Melani Anae (2019) argues that Pacific models and guidelines for research should encourage ethically and culturally appropriate research praxis for Pacific peoples. In doing so, she predicts such research will provide more robust and relevant outcomes to inform policymaking. The question of ethics in research practice is constituted within the Indigenous assemblage. The ethics of knowledge production for Pacific people must engage beyond universalistic notions of research protocols to attend to the culturally complex ontologies of Pacific knowing (Matapo, 2021). Across the various Pacific research guidelines presented in table below, fundamental themes are proposed. These are the importance of Pacific values and principles and the relevance of consultation, partnership and ownership through the research process. The following illustrative table outlines a range of examples of Pacific research guidelines developed over the last two decades (presented in alphabetical order).

**Table 4**

**New Zealand Pacific research guidelines**

| **National Pacific Research Guidelines/Reference** | |
|---|---|
| Health Research Council | Health Research Council of New Zealand. (2005). *Guidelines on Pacific health research* (3rd ed.). Auckland: Health Research Council of New Zealand.<br><br>Health Research Council of New Zealand. (2014). *Pacific health research guidelines.* Auckland: Health Research Council of New Zealand. |
| Ministry of Education | Anae, M., Coxon, E., Mara, D., & Wendt-Samu, T. (2001). *Pasifika education research guidelines: Final report*. Wellington: Ministry of Education Research Division, Auckland UniServices. |
| Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. | Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. (2005). *Pacific consultation guidelines.* Wellington: Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. |
| Tertiary Education Commission | Tertiary Education Commission. (2018a). *Pacific research In* Performance-based research fund, Panel-specific guidelines for the 2018 Quality Evaluation (87 – 94). Wellington, New Zealand: Tertiary Education Commission. |
| **Institutional Pacific Research Guidelines** | |
| Massey University | Massey University (2017). *Pacific research guidelines and protoc*ols. Auckland, New Zealand: Massey University. |
| Otago University | University of Otago (2011). *Pacific research protocols*. Otago, New Zealand: University of Otago. |

*Note.* Adapted from Government departments and higher education institutions (references shown in table).

There is little to no mention of Pacific onto-epistemologies (with world) and their potentiality for knowledge creation in research. Throughout the Ministry and Institutional research principles and guidelines there is a strong presence of the 'social' contexts of Pasifika education research engagement, which follow social-constructivist paradigms fundamental in New Zealand education (MoE, 2011; 2014; 2018; 2020a). The social-constructivist education philosophies that underpin the social dimensions of knowledge creation are apparent however, the 'world' or material context is yet to be articulated as an agentic part of the research process. From a Pacific Indigenous philosophical reference, the creation of knowledge is not only human centred.

*So how do we bring these ways of being into the Pasifika education research assemblage to reimagine novel and embedded relational ontologies in research?*

With the growth in Pasifika research, including with respect to Pasifika education, many of the qualitative paradigms selected for the studies were positioned within critical inquiries (interpretive with transformative aims). However, what is problematic about this research is the dialectic positions that are rooted within critical modes of inquiry (present within social sciences research) and how these are featured through many Pasifika education research studies. Pasifika education research highlights the same persistent systemic disparities, challenges and barriers for Pasifika education success (Sanga, 2014b; Samu, 2010; 2011). Pasifika education research studies have challenged Eurocentric pedagogies and western knowledge systems deeply entrenched within our New Zealand education institutions (Airini et al., 2011; Anae, 2010; Brown et al., 2007; Burnett, 2012). Recent Pasifika qualifications achievement data shows incremental progress, particularly for younger Pasifika peoples gaining certificate levels 1-4, however, Pasifika peoples, compared to other populations within New Zealand, are still at the 'tail-end' (Stats New Zealand, 2020). It seems that although there have been decades of Pasifika education research, education in New Zealand continues to be inadequate in supporting the success of Pasifika peoples as Pasifika (Chu et al., 2013b; Matapo & Baice, 2020). How can Pasifika education research grounded upon Pacific methodologies create generative insights to these ongoing issues when the tools for critique trace back to dialectic thinking?

## The neoliberal university and the politics of research.

The following section explores the relationship between the neoliberal university and the knowledge economy concerning research, particularly the influence of higher education institutional politics of research. The presence of neoliberal politics within New Zealand higher education encroaches upon all layers of academic performance and the determinant measures of scholarly outputs in performance and research (Barrow & Grant, 2019; Naepi et al., 2017). Of course, the local politics of higher education local politics do not occur within a vacuum; global neoliberalism directly impacts local higher education, on all systemic levels. Competition between local and international institutions is not uncommon and is exacerbated by a capitalist and even anthropocentric agenda. The institution becomes the product of appeal for consumers to

choose based on which education experience, level of reputation the institution's qualification holds and the opportunities that may be afforded students post-qualification. The institution constituted in the knowledge capital, is growing increasingly part of the globalising forces with the advancements of technology in communication that bring the world together. Institutions perpetuate neoliberal ideals through curricula, assessment practice and so-called specialised competencies of practice.

The status and ethos of the academy is embedded upon classical liberal ideals including freedom, market exchanges, the rationality of self-government, and freedom from the state's interventions. To be entrepreneurial, competitive and enterprising are features of the autonomous-liberal characteristics promoted within higher education policy (Olssen & Peters, 2005). There are four distinct presuppositions Olssen and Peters (2005) characterise as defining the 'new brand' of neoliberalism within higher education policy. These are the self-interested individual, free market economics, a commitment to laissez-faire and a commitment to free trade (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p 315). The following paragraphs present a critique of the 'new brand' of neoliberalism and its philosophical assumptions and the constraints to Pasifika subjectivity in Pasifika education research. Two, in particular, are discussed; The self-interested individual and free market economics.

**The self-interested individual**: The notion of self within a Pacific perspective takes on a very different etymology from neoliberal notions. The liberal individual holds their own personal sense of autonomy based upon their capacities to reason and rationalise personal choice over a collective ethos of agency. The self is represented as being a rational optimiser and best judge of his/her interests and needs, one who privileges self. When this notion of the self-interested individual is promoted throughout education curricula, pedagogy and policy, the complexities or determinants of successful education engagement are adapted to an individualistic notion or measure. How is this position internalised by Pacific students negotiating a collective vā and personhood constituted within the collective? What assumptions are made about Pacific students when 'self' as individual is premised upon being an economically self-interested subject? These are

implications for Pasifika students navigating notions of success espoused by their higher education institutions.

**Free market economics**: If the best opportunities and allocation of resources are through the market, then the market becomes a more efficient mechanism and morally superior mechanism to meet the demands of society's self-interest and needs. The early childhood education sector and Tertiary education fall into these free-market categories as sectors that are modelled upon a 'consumer-pays' approach, where individuals' choices to engage in such a service can be determined by their interests, desires, judgements as to what suits them. In western countries, education institutions are forced into competing with other institutions, although they may espouse similar philosophies of education. Part of the conversation of mobilising Pacific Indigenous philosophy in Pasifika education research is the role of research in promoting institutional capital.

### Knowledge capitalism and the knowledge economy:

The knowledge economy exhibits different patterns of production, innovation and ownership and also represents an anomaly (Olssen & Peters 2005). Neoliberalism reforms the privatising of the state sector, where national education systems remain overwhelmingly part of the public sector, state-controlled and state-owned (Gould & Matapo, 2016; Olssen and Peters, 2005). The context of education as a profession and the professional discourse that influences Pasifika education research demonstrates that valued knowledges and philosophies in contemporary education are penetrated by neoliberal-ologies; ontological modes of neoliberalism that produce self-interested subjectivities (Matapo & Baice, 2020; Matapo & Teisina, 2020). Another relevant term that expands upon this idea of knowledge capitalism is ‘cognitive capitalism’. Cognitive capitalism is pervasive in the new knowledge economy.

Braidotti (2019) suggests that capitalism has taken a cognitive turn which opens up complexity to the ways cognitive material is produced and reproduced. Cognitive capitalism engenders new labour relations with technological mediation in which automation and advanced computational

systems are pervasive (Braidotti, 2019). In the academy, the notion of cognitive capitalism has infiltrated a new form of reproduction of knowledge and, in particular, affected the conducting of research. The politics of research within the institution, influenced by cognitive capitalism, are wrapped in neoliberal governance regimes mediated through techno-assemblages of research processes. Examples of techno-mediations of research are measures of credibility, citation counts, research impact, dissemination and global research journal rankings. These examples (to some extent) fragment relations of knowledge production, including epistemology. The commodification of research through technological mediation is part of the advanced capitalist agenda, which seeks to capitalise on the production of and relations to new knowledge. This shifts the culture/nature divide to include media as a means of capitalising knowledge; converging environments produce subjectivity in social and material relations (Braidotti, 2018; 2019; Parikka, 2015). This approach to knowledge is diametrically opposed to the principles and values of Pacific philosophies.

## Part Two: Pasifika education research methodologies

The emergence of Pacific methodologies within research pushes back against the history of Eurocentric research frameworks imposed upon Pacific peoples for hundreds of years. Many Pacific methodologies work to decolonise Pacific Indigenous knowledge systems in an ethos of social justice to advance social change to benefit Pasifika/Pacific peoples (Ponton, 2018). Pacific scholars have paradigmatically conceptualised Pacific research methodologies by encompassing Pacific worldviews (ontological and epistemological) that are grounded upon Pacific values, principles and cultural understandings of self and the world (McFall-McCaffery, 2010). Anae (2019) explains that the steady growth of Pacific research methodologies in the last two decades is a renaissance of sorts, a rebirth because these methodologies already existed. Pacific scholars and communities actively seek to decolonise and reindigenise research agendas to produce ethically sound transformational outputs. She explains Pacific research as relational ethics that include the *vā* in all its dimensions: "[…] the sacred, spiritual, and social spaces of human

relationships between researcher and researched that Pacific peoples place at the centre of all human/environment/cosmos/ancestors and animate/inanimate interactions" (para. 1).

Pacific research ethics and Pacific research methodologies require careful and respectful critique, including the refinement of methodologies to provide rigour and clarity (Sanga & Reynolds, 2017). Critique of Pacific methodologies may call upon their genealogies of epistemology, honouring histories and, at the same time, opening up them up to new and generative ways to think and reconceptualise Indigenous philosophies in contemporary contexts. Kabini Sanga (2014a; 2014b) affirms the importance of Pacific methodological agency that affirms, honours, and protects the legacy of Indigenous knowledge systems as an essential component of Pacific research methodology today. The following table provides an illustrative example rather than an exhaustive list of contemporary Pasifika methodologies taken up in Pasifika education research. The table is adapted from Tualaulelei & Mcfall-Mccaffery (2019, pp. 192-195) and *Tapasā,* which includes the Cook Island framework, *Tivaevae*, as an example of a Pasifika education research methodology.

**Table 5**

**Pasifika methodologies utilised within Pasifika Education research**

| Name | Authors | Origin | Key ideas & *Metaphors/concepts |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Iluvatu* | Naisilisili (2012) | Fiji | Research guided by values of inclusiveness, respect, the family, cohesiveness, uniqueness, reflections, reciprocity and spirituality, a derivative of Vanua<br><br>*'*Iluvatu* (special Cu'u mat). |
| *Fa'afaletui* | Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, and Bush (2005). | Samoa | The critical iterative process of weaving (*tui*) different expressions of knowledge from within various groupings of the cultural community. It allows appropriate cultural protocols to be addressed and permits issues to be considered *tapu* (sacred and forbidden) and discussed openly. *Adapted model from Pasifika health has been applied to Pasifika education.*<br><br>*Weaving process |
| *Kakala* | Thaman (1992, 1993b); Manu'atu (2000); Johansson Fua, Manu, Takapautolo, & | Tonga | Philosophy for teaching, learning and research acknowledges social relationships: teu (plan), toli (gather), tui (weave), luva |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Taufe'ulungaki (2007); Johansson Fua (2009, 2010) | | (present), malie (feedback/evaluation) and mafana (impact/sustainability).<br><br>**Tui kakala* (garland making) |
| *Talanoa* | Vaioleti (2006, 2011); Prescott and Hooper (2009); Prescott (2011) | Tonga | Researching through conversation. Engagement of diverse and contesting stories.<br><br>* Talanoa (conversations) |
| *Tauhi vā* | Ka'ili (2005) | Tonga | Nurturing sociospatial ties through geographical and genealogical connections<br><br>* Reciprocity, relational spaces |
| *Teu le va* | Anae (2010, 2016) | Samoa | Practices to engage stakeholders, collaborate, coordinate, accumulate knowledge, understand different kinds of knowledge, engage with knowledge brokers<br><br>*Reciprocal relationships |
| *Tivaevae* | Te Ava, Airina & Rubie-Davies (2011) | Cook Islands | Engagement in Cook Island cultural traditions and relational values to foster culturally responsive pedagogy<br><br>* *Tivaevae* Traditional Cook Island quilt making |
| *Tofä'a'anolasi* | Galuvao (2016) | Samoa | Critical discourse analysis from a Samoan Perspective<br><br>* Wisdom to identify/critique the meanings of texts |
| *Tree of Opportunity* | Pene, Taufe'ulungaki, and Benson (2002) | Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Niue, Hawai'i, Cook Islands, Tonga | Vision for Pacific education deeply rooted in Pacific cultures, languages, values, worldviews and knowledge<br><br>*Tree |
| *Ula* | Sauni (2011) | Samoa | Research approach based on the principles and values of *fa'asamoa* (Samoan culture)<br><br>**Lei* (garland) |
| *Vā* | Indigenous Pacific concept; interpreted by Wendt (1999); Tuagalu (2008); Reynolds (2016); Amituanai-Toloa (2018, April 29) and others | Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Hawaii | Emphasises the spiritual and social connections between people, contexts and environments; focuses on intentions and purposeful actions within social spaces; *Vā* is a crucial dimension of *Ta Vā, Tauhi Vā* and *Teu le vā*<br><br>*Vā(relational spaces) |
| *Va'a Tele* | Si'ilata (2014) | Samoa | Evidence-based strategies for bilingual/ bicultural Pasifika learners' success in English-medium schools and classes<br><br>* *Va'a tele* (double-hulled deep-sea canoe) |
| Vaka | Nelisi (2004) | Niue | Significance of Indigenous values, knowledge and approaches Pacific teachers bring to their pedagogy<br><br>*Canoe |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Vanua* | Nabobo-Baba (2008) | Fiji | Processes and protocols used when researching Indigenous Fijian histories, knowledges, skills, arts, values and lifeways<br><br>*Land |

*Note*. Adapted from: MoE, 2018, p. 27; Tualaulelei & Mcfall-Mccaffery, 2019, pp. 192-195.

In 2005, Tui Atua warned of the implications of the rapid growth of Pacific research methodologies creating 'clutter' in Pacific research (Tui Atua, 2005). Other Pacific scholars have also problematised the ways in which Pacific methodologies are taught and taken up within the institution (Matapo, 2018; Tualaulelei & MacFall-McCaffery, 2019; Vaka'uta & Koya, 2014). More recently, Melani Anae (2019) problematises the ad hoc, rapid and often fragmented development of Pacific methodologies and suggests a more comprehensive, conceptual and theoretical framing is required to enhance and improve the future of Pacific research. A widely used Pacific research approach is that of *Talanoa*[73] (Baice, et al., 2021; Fa'avae, et al., 2016). The lexicon of research processes and practice within the institution often liken Talanoa to other data collection methods such as 'focus groups' or interviews despite a very different cultural knowledge systems that grounds it (Matapo & Enari, 2021). Talanoa, as a methodology is not interchangeable with conventional research methods such a focus group questioning, or informal interviews. The conventions used to describe narrative (subjective) data collection from a standardised qualitative approach misses the point of Pacific subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, what arises out of the research(er) relationship with people and place (including material) is the product of the research

## Pasifika research methodologies: Affirming Pacific philosophy in research

Recent studies in New Zealand higher education reveal tensions of structural racism: Pasifika academics are under-represented, and the inefficiency of policies to address disparities between Pacific and non-Pacific representation within the University is becoming more apparent (Naepi

[73] Vaioleti (2006) suggests that the process of talanoa is a cross-Pacific concept, although in his writings acknowledges a specific genealogy to Tonga. The conepts talanoa is a dialogic concepts that is open to relationality, ethics and co-construction of knowledge.

et al., 2019). The attempts at valuing of the knowledges of Pasifika peoples concerning education, including the collective ties that constitute the Pacific sense of self and personhood, is not always appreciated in dominant society.

In fact, Tolenoa and Hough cited in Kēpa and Manu'atu, (2011) remind us that:

> Since the latter half of the 20th century, education development has been concerned with the individual and the endeavour of universal education to assimilate Pasifika peoples to the dominant society. In the Western world, education is part and parcel of the 500 years of development, colonisation and globalisation based on capitalist relations of production, that is, individual property rights and peoples' labour to create profit (p. 625).

This western capitalist influence affects the realm of pedagogic and research practice within the academy and permeates multiple layers of teacher development, through to initial teacher education, policy and practice. In his article that explores the educational aid and teacher education in the Pacific region, Burnett (2018) critiques the motives of the providers of external aid in the Pacific region that support Pacific teacher development. He identifies how educational aid in the Pacific from a rim country is inextricably tied to motives of altruism, self-interest and accountability which are not always informed by local interests. Quality relationships and careful negotiation of cultural difference and epistemology are vital to moving aid motivations away from reductive and monolithic views of Pacific cultural differences.

Mobilising Pacific Indigenous philosophy into contemporary education research conversations offers other ways of approaching inquiry, the nature and politics of research and its place in knowledge production. The 2018 Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) introduced a new Pacific panel to evaluate Pacific research continuations. The new evaluation tool that this panel developed may generate further opportunities for transforming systemic measures for Pacific research, given that the guidelines include recognition of Pacific epistemologies, ontology and community-based impact (Tertiary Education Commission, 2018a). The measures of Pacific Indigenous research ‘outcomes’ must shift within institutions in order to elevate Pacific Indigenous knowledges and recognise the potential of these knowledges to contribute new philosophies and pedagogies in education (moving beyond an equity-based approach). The

following diagram depicts the transversality of Pacific Indigenous research, a Moana-rhizoanalysis of the concepts and onto-epistemologies I have navigated throughout this study.

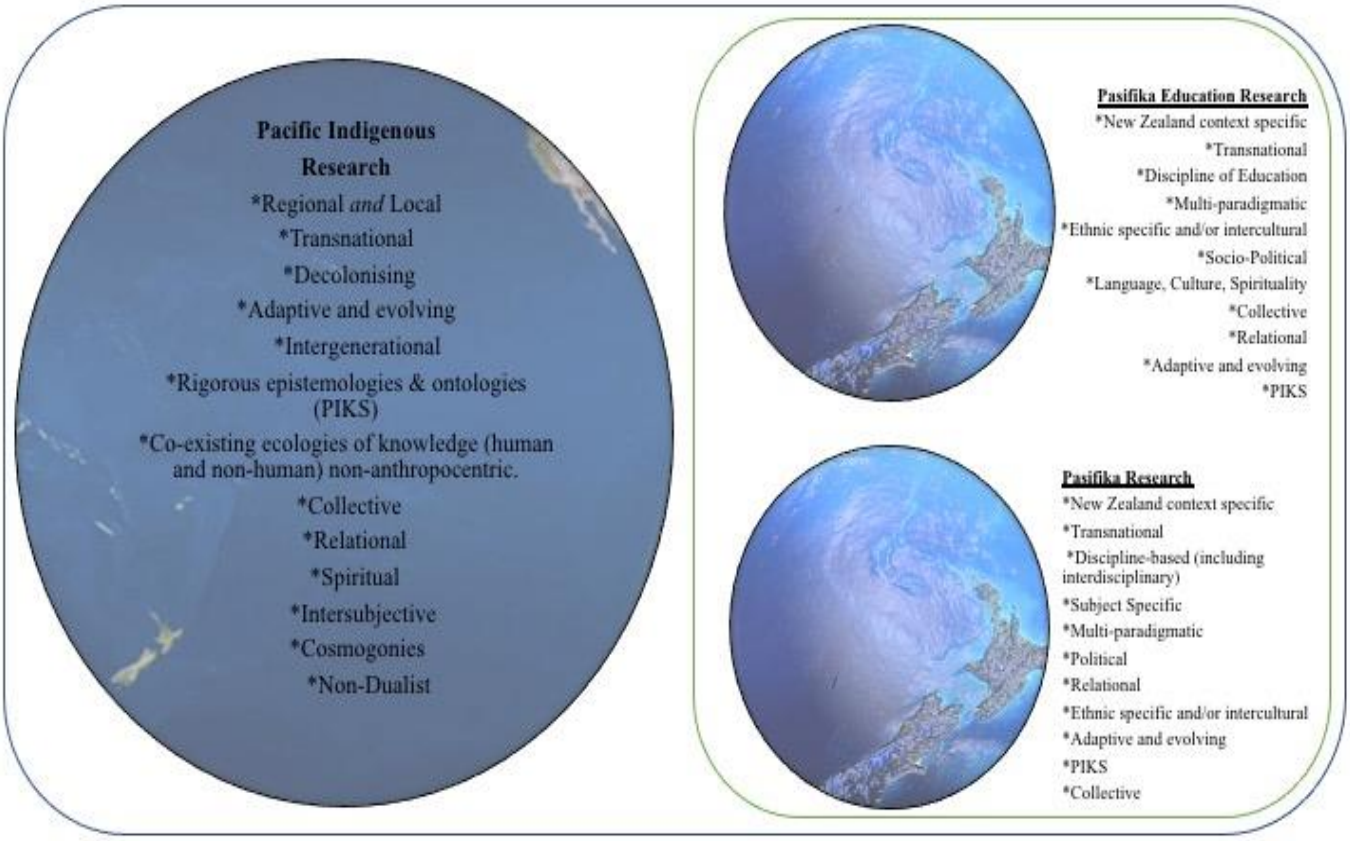


***Figure 22.*** **Diagram of the transversality of Pacific Research (regional and local).**
This image depicts the transversal relations and research concepts that have been mobilised throughout the Pacific region and locally in New Zealand. These are research(er) considerations traversing Pacific onto-epistemologies and the nomadic movement across different geographical, disciplinary and spatiotemporal domains. Jacoba Matapo, (2021). Digital Image.

## Deterritorialising and reterritorialising Pasifika education research through Pacific Indigenous philosophy: Mobilising Moana onto-epistemology

*How does one respond when one is multiple?*
*Why onto-epistemology in Pacific Indigenous philosophy?*

In this section, by way of relations, I map the intersecting lines in a dynamic assemblage of encounters that delineate the presence of the human subject over matter, or human above other-than-human. I will attempt to negotiate western concepts of the human subject, particularly the liberal rationalistic autonomous being that is challenged in collective Pacific Indigenous onto-epistemology, as Pacific ways of thinking shift the western fixed or static human subject position and affirm a co-existence with world, including an openness to the forces and flows of subjectivity.

From a Pacific perspective, our places and our cultures are collective, not individualistic. Gilbert (2005, p. 17) argues that the idea of people as individual, self-contained, independent thinking 'subjects' must giving way to synergies of relations and connectedness. In a qualitative study conducted by Tamasese et al. (2005), the notion of self from a Samoan perspective is problematised as they argue that 'self' is constituted in complex relations. Thus, the self is always a 'relational-self'. Tamasese et al. (2005) describes the Samoan concept of self as “having meaning only in relationship with other people, not as an individual”" (p. 303). The relational-self is flexible and there is an ecological flexibility or fluidity in one's ethnic identity which includes the multi-ethnic community to which one belongs (Anae, 2010, p. 14). Discussing a Fijian conception of self, Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012) also emphasises the importance of relationship as “intersubjectively constituted by past experiences, imagination, environment, and emotions occur through remembering, and each person's bodily and verbal responses to one another" (p. 9). From a Pacific perspective, subjectivity is situated within a vā or space that is perhaps outside the 'common' conceptions of subjectivity (Matapo & Teisina, 2020). The vā, which binds people, place and histories, bringing together co-agentic and collective intersubjectivities, is consistent in Pacific Indigenous knowledges (Matapo & Teisina, 2020).

## Affirming Moana materiality as part of the collective in Pasifika education research

The common Pacific phrase 'Tagata o le Moana' (peoples of Moana) signals relational and ancestral ties to Moana. Moana as a body of water in the Pacific is indeed life-giving and has its life force as an agentic entity. In terms of Pasifika education research, Pacific personhood, tied to Moana as a relational ontology, constituted in the collective, inclusive of human and non-human, generates alternative ways to think-embody philosophy as materialist and open to a complex network of relations (Matapo & Teisina, 2020). Despite the differences between Pacific Island nations, PIKS has gained greater mobility globally as a transnational Pacific paradigm for Pacific researchers to decolonise and affirm Pacific ways of knowing and being, including spirituality. Spirituality in being is present in all things and is immanent in Pacific ways of knowing (Hau'ofa, 1994). Indigenous spirit, in personhood, is not only written about or presented as a textualised formation, it is performed, woven, carved and etched into ancestral understandings that to be human is to know we are more than our physical bodies and minds (Meyer, 2014). Pacific indigenous knowing is entrenched in Pacific ontology; one gives rise to the other, of which both are transposed, an onto-epistemology of relational-being-worlded-knowing. Worlded-knowing in Pacific indigenous thinking decentres a humanist hierarchical position over all others. An example of this is the Pacific indigenous concept of Moana, or as Hau'ofa (1994) conceptualises Oceania. Moana shares a sacred kinship with Pacific peoples, which has been storied from ancient times in Pacific cosmogonies. Pacific peoples share histories and genealogies with Moana that unite Pacific people across the region. There is an embryonic connection to water, as water sustains life and humanity.

Pacific relational-self is continuously made and re-made through a continuum of relations and ties to ancestral knowledge (Matapo, 2017). Even though identity connects a Pacific/Pasifika person directly with the Tagata, fonua and Moana from which they came, 'self' as relational ontological reference allows for new and fluid identity formations, including emerging subjectivities in locations other than ancestral lands.

**Musumusu**

Moana nui a kiwa – my journey of writing/researching/becoming – I share this poem:

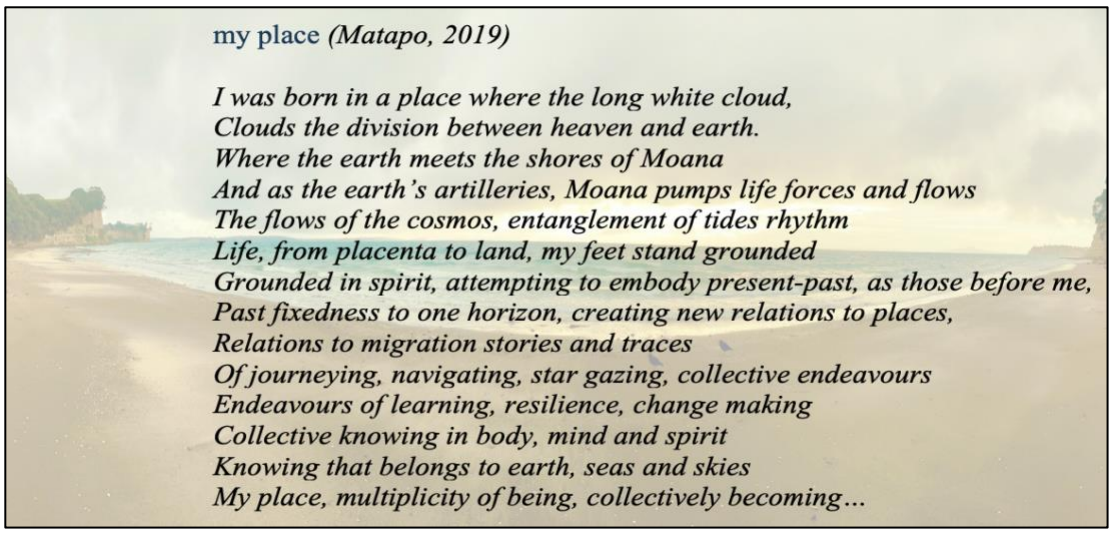


***Figure 23.*** **My place.** Jacoba Matapo, (2019). Poem in Digital Image.

# Chapter eight: Conclusion

## Affirming Pacific Indigenous Philosophy in Pasifika education research

Western educational research has followed the paradigmatic trajectories of modernism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and, as recognised within this thesis, the posthuman qualitative turn. There are core debates within each of these paradigms, based upon particular ideologies of the human subject and the nature of knowledge, including debates about the politics of knowledge production. Each of these paradigms and central debates, bar posthumanism, have contributed to and, to some extent, informed the emergence of Pasifika education research and policy. For the last two decades, Pasifika education policy has driven further research engagement across all education sectors with a particular focus on Pasifika student academic achievement through remedial and pedagogical approaches to address long-standing equity issues of disparity.

Critical qualitative methodologies have promoted emancipatory projects from a critical Marxist position, engaging transformative aims to address social (human) issues of gender, race, ethnicity, class, culture, ability, language, and many other aspects of identity (Ulmer, 2017). Developing from Marxist thought, critical inquiry led to postcolonial critiques that emerged in the 1980s. Later, following the decolonising movement of research (Smith, 2012), critical Marxist materialist critique offered insights into the economic disparities between social class, focussing attention on materialism as an essential aspect of humanist education research. All of these robust bodies of scholarship underpin Pasifika education research today, contributing to the surge in the development of Pacific methodologies that seek to affirm Pacific Indigenous knowledge systems and practices in education. The language of Pasifika education policy, however, still holds a deficit position for Pasifika engagement in education, based on the number of Pasifika students who do not meet standards of achievement that are rooted in mainstream notions of quality and success (Matapo & Baice, 2020). These measures of success, to a large extent, are the reason why, in the current context, Pasifika peoples are still at the margins of national academic achievement (MoE, 2020). There is more that Pasifika peoples (and epistemologies) can contribute to education in New Zealand. Politics of equity in education often direct a drive

towards the advancement of New Zealand's economy. This is an inadequate position to take in relation to both the needs of Pasifika peoples and to their capabilities. Pacific Indigenous philosophy generates more-than-human opportunities to think in and with theory and, in doing so, contributes to the significant ongoing global and local debates within education institutions.

Within Pasifika education research, the sociology of education can be opened up to include non-human others, to challenge the privileging of humans (species) as the only ones capable of knowledge and knowledge exchange. Such a movement shifts us (Pacific education researchers) to think differently about theoretical perspectives grounded upon social constructivism that have shaped Pasifika education and Pasifika education research over the years. The effort to take seriously the non-human other(ed), including materialist bodies (virtual and actual) in the research assemblage, brings posthuman philosophy and Pacific Indigenous philosophy into conversation.

The movement of Indigenous scholarship is both a global and local phenomenon. The local tensions in utilising humanist philosophies to mobilise Pacific Indigenous philosophy still situate the power and production of knowledge as a human feat (Matapo, 2016). Throughout this thesis, the presentation of Pacific philosophy concerning specific primordial chants, stories, and poetry of Pacific cosmogony using arts-based practices has traversed other-than-human possibilities for thinking in and with Pacific philosophy as material, processual and generative. A plethora of ethnic Pacific research methodologies are emerging that cater to specific differences and nuances across Pacific Island nations. The agentic capacities of knowing and knowledge creation inherent in many Pacific and Pasifika methodologies that have been studied/written about/presented/shared in recent years, particularly from transnational Pacific perspectives, show the potentiality of Pacific conceptualisations as nomadic to cut across geographical and spatiotemporal boundaries.

Pasifika methodologies are conceptualised uniquely as attending to the transnational notions of Pacific personhood (Pasifika peoples within Aotearoa). The example explored within the thesis, *teu le vā*, demonstrates the mobility of a time/space/context relational philosophy for Pasifika

education research and policy. Although *teu le vā* is a Samoan term, it has been utilised across different ethnic specific Pacific research projects. Adding to the nomadic capacity of *teu le vā* in Pasifika education research, a worlded and cosmological Moana philosophy brings into conversation the transversality of Pacific onto-epistemology, the ways in which *being* is constituted with the world, and the significance of materiality as part of a vitalist movement in knowledge creation and exchange. The position of Moana as part of a Pacific Indigenous philosophy affirms the complex histories and genealogies of peoples tied to places and ancestors who are always present. It is exciting to think about how Pacific Indigenous philosophy contributes new insights to the qualitative turn. This thesis argues that Pacific Indigenous philosophy conceptually affirms knowledge creation that engages complex genealogies of human and non-human others through co-evolutionary, co-existing, and co-agentic relations. This is certainly a radical departure from normative modes of qualitative research.

Pacific philosophy as it reimagines alternatives in knowledge creation against the grain of education premised on the culture/nature divide generates alternative perspectives and considerations to local and global conversations about education, ecological sustainability, and even universalised notions of global citizenship education (Matapo, 2019). Pacific philosophy mobilises new insights for the posthumanities and post-anthropocentric thinking that supports the relational, collective, and ecological modes of knowledge production, which other non-Indigenous scholars such as Rosi Braidotti, Donna Harroway, and Claire Colebrook, among others, suggest are fundamental in thinking about justice as a more-than-human undertaking (Ulmer, 2017). Pacific Indigenous thinking was never anthropocentric, and thus provides alternative understandings of *being* that are important to contribute to these contemporary conversations and debates.

Coming to know self with others, past and present, the cosmos, land, seas, and skies, I, as a Samoan/Pasifika researcher, have had to traverse in my thinking and being throughout the journey of this thesis. I still have not arrived, and neither do I expect to. I do wish to share with you, the reader, another sense-experience that speaks to the materiality of Pacific Indigenous philosophy

through arts-based practice. I ask how the act of the conch shell call *'ili le pū*[74]' may further the collective spirit of Pacific indigenous thinking in Pasifika education research. Rather than summarising an alternative materialist perspective for which Pacific Indigenous philosophy 'plugs-into', within this concluding chapter I share a Pan-Pacific cultural practice with you, the act of blowing the conch.

The act of blowing of the conch shell derives from ancient Pacific custom(s) that invites the attention of the god(s) and peoples and acts to invoke direct communication between peoples, place, and spirit (Matapo, 2018b). The call of the conch shell 'ili le pū' opens ethical, embodied metaphysical encounters for people, spirit, and place, not only in the physical act of human capacity but in the materiality of the shell-ocean-air-breath-life. The conch's sound as an expressive act moves beyond conventions of language, representation, and an expectation of fixed meanings. Similarly, Pacific Indigenous philosophies of Pasifika peoples, embodied in the creation of knowledge, are part of the body-assemblage, performative, expressive, and relational (Matapo & Teisina, 2020).

*I wonder how research(er) in Pasifika education research may move along such trajectories of expression?*

*In the call of the conch, what ruptures when sensations are felt under the skin, in the blood, through artilleries?*

*Ili le pū – Hear the call of the conch (hyper linked)*

Deep is the sound felt in your body
Hear the call, sensations under your skin
Stirring movement in knowing self
Calling upon ancestors, gods, spirit, time, and space
Knowing does not belong to you alone

Deep in the earth, the call vibrates
Felt under the feet of those before.
Fanua, with its own life forces and flows,
Regenerates new life with old.
Knowledge has constraints, unlike the wisdom of fanua

Deep is the breath you take to blow.
The winds around you, share in your breath

[74] Samoan for 'listen to the call of the conch'.

To fill your lungs, give life to your blood and brain
Breathe in your knowing, breathe out your wisdom
Generate understanding

Deep are the waters of **Moana**
Ili le pū, another voice calls
Waves of unrest, spirit unsettled
Our Oceania is dying, listen to the call
Knowledge has constraints, **Moana** speaks
Knowing does not belong to you alone

Poem by author, Jacoba Matapo (2018a)

## Limitations of research: Opening research to non-representation and non-dialectic thinking.

Mobilising Pacific Indigenous philosophy calls into question notions of human subjectivity concerning the world in which the culture/nature divide demarcates and privileges human over non-human others. Pacific Indigenous philosophy challenges this by affirming a co-existential ontology of relations. Another critical position in this thesis is the limitation of textualized language modes, privileged explicitly within research as the only forms that validate knowing. We are reminded by Tongan professor Konai Helu Thaman (2003) that the brain is not the only organ in the body that can think: hands can think, fingertips and feet can think, your lungs are thinking. In Pasifika education research, Pacific Indigenous philosophy allows for different ways of connecting to earth, body, and thinking in a co-agentic capacity. The challenges of representing these ways of connecting in text are ongoing features and tensions of writing this thesis.

**Musumusu**

I would much rather dance aspects of my thesis to you, the reader; however, I am limited to my doctoral programme's conventions and initial doctoral format selection. Let me story an example of embodied knowing relevant to me and the village that I am from. In my village in Samoa, there is a dance 'story' of the body of water called Loloa. The dance narrates the genealogy of that water, where it springs up from deep beneath the earth. The arms and fingers' movement shift subtly, gently as the eyes trace the hands and fingertips motions; the body and feet are led by the fingers also. Legs move with the body, in between stiff and subtle as not to take away the hands' attention. What is felt in the body when this story is danced? How does this affect others in the assemblage of the event? There is no one correct representation. The tensions as a researcher echo the tensions of dance.

One difficulty for any Pasifika researcher engaging in and with Pacific Indigenous philosophy alongside posthuman philosophy is that idea of culture is neither static nor fixed and is open to

generative forces and flows that are non-representational. Unlike conventional qualitative research, research from this perspective often seeks to explore or discover social phenomena and later apply the conventions of interpretation to seek meaning. Non-representation in knowledge creation involves an openness to unknowing, a specific vulnerability to sense, feel, engage with unfamiliar territory without trying to fix already formulated meaning. This is not to say knowledge creation relies solely on the 'unconscious.' It is to say, however that matter, events, the virtual and actual of events are part of thought and should not be dismissed as irrelevant. Non-representational theory and research are situated in the world and allow for correspondence with material contexts embedded in local formations (Ulmar, 2017). Although it may seem near impossible to escape representation, the purpose of philosophy as a creative ethos (as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari and Braidotti, for instance) is to understand the world and peoples as already fully constituted within knowledge assemblages, not lacking, but vitalist and agentic.

In her critique of the non-representational as presented within posthuman philosophy, Ulmer (2017) states:

> It is important to note that non-representation is not an end-run around method but offers a way of intertwining theory with methodological thinking to produce something different, something generative, and something wildly imaginative. Non-representational research receives mixed reactions. It is at once promising and potentially problematic. Namely, however much it may be desirable to move away from representation, it may not be possible to avoid it altogether (p. 839).

Given academic scepticism around non-representational theory, why is it essential to engage Pacific Indigenous philosophy as part of these movements and shifts in the qualitative turn? The research(er) through non-representational research is directly situated within the world and life, which for research in empirical science histories had divided. For Pacific onto-epistemology, the complex relationship in and with world is part of the collective-self that shapes Pacific personhood (Vaai, 2015). As evident in the theorisations of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) the shifts towards new empiricisms have jolted empirical researchers to affirm the significance of entanglement across environments, ecologies, and relations. In the processes of knowing, always present are the pre-cognitive, non-discursive, more-than-human, spatial, and temporally complex life-worlds (Vannini, 2015).

**Musumusu**
Terms used within posthuman philosophy are intentionally difficult, which means rigorous debates and conversations about alternatives to humanist thinking may seem erudite, impenetrable, or inaccessible. Indeed, this is what I found when I first started on the research journey five years ago. However, there was something about the process ontology of Deleuze and Guattari and later about posthuman philosophy that attracted me to read more, think more, undo more. It was how it challenged my dialectic thinking. From my Samoan/Pasifika perspective, I have often been troubled with cultural concepts that demarcate a pure and untouched notions of culture, particularly when framing precolonial contact. I have wondered how this thinking has permeated Pacific methodologies today; perhaps the residue of anthropological research remains in the representation of an ideological traditional past?

## Our future-past is already present: Possibilities for research

Pasifika education research stresses that Pasifika people within New Zealand, hold a high regard for education as part of the collective success of their families and communities. The Ministry of Education has for two decades focused on Pasifika education plans and policies across the education sectors on strengthening the academic achievement of Pasifika students. However, the engagement of Pasifika peoples within the New Zealand education institutions must offer more than an equity-based position fundamentally oriented to Eurocentric knowledge and ambitions. A radical shift is needed within Pasifika education and Pasifika education research to confront the neoliberal ideals of the knowledge economy, which have permeated all levels of education institutions. The conventional institutional politics that determine what knowledges, philosophies, and pedagogies are to be valued, have proven insufficient and incompatible for many Pasifika peoples to thrive in education.

It comes as no surprise that Pasifika education research reveals that the neoliberal agendas perpetuated within the institution hinder Pasifika academics, ancillary staff and students (Matapo & Baice, 2020). The notion of academic success prescribes a particular subjectivity of the student or academic, often aligned with liberal and neoliberal 'traits' that are not always conducive to Pasifika ways of being and knowing. Extensive research of Pasifika student and staff engagement in higher education signals to the historical and systemic barriers of inclusion and the lack of recognition or value of Pacific indigenous knowledge (Matapo & Baice, 2020; Naepi et al., 2017; Thaman 2003; Smith, 2012).

As an academic, I am convinced that Pacific Indigenous philosophies provide a significant scholarly contribution to many local and global issues in education and education research. Pacific Indigenous philosophy provides radical shifts in thinking and offers other ways of reconceptualising life-being-ontologies in harmony with earth and cosmos. I hope that this thesis contributes to different ways of thinking about Pasifika subjectivity and intersubjectivity, not only in reconfiguring research but also as a way to affirm life (experience) and movement in Pasifika education research. Pacific Indigenous philosophy forces us to think differently about many of the taken-for-granted political, economic and geographical conditions held in high regard in the western canon, such as democracy, globalisation, social-material relations and the power of knowledge. As a Samoan/Pasifika research(er), I hope this thesis contributes to ongoing conversations that build and strengthen rigorous engagement in Pasifika education research. I share my final poem and video with you, the reader.

***Figure 24.*** **Harakeke – Weaving story.** Jacoba Matapo, (2021). Digital Image (hyperlnked).

***Harakeke***

We borrow
The threads we weave
To hold for a while
To sense and to feel,
The Harakeke belongs to earth and kin,

We simply borrow
The languages, histories, knowledges, and culture we weave
The stories we hold for a while
Connecting us, with cosmos, earth, ocean, and kin.

To sense and to feel
**To belong**

Poem by author Jacoba Matapo (2021)

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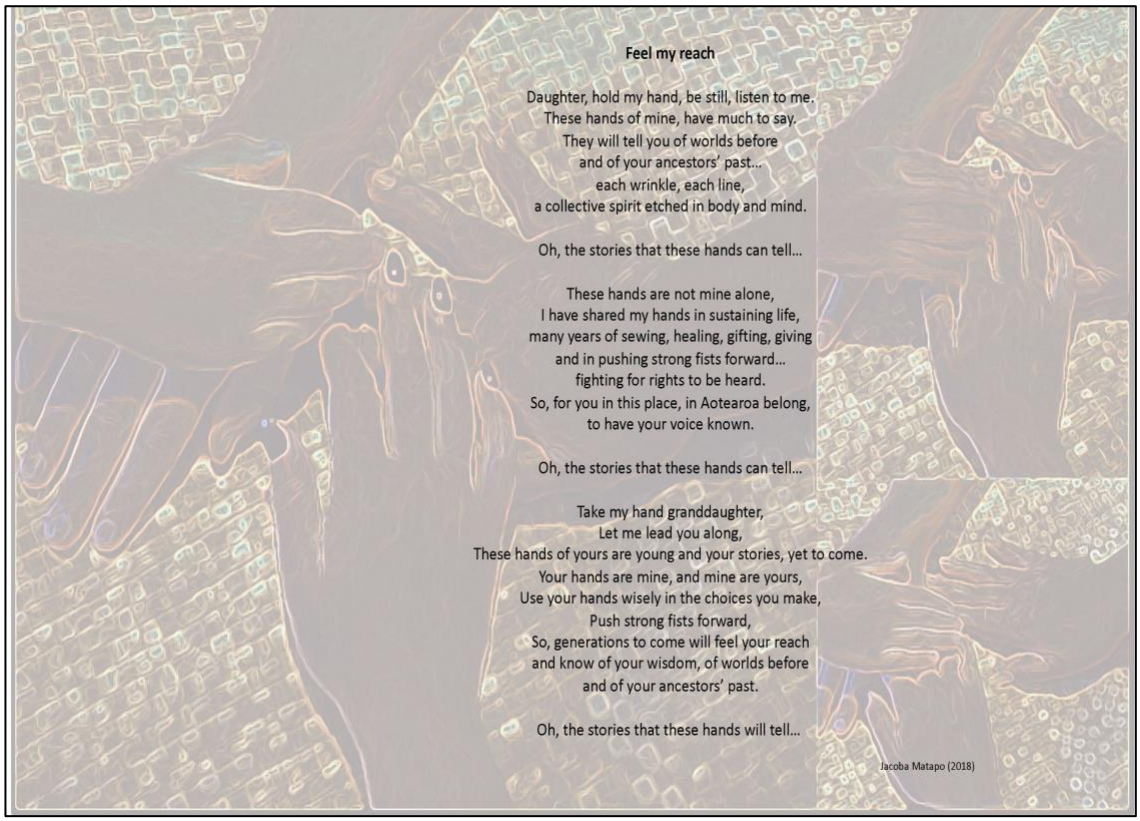
# Appendix: Digital links to audio and video recordings




**Feel my reach (**Poetry by Jacoba Matapo, audio file read by Jacoba Matapo)
https://www.dropbox.com/s/1jgxrsw2h7hulzj/Feel%20My%20Reach%20-%20Jacoba%20Matapo.m4a?dl=0

**Tagaloa** (Poetry by Jacoba Matapo and video by author Jacoba Matapo)
https://www.dropbox.com/s/n8c9zhiqh0d120p/Tagaloa%20.MOV?dl=0

**Ili le pū – Hear the call of the conch**

Deep is the sound felt in your body
Hear the call, sensations under your skin
Stirring movement in knowing self
Calling upon ancestors, gods, spirit, time, and space
Knowing does not belong to you alone

Deep in the earth, the call vibrates
Felt under the feet of those before.
Fanua, with its own life forces and flows,
Regenerates new life with old.
Knowledge has constraints, unlike the wisdom of fanua

Deep is the breath you take to blow.
The winds around you, share in your breath
To fill your lungs, give life to your blood and brain
Breathe in your knowing, breathe out your wisdom
Generate understanding

Deep are the waters of **Moana**
Ili le pū, another voice calls
Waves of unrest, spirit unsettled
Our Oceania is dying, listen to the call
Knowledge has constraints, **Moana** speaks
Knowing does not belong to you alone

**Ili le pū –** (Poem by author and read by author).
https://www.dropbox.com/s/g5e8uus117f7dg8/Ili%20le%20pu%20Matapo.m4a?dl=0

**Harakeke – Weaving story.** (Poetry by Jacoba Matapo and video by author Jacoba Matapo).
https://www.dropbox.com/s/761as5fompk9c7q/Harakeke%20Matapo%202021.mov?dl=0