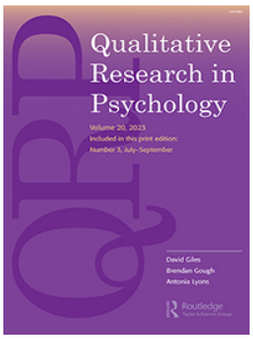

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Drawing wisdom from the Pacific: A Tongan participative approach to exploring and addressing family violence

Sesimani Havea, Siautu Alefaio-Tugia, and Darrin Hodgetts

School of Psychology, Massey University, NZ

ABSTRACT

The development of qualitative research approaches that are embedded within a Tongan worldview and associated relational practices is pivotal to enhancing knowledge of, and culturally-informed responses to violence within the Tongan *kainga* (family). We are currently in the early stages of such developments. This reflexive methodological article draws conceptual insights and cultural concepts from the exemplar of a Tongan faith-based family violence prevention programme, which was developed by Tongan community practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand. We document the adaptation of *Tauhi va* (nurturing loving and harmonious relationships), *Nofo* (indigenous cultural immersion), and *Talanoa* (Pacific indigenous ways of dialogue and discussion) in the design and documenting of this culturally-embedded response to such violence. Elsewhere, we have documented the violence programme in question and its implications for participating families, and the broader faith-based community and leaders. In this article we present a Tongan methodology that we hope is used for other scholar activists also engaged in participative action-oriented research within Tongan and other Indigenous communities more broadly.

KEYWORDS

Family violence; indigenous; Pacific methodologies; qualitative; Talanoa; Tongan

With notable exceptions (e.g., Participative Community Psychology and Research), globally dominant WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) psychologies (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan 2010)[1] are often applied in a top down manner across a range of contexts. This is often done with limited regard for local cultural worldviews and indigenous psychologies or ways of understanding people and our relationships with one another (Anae 2010, 2019; Hodgetts et al. 2020). In response to the cultural relativity and epistemic issues associated with such applications of WEIRD psychologies, considerable effort is currently being devoted to indigenizing psychological theory, research and practice across the Asia Pacific region (Fernández et al. 2021; Guimarães 2019; Li, Hung,

CONTACT Sesimani Havea S.Havea@massey.ac.nz Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand

[1] We realise the the original 2010 article focused primarily on issues of sampling in quantitative research in psychology. However, the concept of WEIRD psychology offers a means for indigenous scholars and those on the margins of the discipline to question some of the dominant assumptions around individualism and associated research practices in psychology.

and Hodgetts 2020; Rua et al. 2021). Underpinning such developments is renewed acknowledgement that people's cultural worldviews, ways of being and relating to others, and embodied and profoundly relational value systems are central to their psychologies (*cf*., Hofstede 1997; Thaman 2003). Central to these reemerging indigenous psychologies is a relational understanding of humanity that is not restricted by models of the 'lonely thinker' (atomized individual), which pervade WEIRD psychologies and restrict our understandings of diversity within the human condition.

Given the increasing reach of psychology into diverse global communities with different cultures, religions, languages and worldviews, it has become even more important to develop culturally and practically responsive orientations (Li, Hung, and Hodgetts 2020; Villegas and Lucas 2002). Further, Kaholokula et al. (2018) have argued that the interpersonal, sociocultural and socioeconomic realities of Pacific peoples need to be considered in any health and social intervention programmes, and how these are researched. Moreover, there is an urgent call from both Pacific and non-Pacific researchers and practitioners to centralize Pacific knowledges and practices in research and efforts to address social and health concerns (Asiasiga and Gray 1998; Mokuau 1999; Rankine et al. 2015). Specifically, within psychology there are also prominent calls for fostering greater cultural competence for psychologists engaging with diverse cultural communities (Hays and Iwamasa 2006; Lopez and Bursztyn 2013). Articulating, embedding and practicing cultural values and associated concepts needs to be centralized in the work of effective scholar practitioners.

Efforts to indigenise psychology constitute much more than self-indulgent academic exercises in personal reflection. These efforts are implicated in collective or community-driven efforts to address endemic issues such as family violence and in ways that make sense culturally to participants (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b; Pulotu-Endemann and Faleafa 2017). This article contributes to this inclusive agenda and disciplinary shift by reflecting methodologically on a culturally immersive approach to conducting and documenting a Tongan family violence programme. We demonstrate the utility of mobilizing Tongan cosmology, cultural concepts and associated relational practices in the conduct and documenting (researching) of this culturally-responsive approach to family violence (*cf*., Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b). It is important to note here at the outset that manyTongan people value practical applications of knowledge. Relatedly, Tongan people are enculturated to value meaningful positive relationships, dialogue and participation in knowledge production and sharing.

Foundational to the exemplar of the *Kainga Tu'umalie* (prosperous families) family violence prevention programme (Alefaio-Tugia and Havea 2016) and this article is how the programme emerged from within a long-term relationship between a key social service provider, Christian churches as

community hubs, and a group of Pacific university researchers. It reflects a break from convention within WEIRD psychology in that faith and the spiritual dimensions that are foundational to the everyday lives and ways of being for Tongan people are central aspects of the programme design, and the indigenous approach taken to research it (Alefaio-Tugia and Havea 2016; Havea 2011). This programme involves families accessing the support to work through the issues they face from faith and cultural leaders as well as their broader *kainga* (families) in Aotearoa and in Tonga. The overall intent is to situate *kainga* within supportive networks that enable members to become more self-sustaining in living without violence. This exemplar also foregrounds the centrality of collaborative relationships within Pacific communities that draw on the expertise of *kainga*, community leaders and scholars who work practically and constructively not only for the purposes of knowledge production, but also to inform the refinement of community initiatives to address pressing social issues such as family violence (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b).

In the absence of a substantive Tongan psychological literature, Pacific psychologists and scholars are starting to articulate our own approaches to researching practice initiatives such as the programme in question (Alefaio-Tugia et al. 2015; Anae 2019; Ka'ili 2017; Thaman 2003). In doing so, we are contributing to the growing diversity and dynamism in the discipline. Central to this evolving agenda is the increasingly recognised need for Pacific scholars to articulate our engagements with our own cultures, cosmologies, epistemologies, ethics, and ways of being, which are foundational to our subjectivities and knowledge production and application practices (Ka'ili 2017; Mahina 2010; Thaman 2003). Thus, one of the aims of this paper is to articulate and unpack key Tongan concepts as foundational to the articulation and further refinement of a Tongan psychology that can extend research and responses to the social issues we face as communities (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b).

More specifically, central to the approach outlined in this article are Tongan ways of knowing and being that are evident in the concepts of *Talanoa* (Tongan/Pacific indigenous dialogue), *Nofo* (reside, cultural immersion) and *Tauhi va* (nurturing loving and harmonious relationships). The concept of *Nofo* speaks specifically to the importance of residing with others or cultural immersion in community settings. This concept relates to the increased sustainability of relationships between researchers and community organisations in sharing expertise, resources and networks, and exercising resourcefulness in sustaining collaborative partnerships to address issues of shared concern (*cf*., Li, Hung, and Hodgetts 2020). Such efforts carry the ultimate goal of strengthening the Tongan *kainga* (family) by mobilizing *Tauhi va* (nurturing loving and harmonious relationships) and centralizing '*ofa* (love/compassion), *angafaka'apa'apa* (respectful heart), *angafakatokilalo* (humble

heart), and *feveitoka'i'aki* (mutual care/generosity) in how family violence is addressed collectively (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021b; Johansson-Fua 2014; Mafile'o 2008). The embedded worldviews and cosmological theories of Tongan people within these cultural principles offer effective foci for preventative and ameliorative measures against family violence amongst Tongan families (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b). More broadily, these values inform the theorizing and conduct of our approach to qualitative inquiry.

As noted above, central to our present effort is a practical orientation towards scholarship that informs efforts to address pressing needs in the community. For Tongan people simply documenting social issues is not enough. Our communities also expect scholar practitioners to involve themselves or become immersed within efforts to formulate and respond to social issues for our collective benefit. In some respects, this praxis orientation could be read as similar to recent work on Participative Action Research (PAR) (Chevalier and Buckles 2019; Lewin 1946, 1997; Swantz 2008). With PAR, Indigenous approaches share an emphasis on conducting programmes to address social issues and to document such efforts *with* and not *on* our communities (Elder and Odoyo 2018; Rua et al. 2021). This orientation is reflected in a key move away from more the positioning of researchers as external evaluators and towards the position of researchers as meaningfully engaged participants embroiled in shared learning with programme leaders and families (Akom 2011; Caxaj 2015). Like PAR, the Tongan approach manifests a transformative praxis that is anchored in trusting partnerships, caring and inclusive interactions as the basis of knowledge production and application.

As is the case with other indigenous approaches to participatory research praxis (Akom 2011; Caxaj 2015; Dadich, Moore, and Eapen 2019; Elder and Odoyo 2018), the Tongan approach we outline is much older than PAR, draws from a distinct intellectual cosmology, linguistic tradition, cultural concepts, ethics and relational practices, and is more profoundly anchored in cultural insider participative leaderships. Another key difference is how when outlining the underlying philosophical assumptions to their approaches, psychologists engaged in action-oriented qualitative research focus primarily on epistemological issues and to a lesser degree ontological concerns. In contrast, scholars operating from within indigenous participative action projects, do not demarcate epistemic and ontological principles from those of existential, cosmological or ethical concerns (Hau'ofa 2000; Ka'ili 2017; King, Hodgetts, and Guimarães 2021; Mahina 2010).

To recap, this article offers a Tongan approach to culturally immersive and practically minded research praxis (*Nofo*). This approach speaks to the importance of embracing cultural ways of engaging in partnership from *within* communities (*Talanoa & Tauhi va*) to produce knowledge of and responses

to social isssues impacting these communities. In many respects, this is a reflexive article that implicates, but does not fixate on us as investigators. We seek to think through and articulate some of the methodological issues that are embedded in the use of *Talanoa* (Tongan/Pacific indigenous dialogues) to understanding the *Kainga Tu'umalie* family violence programme.

Engaging in the *Kainga Tu'umalie* (prosperous families) programme

The faith-based Affirming Works non-government organization developed the *Kainga Tu'umalie* (prosperous families) programme in collaboration with Tongan faith leaders in Auckland. At the time of this research, the programme involved four Tongan churches and 49 *kainga* (families) being invited to attend weekend retreats. There were formal programme sessions addressing key topics, including Biblical narratives relating to care and violence, the implications of violence, and the dreams of harmonious lives of our Pacific forefathers (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b).

The aim of the programme is to provide a culturally conducive space where *kainga* members can *talanoa* and be encouraged and relearn new ways of rebuilding and fostering violence-free family relationships. It encompasses a strengths-based approach that seeks to empower families to rebuild and enable strong, resilient familial relationships. This space is signified by the utilization of the Tongan framework of '*Fofola e fala ka e talanoa e kainga*' (laying out the mat for the families to dialogue). This is an approach that is familiar to participants and conducive to promoting open dialogue, respect, and accountability. Embodying this cultural framework are Tongan core faith-cultural values of '*ofa* (love/compassion), *tauhi va* (cultivating loving and harmonious relationships), *angafakatokilalo* (humble heart), and anga*faka'a-pa'apa* (respectful heart). Interwoven into the programme is the key message that at the heart of Biblically based familial relationships are the enactment of these core values. The programme sessions were developed to encourage and challenge *kainga* (families) to reconcile their faith and culture to nurture a deeper understanding of the significance of violence free *kainga* relationships (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b).

The interweaving of a Tongan indigenous approach and the Biblical narrative is important because Christianity has been adapted as a culturally embedded value system among Tongan people (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b). That is, Christian teachings have been fused with Tongan spiritual traditions to the point that both have now evolved in concert and are very difficult to demarcate. Participants identify with and respond positively to the programme because their faith is an integral part of their identities and cultural worldview (Alefaio-Tugia and Havea 2016; Havea 2011). The Christian Bible-based principles align with Tongan traditional principles and values offering practical tools that cultivate and foster family

connections and relationships. Moreover, a differentiating aspect of this programme from more generic programmes, is that facilitators were also faith leaders who work with the whole *kainga* (family) as a living entity and not just with men or women who have been violent. Another important feature of the programme is the blend of a Tongan cultural metaphor of *'Fofola e fala ka e talanoa e kainga'* (Laying out the mat so the families can dialogue) and the Biblical narrative. This blended approach provided a culturally safe space and a sense of dedication for *kainga* (family) members to collectively and openly discuss the often taboo topic of violence. The mat also helps to ameliorate power differences not only between facilitators and participants, but also between different family members, which are common characteristics of Tongan social hierarchical structure. The collectivist and relational norms, values and practices of Tongans and Pacific people and cultures as experienced within the *Kainga Tu'umalie* programme highlights the significance of this faith-based programme (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b).

The first author participated fully in the weekend retreats, becoming culturally immersed within *Talanoa*, *vahevahe* (sharing), *fanongo* (listening), observing, and reflecting on the activities at the retreats. Allowing oneself to be fully immersed as a meaningful participant in the retreats (*Nofo*), enabled important personal connections (*Tauhi va*) to be made *with* participating families and faith leaders. *Nofo* is central to orientating the research and assessing the key issues for dialogue. Like cultural immersive strategies employed by other indigenous communities (see Rua et al. 2021), *Nofo* resembles a collectivist take on the auto-ethnographic tradition of inquiry whereby the researcher is also an immersed participant in the culture and programme under investigation (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011). This nurturing of rapport and trust facilitated a deeper understanding of how the programme works, its underlying cultural values, and the impacts for *kainga* (families) (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b). It is important to emphasise here that there is a deep and multifaceted spiritual dimension to relating in this way. That is, reflected in the concepts of *Tauhi va, Nofo and Talanoa* and the reconciliation of violence, it reflects how in Pacific research settings reciprocal relationships are sacred and paramount (Anae 2019; Ka'ili 2005, 2017).

Within this research context, *Tauhi va* (fostering loving and harmonious relationships) is a nurturing value, and if necessary to reconcile any *vatamaki* (disharmonious) relationships (Kalavite 2019; Ka'ili 2005) using the gifts of faith, respect, and care. By no means is it being suggested that keeping *Tauhi va* is an easy and simple process. Particularly in situations where there are tensions and disagreements: 'More often than not it is complex, multi-layered, and fraught with difficulties' (Anae 2019, 11). For example, the sensitive topic of family violence transgresses cultural expectations and as such has to be broached in a loving and sensitive manner. To *Tauhi va* as a married couple is sometimes taken to mean that a wife who has experienced violence at the

hands of her husband often remains silent in the marriage because of her desire not to bring shame and dishonour to her *kainga* (families). A key aspect of the programme was to create an environment in which such issues can be discussed and whereby the work can be done to ensure the woman's voice is heard and her safety is ensured. This is important because like many other women of faith around the world, many decide to remain in the relationship (Zust et al. 2018).

In essence, the spiritual dimension of *Tauhi va* is manifested in both the holistic and relational spirituality that is central to the interactions and relational practices that are foundational to the programme. Holistic spirituality results from the flow and fluidity of relationality, where there is no divide between the sacred and the secular, meaning that relational or social life is spiritual life (Anae 2019; Havea 2011). These principles suggest that in *Tauhi va*, Tongan people are relationships and see ourselves mirrored in the other. Ultimately, as Va'ai and Casimira (2017) contend, relationality is the key to life and that spiritual relationality is a Pacific response to the 'moral issues' now faced by the world today. In the engagement and research context, the gift of relational spirituality is found in the relational accountability in the *va* across all stages of the programme and associated research process (from developing research questions, design, analysis, and dissemination).

Moreover, Tongan faith-based relationships can manifest through the practice of spiritually sensitive research. Practically, this means that researchers and programme participants more generally become more open to mutual discoveries of ways to more fully connect, dialogue, and cooperate in addressing family violence. As Li, Hung, and Hodgetts (2020) note, 'engaging in such allied and human-hearted scholar activism enables scholars to realise their own humanity through service to others' (18). If our desire is to study social life and complex situations including those featuring violence, then we must develop methods that allow us to witness and engage with the turmoil, emotion, and uncertainty that may in return impact our own subjectivities (Adams and Manning 2015). This immersive orientation resonates specifically with the Tongan concepts of '*ofa* (love/compassion), *angafakatokilalo* (humble heart) and *feveitoka'i'aki* (mutual care/generosity) (Kalavite 2019). These concepts are important features of *Tauhi va* (nurturing loving and harmonious relationships) and Tongan culture.

For the necessary intensive dialogues to occur within the programme, it was imperative that the programme facilitator and researcher (first author) was a cultural insider who knew how to navigate the various cultural protocols and nuances involved. This is not only because of the first author's ability to speak the same language, but also because of her understanding and ability to enact *Tauhi va* and provide a culturally safe space for the families to open up to the shared effort towards change. For example, in one of the programme retreat sessions a father and daughter engaged in a frank conversation about his

violence. Only a cultural insider or Tongan researcher/facilitator would understand the cultural significance of a daughter being this open and frank about her father's abusive disciplinary practices. Also significant is for the father to acknowledge his weaknesses and allow himself to be vulnerable in front of his *kainga* (family) and church community (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b). Traditionally, Tongan children are taught to show *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and obedience to their parents, and can only engage in such open dialogue on the woven mat and when the appropriate cultural space of *Tauhi va* is opened up for this to happen. This is an example of Tongan relational ethics in action.

The sacredness of *Tauhi va* is a pivotal aspect of *Talanoa* and *Nofo* in Tongan qualitative inquiry. For Tongans the concept of *Tauhi va* (nurturing loving and harmonious relationships) begins with ones' relationship with God. The quality of this sacred *va* or relationship determines the strength and importance placed on ones' relationships with others (Anae 2019; Kalavite 2019). It is this sacred relationship which invites one into communal *va* or relations of '*ofa* (love/compassion), *angafakatokilalo* (humble heart), *angafaka'apa'apa* (respectful heart), *fatongia* (accountability); and *feveitoka'i'aki* (mutual care/generosity) (Anae 2019; Havea 2011). It is the spiritual dimension of *Tauhi va* that enables a person to show '*ofa* (love/compassion), *kelesi* (grace) and *fakamolemole* (forgiveness) if the relationship is *vatamaki/vakovi* (disharmonious).

As a Tongan programme facilitator and researcher engaged with Tongan participants, it is important to note that we are already interconnected and come to our interactions with familial histories. For example, the first author came into the programme where there were people whom she already knew and others who knew her parents and grandparents. From a Eurocentric perspective this might be classified as a conflict of interest or bias. From a Tongan perspective it means that the seeds of connectedness and the *Tauhi va* (nurturing loving and harmonious relationships) are already in place to be cultivated further and brought to the fore through our cooperative interactions. As a result, the *Nofo* and *Talanoa* or cultural immersion can flow naturally and will be deepened and strengthened as a result of our shared enactments of '*ofa* (love/compassion), anga*faka'apa'apa (*respectful heart) and *angafakatokilalo (*humble heart) towards one another.

Further thoughts on key concepts for a Tongan approach to qualitative inquiry

All too frequently, Pacific worldviews and practices have been researched through the eyes of non-Pacific researchers. This has been the dominant process of academic knowledge production since the early 17th century when explorer's attempted to 'record' Oceanic cultures. As a result, 'our traditional

knowledge systems have been partially understood at best, misrepresented and often relegated to knowledge that is "interesting" with little value to contemporary life' (Johansson-Fua 2014, 52). As argued above, there is an increasing recognition of the need to develop and apply Pacific approaches in both research (Anae 2019; Thaman 2003) and in addressing complex social issues, including family violence (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b; Rankine et al. 2015). At a base level, in order to access and make sense of the qualitative accounts provided by participants, it is important to recognise and engage with our ways of relating to one another and generating knowledge. We are now reclaiming spaces to speak for ourselves, in ways we understand, and which reflect our cultural realities and knowledge systems.

Pacific approaches such as the one offered in this article offer avenues for Pacific researchers to emanate our identities and cultural worldviews, and to engage with our shared ways of understanding and responding to issues such as family violence without 'shame or pretence' (Johansson-Fua 2014, 51). As is the case for Maori and other indigenous scholars (King 2019; Rua et al. 2021), Pacific methods are foundational to our generation of knowledge that can be applied to addressing violence in our everyday contexts. Correspondingly, our approach combines insights from the inter-related concepts of *Tauhi va* (nurturing loving and harmonious relationships), *Nofo* (Tongan indigenous cultural immersion) and *Talanoa* (Pacific-indigenous way of dialogue and discussion). Although we have considered aspects of these concepts above, it is important that we delve a little deeper in order to unpack the philosophical and relational bases of our approach to action-oriented qualitative inquiry.

The concept of *Tauhi va* underpins *Talanoa* and *Nofo* as Tongan research concepts. The combined essence of these three cultural concepts is relationship building (Fa'avae, Jones, and Manu'atu 2016; Ka'ili 2005; Vaioleti 2011). *Tauhi va* or 'the value of nurturing and looking after or attending relationships' (Mafile'o 2008, 125) is an epistemological, ontological, and ethical concept (Ka'ili 2005, 2017; Mahina 2010), which carries the essence of Tongan ways of knowing, being, and doing research praxis. When engaging with such concepts, one cannot separate or parcel out epistemological, ontological, ethical, cosmological or existential concerns (King, Hodgetts, and Guimarães 2021). This is because *Tauhi va* is the essence of the fabric of Tongan culture or *Angafakatonga*, our ways of being, and associated knowledge production practices (Ka'ili 2005; Mahina 2010). As also noted above, the practices of *Nofo* and *Talanoa* are foundational to enactments of *Tauhi va* and the nurturing of harmonious relationships (Mafile'o 2008; Saltiban 2012). The cultivation of *Tauhi va* as a relational space with participants in which Tongan values are experienced and enacted (Kalavite 2019; Ka'ili 2005) is an integral aspect of the approach we are outlining in this article. Anae (2019) also asserts that this is the case with the parallel concept of *va* where 'Pacific values of love,

service, spirituality, respect, reciprocity, collective responsibility, gerontocracy, and humility' (9) are consistent with Pacific research practices.

Tauhi va is an embedded philosophy and practice that Tongan people observe and experience within their *kainga* (families) and their life journeys (Paea 2016). It is a concept that applies to all levels of relationships and across different contexts, including research. *Tauhi va* requires the maintenance, nurturing and reciprocal practices of care in ways that reflect the continuation of a Tongan rhythm (time) of engagement (Ka'ili 2008). Correspondingly, of key relevance to the programme and first author's roles as programme facilitator and researcher is the enactment of good *va* (relationships) and cultural obligations towards supporting everyone's wellbeing. This is done through enactments of the Tongan core values of *'ofa* (love/compassion), *angafakatokilalo* (humble heart), and *feveitoka'i'aki* (mutual care/generosity) (Kalavite 2019; Mafile'o 2008).

The essence of *Tauhi va* is knowing yourself and knowing your status in relation to others. This reflexive realisation invokes the Tongan concepts of *'ilo'i kita* (know your responsibilities and boundaries) and *fatongia* (obligations) in the social structures of the *kainga* (family), church and community (Kalavite 2019; Paea 2016). It is applicable to all contexts where there is social interaction, including research. In the context of this research, *Tauhi va* becomes the logic behind how the researcher relates to the Tongan *kainga* (families) and faith leaders in the process of *Nofo* (residing/cultural immersion) and *Talanoa* whilst knowing and enacting her positioning as a researcher and as a Tongan woman.

Given that *Tauhi va* is fundamental to Tongan relationships and the broader social fabric the enactment of these create, behaving appropriately and respectfully is pivotal in gaining access to a place in dialogue and gaining peoples' trust and participation (Johansson-Fua 2014). In residing (*Nofo*) with the Tongan families during the programme the first author needed to ensure adherence with cultural protocols and appropriate conduct of the Tongan relational self. This was necessary to ensure a sense of familiarity and mutual respect with participating families and faith leaders (Fa'avae, Jones, and Manu'atu 2016; Vaioleti 2011). Here, the reciprocal practice of the principle of anga*faka'apa'apa* (enacted respect) is central to connecting effectively with others (Foliaki 2003). An example of how the first author enacted this value was to take the time to participate in the programme (*Nofo*) and *Talanoa*, contribute to the nurturing of the *Tauhi va*, express a willingness to listen and learn with humility (*angafakatokilalo*), to share her own story (*Talanoa*), and to be seen to contribute what she can in helping the families address the violence.

Such cultural participation and immersion (*Nofo*) has been practiced by Tongan people for milenia and reflects the timeless collective values of *kainga* (families), of *Tauhi va* and of cooperative decision making through *Talanoa*

(Mafile'o, 2004; Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a). A sense of communalism and interconnectivity, social participation, and inclusion is central here. The space opened up by the violence programme and research is one in which every participating person is encouraged to feel a strong sense of familiarity, belonging, togetherness (*fa'utaha*) within a mutual effort to understand, address, and prevent further violence. The concept of Kononia or fellowship is another way of thinking about the values based, culturally-patterned process of inclusion that is central to this approach to qualitative inquiry. Having researchers as scholar activists culturally immersed amongst *kainga* (families) demystifies and transcends 'them' and 'us' (Chevalier and Buckles 2019) positionings that are often reproduced in research practices in psychology. It also helps us overcome any suspicions participants may have about the researcher(s) or how information might be used, because any knowledge use has to be negotiated with all concerned (*cf*., Li, Hodgetts, and Foo 2019).

Relatedly, Māori community psychologists have also raised the importance of cultural values and immersive practices in understanding the underlying principles for working participatively with indigenous groups. Central is the use of cultural practices and styles of relationality that are recognisable to participants and which enable researchers to 'reside' with participants prior to and whilst engaging in research. For example, Rua et al. (2021) argue that cultural immersion motivates community psychologists not only to challenge the field, but also to push beyond the hegemonic use of WEIRD approaches, tools and frameworks. In residing and participating (*Nofo*) in the programme weekend retreats, the first author was able to *Talanoa* and to interact with participating *kainga* (families) and develop that important relational connectedness (*Tauhi va*). The combination of cultural practices of *Tauhi Va*, *Nofo*, and *Talanoa* allowed for the establishment of cooperation between researchers and participants as community members and contextually inform open and frank dialogue throughout the research process. What emerged was a situation during the programme retreats whereby enactments of key cultural values 'acts as a method to integrate inquiry and intervention' (Tandon 1981, 299).

A crucial aspect of many Indigenous approaches and psychologies is the development of penetrating and relevant psychological knowledge through enactments of relational values such as those outlined above (Alefaio-Tugia et al. 2015; Rua et al. 2021). In taking the time to reside in the retreats and enact the concepts of *Nofo* and *Talanoa*, the research process becomes an organic artefact of culturally-patterned interactions, rather than an externally imposed structure of engagement that disrupts community rhythms for the purposes of knowledge extraction. *Nofo* also complements *Talanoa* as a way to contextualise information gathered through *Talanoa* as a non-disruptive mode of engagement (Johansson-Fua 2014). The complementary utility of these Tongan indigenous values allows us to quickly understand and meld into

the context *with* participants. Moreover, to provide in-depth-analysis of the context of the programme, participant experiences of it, and what consequences the programme may be having for families and their efforts to live violence free.

The Tongan cultural practice of *Talanoa* was the primary means of knowledge production because it was also foundational to the very design of the *Kainga Tu'umalie* (Prosperous families) programme (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b). In order to capture *kainga* experiences of the programme, it was appropriate that this cultural form of open dialogue was adopted (Halapua 2000; Vaioleti 2011). The concept originates from the Tongan words *tala* which means to tell or communicate, and *noa* denotes silence, unable to speak or zero representing an expectation from the others to listen (Ka'ili 2005; 'Otunuku 2011). This protocol applies in both formal and informal contexts and was central to the process of working through issues of violence with participants and documenting their experiences. As such, the first author's research practice was in keeping with Ka'ili's (2008) conceptualisation of *Talanoa* as conversing critically and harmoniously in order to reach shared understanding or common ground.

Efforts to reach inclusive understanding and agreement also reflects how *Talanoa* is a collective form of dialogue where every persons' voice is valued. It is much more than a simple focus group. Tongan academics, propose that *Talanoa* is also a skill and its enactments, the language and nuanced practices used, and people involved are determined by the context (Johansson-Fua 2014). *Talanoa* also allows for more in depth and authentic information to be generated within Pacific research (Fa'avae, Jones, and Manu'atu 2016; Vaioleti 2006; Vaka, Brannelly, and Huntington 2016).

One of the key features of *Talanoa* is how it reflects the cultural practice of Tongan people of talking around an issue as a way of contextualizing it before moving to a more central focus on the core topic. In other words participants will not always address the topic at hand immediately or directly. *Kainga* participants in this study did not always address violence directly, but rather talked in a more indirect and less affronting way around the issue. This is the culturally appropriate way of addressing sensitive issues that allows for open discussion in a non-threatening manner. This does not mean that the dialogue did not address key issues of cause and responsibility. For example, a *Talanoa* guide was developed for this project to ensure that key issues were covered whilst at the same time allowing the *Talanoa* to flow. Thus, the focus of the *Talanoa* was to encourage *kainga* participants to reflect on how the programme helped them to address and prevent further violence in their families.

To recap, as an adaptive, dynamic and multi-faceted concept and process, *Talanoa* was utilised in both the *Kainga Tu'umalie* prevention programme and research process. After learning from engaging as a facilitator of *Talanoa* during the retreats, the first author collected her thoughts and identified topics

that needed to be discussed in documenting the programme and its impacts. She then invited both the families and the faith-based facilitators to engage in further *Talanoa*. Families were asked to reflect further on the impact of the programme on their relationships and everyday lives, for example. During these *Talanoa*, the respectful (*angafaka'apa'apa*) and humble (*angafakatokilalo*) practice of *Tauhi va* (relational connectedness) was employed to connect meaningfully with both the families and faith leaders. It required the first author to demonstrate that she knew her place *('ilo'i kita*) as the researcher and as a Tongan woman in this cultural nexus by opening and closing the sessions with *lotu* (prayer) and enacting the appropriate language and wearing respectful, appropriate attire ('Otunuku 2011).

Upon reflection, I believe that the development of a *Talanoa* guide emerged from my own academic training within a western paradigm and desire to be a 'good researcher'. This was coupled with my own lack of understanding as an emerging researcher of the utility of adapting research methods to meet the needs of participants as the primary priority (Fa'avae, Jones, and Manu'atu 2016). This illustrates a tension around the use of *Talanoa* as a research method. Halapua (2000) proposes that a central feature of *Talanoa* is that participants are not guided by a 'pre-determined agenda' (3), but rather are involved in speaking from their hearts openly. Johansson-Fua (2014) argues that *Talanoa* needs to be a flexible and open form of information gathering, in the sense that it is not a focus group as such. Rather it is a cultural process through which researchers approach ' . . . the participant with an idea that the participant is asked to muse, to reflect upon, to talk about, to critique, to argue, to confirm, and express their conceptualisation in accordance with their beliefs and experiences' (56). *Talanga* which is another form of *Talanoa* can also be akin to debates or constructive arguments focusing on issues that require attention (Fa'avae, Jones, and Manu'atu 2016; Vaioleti 2013). There is a balancing act to be performed here between focus and openness, which relies on the facilitators cultural skills. Relatedly, Prescott (2008) also emphasises that as a research tool *Talanoa* should be guided by the researcher, rather than allowing it to be an open ended forum. Despite there being different levels and perspectives of *Talanoa* (Manu'atu 2000; Vaioleti 2013), what is clear is that it comprises a maluable and useful method for attaining robust information (Halapua 2000; Vaioleti 2006).

It is also crucial to note that in the approach we are advocating to Tongan participative to action-oriented qualitative inquiry, *Talanoa* is not restricted to engaging participants in 'data collection' processes and also extends the *Tauhi va* into the analysis process (Fa'avae, Jones, and Manu'atu 2016). For example, the *Talanoa* with the faith and community leaders encompassed ideas that the first author formulated with the *kainga* (families) regarding their experiences and needs. We then extended this interpretative process into the domain of the cultural concepts, which we have outlined in this article. This is important

because what we are engaged in is not research on a culture. It is research within a culture in collaboration *with* others, many of whom are experts in the cosmologies and philosophies of the Tongan people. Finally, WEIRD psychologists engaging in applied scholarship, often separate out research design, fieldwork, intervention, and analysis elements of a project. From a Tongan perspective this makes little sense. All these elements can be approached as central facets of *Talanoa* as a dynamic process of dialogue to understand and address family violence.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to document Tongan indigenous ways of engaging and conducting research with Tongan *kainga* (families) and faith leaders as part of a community programme for addressing family violence. We have presented a series of cultural concepts and values and how these inform the programme and research approach. In particular, we have emphasised the significance and fluidity of the Tongan concept of *Tauhi va*, which comprises a central dimension of Tongan ways of being and engaging with others. This concept has some reasonances with notions of relational ethics in terms of the primacy given to mutual accountability and responsibilities towards care (*cf*., Hodgetts et al. 2021; Liu 2021; Rua et al. 2021). Relational ethics emphasises not only the epistemic and ontological basis of knowledge produced through research and practice, but also the relational utility of such knowledge and issues regarding whose worldviews it reproduces and whose interests it serves. We have engaged these concepts in an effort to articulate the depth of importance of developing Tongan approaches to qualitative inquiry that are embedded within our traditional knowledge systems.

The recent trend in which academics are subjected to increased scrutiny regarding the impact of their research has resulted in the renewed prominence of cultural and community-based approaches. Numerous calls have been made for more open dialogue and for *Talanoa* style engagements amongst researchers. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of establishing community-based networks within which local cultural ways of being and relating to people are centralized in the research process (Boursier 2017; Forber-Pratt, Mueller, and Andrews 2019). It is our hope that this paper contributes to this dialogue and greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous and Tongan/Pacific ways of being, relating, producing and applying knowledge.

The approach we have presented also stems from the recognition of the need for Pacific psychologists (to which there are very few, first two authors included) and accomplices (third author) to respond to and serve community needs through research praxis. Central for us are efforts by Tongan and Pacific *kainga* to be supported in living lives where *tauhi va* (nurturing loving and harmonious relationships), *'ofa* (love/compassion), *angafaka'apa'apa*

(respectful heart), *angafakatokilalo* (humble heart), and *feveitoka'i'aki* (mutual care/generosity) are normalised. The potential impact of developing research that is embedded in Tongan/Pacific indigenous wisdom is significant particularly in addressing the destructive effects of violence among Tongan and Pacific *kainga* (families) and communities.

More broadly, writing this article has reminded us that psychological research has always been plural in its approaches to knowledge production, but has not always been culturally inclusive (Li, Hung, and Hodgetts 2020; Markus and Kitayama 1991). A key context for this article is that this situation appears to be changing (Fernández et al. 2021; Guimarães 2019). The pretense from some quarters that culture is not foundational to human psychology and that psychological methods are culture free has been increasingly brought into question (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan 2010; Hodgetts et al. 2020; Hofstede 1997; Li, Hung, and Hodgetts 2020; Thaman 2003). Indigenous cultures are now being embraced within some areas of psychological research and practices as crucial to the pluralizing of the cultural bases of theory, research and practice in psychology (King and Hodgetts 2017; Liu 2021). Although Tongan cosmologies, epistemologies and relational ethics remain marginal to WEIRD psychology, our approach does relate with community-ground or 'bottom-up' orientations that are evident in participative approaches and community-oriented psychologie (Akom 2011; Hodgetts et al. 2020; Sonn, Rua, and Quayle 2019).

As Taufe'ulungaki (2006) argues, the failure of western paradigms to address Pacific social issues is due to 'fundamental flaws in the paradigms as opposed to inefficiency, lack of human capacity and commitment to good governance, unconducive economic environment, poor resource base, political instability or combination thereof' (6). Tongan academic, Thaman (2003, 3–4) aptly encapsulates in her poem below the related and ever-present tension between Pacific research approaches and WEIRD methodologies outside of the typical ontological orientation that is often found within Western academic discourses (Naepi 2019):

> your way
> objective
> analytic
> always doubting
> the truth
> until proof comes
> slowly
> quietly
> and it hurts
>
> my way
> subjective
> gut-feeling like

always sure
of the truth
the proof
is there
waiting
and it hurts
(Konai Helu Thaman, 'Our Way')

Tongan and Pacific indigenous approaches and our concepts of *Talanoa, Nofo, and Tauhi va* are also more closely aligned with qualitative traditions that are more accepting of cultural and community considerations (King and Hodgetts 2017). Many embrace overlapping story sharing or narrative methods to the experiences of human beings as storied beings (Cassim, Hodgetts, and Stolte 2015; Caxaj 2015). Our motivation in this article is to contribute to the deepening of culturally informed methods of knowledge production and application in psychology. This includes positioning the storied beings in our communities as key knowledge holders as well as allowing future generations to rediscover their knowledge production traditions and their identities as part of the decolonization process (*cf.*, Fernández et al. 2021).

By way of further contrast, WEIRD psychologies often implicitly reproduce or centralize the autonomous individual who has personal rights and freedoms that must be preserved (Rua et al. 2021). In essence, in doing so they reproduce a cultural regime that focuses more on the individual as opposed to the collective needs and wellbeing of Tongan/Pacific *kainga* (families) (Anae et al. 2001; Rankine et al. 2015). This is in contrast to Pacific ways of being where a person's value and wellbeing is important, but as an inter-connected part of the *kainga* whereby collective rights and responsibilities are paramount (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b; Helu 1999). We make this distinction not only for conceptual reasons, but also because of the practical implications of a culturally collectivist approach to addressing serious issues such as familial violence that constitute breaches of custom and ethics within Tongan culture. For example, the common utility of 'The violence wheel' framework for screening and addressing domestic violence cases (Pence, Paymar, and Ritmeester 1993) reproduces individualistic cultural assumptions. The focus is on the autonomous actions of individual's and a core distinction between victim and perpetrator. Clearly the rights and safety of women and children who predominantly experience violence are of paramount importance. From a Tongan perspective these necessities need to be seen in the context of the *kainga* (family) as a whole and our shared responsibilities to live violent free lives (*cf.*, Rua et al. 2021). As such, patterns of violence can be addressed collectively within the *kainga* and with support from the broader community and faith leaders. Within the collective unit of *kainga* the collectivist approach we advocate deepens the ownership of a person's action and responsibility for perpetuating violence. We do realise that this

stance can be affronting to some scholar activists within the family violence field. However, it is our task here to outline a Tongan perspective that focuses on collective responsibilities, which is necessary for realising lasting transformative change for Tongan perpetrators of violence. We would also emphasize that this stance in no way exonerates men who have been violent for their actions.

In outlining a Tongan approach, we emphasise that this is not a rigid model for conducting praxis-based research with Tongan people. What we are proposing is that within the Tongan culture there are dynamic relationships between family members and with the broader community that need to be respected in any programmatic response to issues of violence (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a; Rankine et al. 2015). The everyday conduct of positive familial relationships within Tongan culture offers a sound and positively oriented mutually respectful ontological basis for engaging families in addressing issues of violence in ways that are culturally recognisable to them. These relationships are founded on notions of equality and responsibilities of mutual care and support. A focus on restoring such relationships enables us to draw upon the potential of the *kainga* (family) members through *Talanoa* (open dialogue) as a basis of drawing participants into shared decision-making processes with mobilized community supports for change (Havea, Alefaio-Tugia, and Hodgetts 2021a, 2021b).

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Notes on contributors

Sesimani Havea currently completing PhD with the School of Psychology, at Massey University and also working supporting the achievement of Pacific postgraduate students at Massey University. My research passion is collaborative research exploration of culturally sustainable approaches to impacting and developing the socio-economic wellbeing of Pacific peoples in diaspora.

Associate Professor Siautu Alefaio-Tugia is an currently working in the School of Psychology, Massey University. Her research specialty is Pacific indigenous humanitarian psychology.

Professor Darrin Hodgetts is also working in the School of Psychology at Massey University. His research specialty is societal psychology exploring the impacts of societal systems and change on people's everyday lives.

ORCID

Darrin Hodgetts http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8726-5965

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