TATALA 'A E KOLOA 'O E TO'UTANGATA TONGA I AOTEAROA MO TONGA

A way to disrupt and decolonise doctoral research

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Abstract

"Disruption" and "decolonisation" are terms often associated with Indigenous researchers' intent to validate traditional cultural knowledge and practice in academia. The challenges and complexities in Indigenous researchers' positionalities within their doctoral research projects are not always openly discussed (Webber, 2009). In this article, I share my personal reflections and observations of the challenges in my doctoral research with Tongan kāinga (extended families) in Aotearoa New Zealand and Tonga. I highlight "Tatala 'a e Koloa 'o e To'utangata Tonga i Aotearoa mo Tonga", a research framework drawn from an Indigenous paradigm that governs the knowledge and actions of three to'utangata Tonga (generations of Tongan males) as well as my own activities as the researcher within the community. Interrogating and highlighting the challenges linked to my attempts to validate and legitimate Tongan cultural knowledge in the university setting is delineated by my positionality within the Tongan community in Aotearoa and Tonga, with other Indigenous researchers, and the ways in which I negotiate the boundaries between the traditional cultural world and academia.

Keywords

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Introduction: The term "Indigenous" and positionality

"Indigenous" is a descriptor used by most Māori and Pasifika scholars to position themselves within the postcolonial era (L. T. Smith, Maxwell, Puke & Temara, 2016). However, the descriptor is not always used in the same way in the diaspora because Indigenous scholars' positionalities are diverse. During talanoa with Seu'ula Johansson Fua, a Tongan academic and researcher, I learned that she positions herself as a Tongan researcher rather than an Indigenous researcher (personal communication, August 2018). When referring to researchers who identify as Pasifika in Aotearoa New Zealand in this article, I use the term "Pasifika researchers". My Indigenous identity aligns with the term "Moana people", which was used by the late 'Epeli Hau'ofa (1998) to actively disrupt the colonial naming of the people in the Pacific region, as it acknowledges our connection to each other through the moana. My use of "Moana people" in this article, however, does not ignore the diverse languages and cultures that make such peoples distinct within Oceania. My position as an Indigenous researcher, therefore, is linked to my social responsibilities and roles in both Aotearoa and Tonga, as well as other parts of the moana. I was raised and educated in Aotearoa and now live and serve in Tonga. I apply the "Indigenous researcher" descriptor to myself in this article because my duties and service have now expanded beyond Aotearoa. My current responsibility is to serve the University of the South Pacific (USP)'s 12 small island nations (SINs) by providing educational services linked to research and consultancy, professional learning and development training, and publications (Fa'avae, 2018). Many of the SINs, including Tonga, follow Western-style education systems that were set up in the past during the administrations of colonial powers (Taufe'ulungaki, 2014). My use of "Indigenous researcher" is linked to my deliberate intention to empower Pasifika and Moana researchers in the diaspora who are attempting to find their intellectual space and niche within Western schooling and academia.

L. T. Smith (1999) posits that as a term "Indigenous" is limited because of its standard definition and its tendency to homogenise researchers from quite different Indigenous communities. Amongst Indigenous researchers in Aotearoa, diversity is often linked to their affiliated language and level of connection to their cultural heritage, as well as their connection to their world in Aotearoa. I grew up as part of an ethnic minority in Aotearoa; today I am a Tongan father and an uncle to Tongan nephews and nieces, as well as an educator in Tonga. I am therefore obligated to support Tongan people by sharing my struggles in Western schooling and reminding the young of the community's aspirations for them and the generations to follow. To ensure that cultural continuity and survival is maintained for Tongan males and their kāinga in Aotearoa and Tonga, as well as the strive for self-determination, being open about the challenges and complexities for us as Indigenous researchers is a necessary and crucial part of our doctoral research (Webber, 2009).

Koloa: Indigenous scholars and decolonisation literature

Koloa is a Tongan concept linked to valued knowledge, and in this section I highlight some of the key Indigenous scholars and literature linked to decolonising research knowledge and practice. Indigenous scholars from diverse disciplines often seek to actively disrupt dominant Western research practices by decolonising and deconstructing the methodological and institutional processes within academia. Māori academics in Aotearoa, for instance, have provided models for such disruption through the use of approaches aligned to Kaupapa Māori (Bishop, 2003; Kerr, Penney, Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2010; G. H. Smith, 1997;

Walker, Eketone & Gibbs, 2006). Professors Graham and Linda Smith have been key leaders in helping Māori and other Indigenous researchers understand decolonising research processes (G. H. Smith, 1997; L. T. Smith, 1999). The act of decolonising research is not linked only to deconstructing Western scholarship; nor does it focus only on the re-telling of the imperial and colonial mistreatment of Indigenous peoples as a result of research. To decolonise dominant Western practices, an essential requirement is that Indigenous researchers purposefully and actively align research outcomes to the cultural survival of Indigenous peoples (L. T. Smith, 1999; Thaman, 2003). My argument here is that this methodological imperative towards cultural survival as a research aim requires more difficult work by the researcher than has been previously discussed.

L. T. Smith et al. (2016) indicate a real concern that Indigenous research methodology has become "institutionalised away from its indigenous communities and contexts, where it began and where it still informs identities, ways of living and being" (p. 136). They question the significance and role of research methodologies in Indigenous scholarship because many Māori and Indigenous scholars who have struggled to claim the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge (IK), continue to be weary and sceptical of "academic attempts to over-determine IK mātauranga Māori to ensure that it 'fits' existing academic regimes of control such as research performance measures, publish or perish drivers, and even genuine desires to include mātauranga in the curriculum" (L. T. Smith et al., 2016, p. 132). The authors further highlight critical questions for us to contemplate such as: Are methodologies simply new technologies of cultural assimilation, or governance and the disciplining of knowledge, or are they expanding the known worlds of IK mātauranga Māori for the well-being of Māori and other Indigenous people? Although this article does not focus entirely on articulating the expressed concerns highlighted by L. T. Smith et al. (2016), it does address well-being in terms of how Indigenous researchers negotiate the challenges associated with them having to "fit" IK and research methodologies to existing academic regimes and institutional systems. As an urgent matter linked to cultural survival, and to ensure that the well-being of Indigenous people is kept at the fore when conducting research, I share my experiences and the challenges linked to my attempts as an Indigenous researcher to disrupt and decolonise doctoral research based on my positionalities.

According to Prior (2007), to decolonise research is to decentre the focus from the aim of the non-Indigenous researcher towards the agenda of Indigenous people "by adopting Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and methodologies" (Asselin & Basile, 2018, p. 644). Though some Indigenous scholars consider that decolonising research "exclude[s] non-indigenous researchers altogether" (Asselin & Basile, 2018, p. 644), I, like Hawaiian academic Renee Pualani Louis (2007), adopt a more inclusive view. Louis (2007) calls for research agendas that are "sympathetic, respectful, and ethical from an Indigenous perspective" (p. 134). I use the word "disrupt" because it requires the active interruption of one's thinking and practice. In this article, I provide a way to disrupt and decolonise research using an Indigenous research framework—Tatala 'a e Koloa 'o e To'utangata Tonga i Aotearoa mo Tonga—for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars who intend to conduct research studies with Indigenous communities.

Tatala 'a e Koloa 'o e To'utangata Tonga i Aotearoa mo Tonga

The criticality of Indigenous peoples' active disruption and decolonisation lies in the "need for active theorising" (Koya-Vaka'uta, 2016, p. 20) and interrogation from and based on each of our own knowledge systems. An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that

knowledge is relational (Wilson, 2001). Tatala 'a e Koloa 'o e To'utangata Tonga i Aotearoa mo Tonga is drawn from an Indigenous paradigm based on a set of beliefs about the valued knowledge and practices passed down from generation to generation to ensure cultural continuity and survival (Fa'avae, 2017; Thaman, 1995). My doctoral study (Fa'avae, 2016) utilised a Tongan approach to understanding the types of cultural knowledge specific to Tongan males and transmitted from the grandfathers to their sons and grandsons in both Aotearoa and Tonga. While the theory of cultural capital constructed by Pierre Bourdieu (1997), a Western theorist, was helpful in placing my study within existing research studies and discourses, it was necessary to develop a framework that was more appropriate to Tongan extended families' lived realities in Aotearoa and Tonga. As Tongan cultural capital, koloa 'o e to'utangata Tonga relates to the embodied knowledge inherent in the extended family's collective aspirations for their young, as well as their collective practices and activities in both contexts. "Tatala" is the process of unfolding layers to reveal the intergenerational educational experiences (stories) of the grandfather, son and grandson. Tatala 'a e Koloa 'o e To'utangata Tonga i Aotearoa mo Tonga, therefore, is a research framework for understanding Tongan males' (as well as females') valued knowledge and practices in Aotearoa and Tonga. The collective responsibility of each to'utangata is to ensure that the valued cultural knowledge (koloa) passed down to them, once realised (koloa'ia), is then shared (fakakoloa) with the next generation. This process ensures that the cultural knowledge continues and survives within the kāinga (Fa'avae, 2016).

To identify the valued knowledge/s within Tongan extended families themselves, I placed Tongan knowledge and language at the fore of my doctoral investigation. Although I believed foregrounding Tongan language and concepts was central to the theorising of my study, I was somewhat apprehensive because I had never undertaken such a task in higher education. I started to raise questions: Will my research be counted as valid research? How can I theorise as a Tongan when my knowledge of the Tongan language and culture is at the surface level? Nevertheless, I persisted with the research topic because I was passionate about it and knew it had to be done. In hindsight, my fear at the time was symptomatic of the deeply ingrained research practices expected of us by academia, which are focused on defining and conceptualising knowledge from a predominantly Western lens. As Indigenous researchers, disrupting ingrained thinking is possible when using Tongan or Moana people concepts that allow for deconstructing, re-focusing, and re-thinking that is centred on Indigenous views of the world (Thaman, 2016).

Tā and vā—relationality, positionality

Understanding Indigenous peoples' ways of thinking and being in the world is "based on the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational . . . and shared" (Wilson, 2001, p. 176). For Tongan people, their positionality in relation to others is shaped by tā and vā—cultural concepts associated with time and space, respectively (Ka'ili, 2005). Tā and vā are constructs that co-exist and cannot be separated. Tā relates to time, but it can also relate to age, history, generation/s and gender. Vā, meanwhile, denotes the physical, spiritual and emotional spaces that exist between objects and people, within the mind and in the heart. Vā is also symbolic of "place" (land/home) or "space" in terms of abstract boundaries that shape one's sense of connection to place/s and people. In terms of social reality, vā is a space where one's sense of self is positioned and shaped in relation to the collective or the to'utangata within the kāinga. In Tongan society, the kāinga is a hierarchical and socially stratified unit where the layers and levels of relations are complex (Helu, 1995). The term "Indigenous" for Tongan

people embodies the social and political relations that govern social order within and across Tongan society.

Indigenous researchers and education research

Most Pasifika/Indigenous researchers engage in educational research because of their desire to improve the schooling experiences of minority peoples in Aotearoa (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013; Siope, 2013). My postgraduate journey developed from a struggle to convince teachers that Tongan students' cultural knowledge was useful in their classroom learning, despite claims made to that effect by Pasifika and non-Pasifika academics (Alkema, 2014; Fasavalu, 2015; Fitzpatrick, 2010; Jones, 1991; Manu'atu, 2000; Milne, 2013). In my previous role as a classroom teacher and dean at a South Auckland high school, I saw incidents and situations where Tongan boys gained confidence and succeeded when their cultural knowledge and practices were capitalised and acknowledged as significant learning. But how was I to share these with the teachers of Tongan boys? And, what kinds of cultural knowledge and practice were valued by their families and passed down to the next generation? These were questions that led me to start my doctoral study in February 2014.

All Indigenous researchers who seek to decolonise their practices and aim towards decolonisation must face very difficult questions related to positionality. The positions that such Indigenous researchers occupy within their studies are shaped by three main factors: (a) the Indigenous researcher's social/cultural position within his/her traditional cultural context, (b) his/her relationship with other Indigenous researchers that occupy the same academic space, and (c) the boundaries that govern how Indigenous researchers negotiate between their traditional cultural world and that of academia.

Fakakoloa: Positionality in relation to the kāinga in Aotearoa and Tonga

In this section, I fakakoloa key learnings related to the significance of positionality in relation to disrupting research practice. Decolonising how we conduct research is linked to our relationship and social position with the research participants. According to L. T. Smith (1999), the dynamics of relationships are by nature hugely complicated. Gender and age are two critical factors in some Indigenous contexts that determine the research relationship. My aim in the doctoral research was to talanoa with Tongan males both old and young. My position as a Tongan father and uncle led to the decision to focus specifically on Tongan males. This felt appropriate to me at the time. However, when engaging with grandfathers, I found establishing consent and trust was initially difficult. I could not request their participation; it had to be arranged by other people who were part of my wider social network. My university training led me to expect that as the researcher I would conduct the initial communication; however, the grandfathers from the kāinga in Tonga conducted most of our talanoa. For example, my first meeting with Viliami Finau (pseudonym), a chief executive officer of a government organisation in Tonga, involved him asking the initial questions linked to who my parents and grandparents were, the villages they came from, who I was married to and where my wife's family was from in Tonga—before he agreed for us to continue with the research.

My credibility as a researcher was based predominantly on my social position within my kāinga and not so much on my research credentials. Despite my university training and expectations of research conduct, mediating talanoa with Tongan elders in Aotearoa and Tonga was challenging yet necessary to assure participants that I was there to learn, respect and live their teachings rather than just take and use them for personal gain (Fa'avae, Jones & Manu'atu, 2016). To disrespect the kāinga

in Aotearoa and Tonga who participated in the study would dishonour my own kāinga. Working with the kāinga required a critical awareness and analysis of my processes to ensure that I was constantly reflexive, active and ready to learn from the kāinga's fakakoloa of their koloa with me.

Traditional cultural knowledge and practice is often challenged by university human ethics protocols and can sometimes result in students amending their methodological processes within academia. When my supervisors and I challenged the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee's assumptions of what counts as valued knowledge and practice, it was based on the ideal that the outcomes of my study would appropriately align to the continuity of the kāinga involved in the project. For example, as part of the ethics application to start the talanoa with the four kāinga in Aotearoa and Tonga, I stated that a bound copy of the thesis would be gifted back to each kāinga as a me'a'ofa. Gifting the bound thesis was to honour the Tongan kāinga for sharing their koloa with me. Captured within the thesis were the families' educational experiences and therefore worthy stories to fakakoloa with their young. However, the committee responded and suggested that a summary of the findings was more appropriate as a me'a'ofa instead. I interpreted this suggestion as an implication that the Tongan families lacked the linguistic competency to comprehend the thesis. Rather than accepting the conditional requirements set by the human ethics committee, my supervisors and I wrote back and challenged the committee's presumption based on a strengths-based and cultural view that the stories were written accounts of Tongan males' struggles, hopes and aspirations (koloa) that will help to ensure the continuity and cultural survival of generations to come. When a red-bound hardcover copy of my thesis was gifted back to each of the kāinga, there was an overwhelming sense of gratitude not only from the extended families but also from me—in that I had fulfilled my fatongia to

them. A sense of gratitude knowing that each kāinga will have their koloa to share and continue their knowledge and practices throughout their to'utangata.

Decolonising our trained thinking acquired through Western education is necessary yet difficult to negotiate in relation to our obligations within our communities in Aotearoa and Tonga. L. T. Smith's (1999) claim that a "very real sense of ambivalence in indigenous communities towards the role of Western education and those who have been educated in universities" challenges how Indigenous researchers negotiate their position within insider research (p. 71). Thaman (1995) refers to this ambivalence as a matter related to 'ilo and poto, whereby an educated Tongan person is not always fakapotopoto. As an Indigenous researcher, it was necessary to deconstruct my approach to carrying out the study by shifting the primary focus of my researcher role from collecting data to a privileged role as the receiver of the kāinga's koloa which was to be used to fakakoloa with others. In Tonga, I extended my responsibility to fakakoloa by encouraging master's students at USP's Tonga Campus to engage, share and report their methodological struggles when using Tongan approaches to conduct research. While serving USP, the Pacific's regional university, it is my obligation to engage and share with other Moana people researchers about the challenges and struggles they experience negotiating the boundaries that govern how we conduct meaningful and relevant research that is aligned to the cultural survival and continuity of Moana people.

Fakakoloa: Positionality in relation to other Indigenous scholars

I position myself as an Indigenous researcher because my thinking and upbringing have been shaped by my position within my kāinga and the Tongan communities in Aotearoa and Tonga, as well as by my role as a researcher in higher

education. I adopt the term "Indigenous" conscious of the fact that I am positioned as outside the Indigenous people of Aotearoa, the tangata whenua. Aotearoa is a place that I have been privileged to live and reside in for most of my life.

Using the term "Moana people" when referring to Indigenous Pacific people feels inclusive and empowering given that my service and sense of duty extends beyond Aotearoa's borders into the Pacific region as a USP Institute of Education fellow. Most Tongans born and raised in Aotearoa who have transnational ties to both Tonga and Aotearoa have a different conception of "Indigenous" and "indigeneity" compared to that of Māori and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, for instance, who are the First Nation peoples of Aotearoa and Australia. Some academics based in Tonga do not refer to themselves as Indigenous researchers. Instead, they adopt the term "Tongan researchers/researchers" because their sense of being Indigenous relates to the ways they identify with the Indigenous struggles rather than the idea of land. Although some academics in Tonga do not always identify as Indigenous researchers, the intention to actively disrupt Western research is still a key aspect of their projects.

In Aotearoa, however, Tongan and other Pasifika researchers' positionalities, despite their claim to indigeneity, are defined based on their vā with Māori, who are the tangata whenua (Sualii-Sauni, 2017). This can often raise critical questions as to the significance and appropriateness of Pasifika researchers' claims for self-determination compared to those of Māori academics whose struggles for self-determination continue to be ignored (Sualii-Sauni, 2017). For emerging Pasifika academics who are finding their intellectual space and niche, the absence of open discussions about their Indigenous researcher positionality in relation to Māori and other Indigenous scholars may lead to research practices that are disrespectful and unhelpful to the decolonisation movement, which seeks to claim self-determination for Indigenous communities in Aotearoa.

Self-determination is central to the decolonisation agenda because it is aligned to the ongoing sustainability of Indigenous peoples' lived realities in the postcolonial Pacific (L. T. Smith, 1999). To take charge of the education agenda and concerns for Moana people, the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative by and for Pacific People (RPEIPP) was developed by Pacific educators in 2000 (Taufe'ulungaki, 2014). The purpose of this initiative was not only to counter the prevalence of consultants and development aid organisations from outside coming in and determining Pacific peoples' education agenda, but also to empower Pacific peoples to rethink education from their own perspectives and through their knowledge systems. Though RPEIPP was established prior to the start of my doctoral research, its presence and impetus in the development of Pacific education in Aotearoa was absent from the literature, including previously completed doctoral theses. After my thesis was examined, the external examiner, who is a well-established academic in the region, argued that my claim for the self-determination and cultural continuity of the Tongan kāinga linked to the education of their young in Aotearoa and Tonga is an objective that is aligned to the RPEIPP initiative. She then asked why had I not made explicit links to the movement in my study. Despite my initial feelings of disappointment, I explained to her that RPEIPP was completely absent from the published outputs of Pasifika academics and the postgraduate community's discourses. Why was the RPEIPP initiative deemed not of value to the educational concerns of Pasifika people in Aotearoa who live in diasporic communities? These are difficult yet critical questions for Indigenous doctoral researchers to negotiate and mediate.

For some Indigenous students/researchers, confronting their "own identities as indigenous and their connected identities to other indigenous peers" (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 136) can be

challenging. As Indigenous researchers we take on the critical position of challenging Western norms and research conduct in higher education (Webber, 2009). Yet even amongst Indigenous scholars, the "Indigenous researcher" identity is associated with the socio-political challenges linked to Pasifika academics' position in relation to Māori. The tuakana-teina social relationship within Māori society (Milne, 2013) has helped shape and determine Pasifika/Indigenous researchers' identities. Pasifika are required to maintain the vā with Māori who are their tuakana in Aotearoa. This can be difficult if individuals are not upfront and open about Indigenous researchers' positional struggles, particularly within academia.

I believe it is necessary for Indigenous/ Pasifika researchers to acknowledge Māori in their projects because it is culturally appropriate to do so. Emerging Pasifika academics in Aotearoa who self-identify as Indigenous researchers should not forget their place and position in relation to Māori who are their tuakana. To do so ignores the significant historical struggles by Māori to reclaim and validate their knowledge and practices within Aotearoa (L. T. Smith, 1999).

The University of Auckland expects its doctoral students to utilise supervisors within the institution itself. However, there were very few Tongan academics in the Faculty of Education and Social Work to choose from. In order to conceptualise Tatala 'a e Koloa 'o e To'utangata Tonga i Aotearoa mo Tonga, having access to experts in the Tongan language and culture was necessary. Though I greatly benefited from the expertise of my Pasifika supervisors during my master's degree and in the first year of my doctoral study, conceptualising cultural capital and its complexities from a Tongan perspective required the assistance of an expert in the language and culture. When I decided to change my supervisory team in my second year of the doctoral study, my social and cultural responsibility as Pasifika researcher required me to maintain tauhi vā with my initial Pasifika

supervisor. This was difficult, especially when she was already invested in the project. After consultation with my supervisors, we agreed that she would now be an advisor because of her expertise in Pasifika education. The next step was to find a Tongan academic outside of the University of Auckland. After completing much paperwork and waiting for a period of months in 2015, and with the support and persistence of my primary supervisor, my supervision team was finally complete.

Fakakoloa: The boundaries of traditional cultural knowledge within academia

The "insider/outsider" binary is where researchers learn to mediate and negotiate the boundaries that determine the expectations and responsibilities required by their community as well as their university. However, the difficulties associated with this negotiation are not always openly discussed in doctoral research (Webber, 2009). L. T. Smith (1999) proposed the need for emerging Indigenous researchers to engage in constant reflexivity, whereby they put in place "research-based support systems and relationships" to remind them of their role and responsibility throughout the entire research engagement (p. 137).

When Indigenous researchers are focused primarily on the decolonising concern to change the academy and its systems, they face great challenges and "if one begins to take a whack at shaking the structure up, one sees how much more consolidated the opposition is" (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 71). L. T. Smith's (1999) description refers to the strongly embedded institutional protocols and systems that are prevalent and are consolidated within Western universities. Therefore, when Indigenous researchers ignore the dynamic relationships with others within the community and other Indigenous researchers, it can result in them perpetuating practices and research approaches

that undermine their cultural ways of being and the people within their own communities.

Indigenous researchers seek to decolonise and deconstruct the boundaries that shape how they see, interact with and interpret the world within academia (Gegeo, 2001). With regard to the cultural survival and continuity for Tongan males and their to'utangata within the kāinga, my intention as an Indigenous researcher in the doctoral study was to decolonise research by highlighting how Tongan males perceive, interact with and interpret their "ways of knowing" and "ways of being and becoming" in Aotearoa and Tonga from a Tongan perspective. Tatala 'a e Koloa 'o e To'utangata Tonga i Aotearoa mo Tonga provided a framework for conceptualising through a Tongan lens. It provided an understanding that the identities of Tongan males in Aotearoa and Tonga were multiple. In other words, their experiences and connections to people and land were fluid, not fixed (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003). Their sense of being and becoming Tongan in Aotearoa was aligned to their heritage ties in relation to their kāinga, Tongan culture and language, as well as their life in Aotearoa.

Shifting one's thinking is an expected and necessary process for all doctoral researchers; it is also a challenging one. So for Indigenous researchers, what exactly does this mean and what does it involve? This shift is often referred to as a "paradigm shift from simply rethinking education systems to transformative thinking" (Koya-Vaka'uta, 2016, p. 20). Koya-Vaka'uta (2016) elaborates that this process requires Indigenous researchers to refine their lenses for a deep reflective unlearning of what has been ingrained in their minds about education. For some doctoral students, it is a complex process, and one that I have observed as being a challenge for most who undertake doctoral research. Emerging Indigenous doctoral students tend to neglect the significance of such a shift in one's thinking and practice, and sometimes forget to report the complexities of their struggles at the methodological and institutional level.

The employment of talanoa as a method to gather intergenerational stories from three generations of Tongan males who were diverse in terms of age, history and social class resulted in challenges that originated from my positionalities as an Aotearoa-raised Tongan. It was necessary, therefore, to deconstruct and then (re)construct talanoa within the context of how an Aotearoa-raised Tongan male used the methodology to gather and understand Tongan males' lived realities in Aotearoa as well as Tonga. (Re)constructing talanoa involved unpacking its ideal characteristics as identified by Tongan academics. Rather than taking these ideals as normal practice, Indigenous researchers must be open to exploring the complexities involved when using our Indigenous concepts/ideals within Western research frameworks. Therefore, "indigenous researchers are encouraged to use elements and principles of talanoa in our research unevenly, in patches, or with ambivalence, without feeling inadequate" (Fa'avae et al., 2016, p. 147). Utilising research practice in this way aligns with the fluid, shifting and transient nature of Pasifika/Moana people identity/ies in the diaspora.

Deconstructing how researchers employ Indigenous research methods is an important part of decolonisation. In spite of having access to a number of studies carried out by Tongan researchers that proposed the theoretical and ideal practice of the talanoa method (Halapua, 2000; Vaioleti, 2006), the dilemmas and difficulties involved in talanoa with diverse people of different social positions and ranks, ages, levels of education and occupational roles, and the challenges concerning the context of where the talanoa took place were not always evident in research reports. To fakakoloa with novice researchers, my supervisors and I published the difficulties linked to the use of talanoa as a method as well as the ethical and methodological challenges associated with Indigenous research (see Fa'avae et al., 2016).

Decolonising research often focuses on validating and authenticating Indigenous

researchers' lived realities. The idea of authenticity is based on the belief that Indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot re-create themselves and still claim to be Indigenous (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 74). This has led to debate as to the existence of a "pure and authentic self" (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 73) and critical questions linked to "who is a real indigenous person; what counts as a real indigenous leader, which person displays real cultural values and the criteria used to assess the characteristics of authenticity" (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 72). Such confronting questions and debates dehumanise our existence and survival. Furthermore, such questions and debates can challenge the validity of emerging Indigenous academics' experiences in Aotearoa and suggest that their experiences are inauthentic and irrelevant. L. T. Smith (1999) posits that truth is a dynamic concept rather than being a fixed notion. This means that Pasifika/Moana peoples' lived realities and truths are multiple. That is to say, the experiences of Pasifika born and raised in Aotearoa, including Tongan researchers, are valid and representative of what constitutes the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples in the diaspora.

Most Indigenous researchers seek to actively disrupt research by drawing on their ethnic language and knowledge systems. However, their attempts are still undervalued within academia because Indigenous/Pacific knowledge is "often not recognised, understood or valued by non-indigenous colleagues or institutions" (L. T. Smith et al., 2016, p. 132). Indigenous knowledge is likened more to "religious rituals, dogma and ceremonies than to forms of knowledge production" (L. T. Smith et al., 2016, pp. 132–133). I utilised Tongan concepts like koloa, koloa'ia and fakakoloa because they were central to understanding how Tongan to'utangata perceived their roles based on their collective responsibility, which was to ensure the cultural survival and continuation of their young in Aotearoa and Tonga. My understanding of the Tongan concepts expanded when the kāinga shared their stories with me, reminding

me of my own grandfather and father and their educational aspirations for me and my son. The concept of cultural capital, however, was a reminder of what I did not have in my Aotearoa schooling and as a result certain cultural knowledge and practices were ignored so that I would succeed in the classroom. Despite reading widely within the field of cultural capital and having produced a literature review as one of the University of Auckland's provisional goals during my first year of enrolment in the doctoral programme in 2014, my thinking continued to be framed based on a deficit view that only certain kinds of knowledge (mainly Western) had value or "capital" at school. This deficit view had a debilitating effect on my thinking and my progress in doctoral study. After months of discussions during the second half of my doctoral study with my secondary supervisor, a Tongan academic knowledgeable in Tongan language and culture, I came to realise that my role was to learn as much as I could from the extended families' stories in order to fakakoloa key learnings with others. This change in my thinking resulted in an increase in the number of words and chapters produced and submitted to my supervisors for feedback.

Conclusion

An Indigenous researcher's positionality is complex and dynamic; therefore, learning to negotiate the relational connections and reporting openly about the challenges and complexities involved is a worthwhile process for Indigenous doctoral students in higher education. I have shared some methodological and institutional experiences and situations during my doctoral study for emerging Pasifika/Moana people doctoral researchers to take into account and carry out in light of their Indigenous research imperatives and intentions. Indigenous researchers seek to disrupt Western approaches in higher education by decolonising the dominant knowledge system embedded in

research practice. Their positionality in terms of their social roles and responsibilities within their own communities, their positionality in relation to other Indigenous academics and the boundaries that govern how Indigenous researchers mediate and negotiate their traditional cultural world and that of academia can challenge their goal to disrupt and decolonise Western research. Emerging Pasifika/Indigenous researchers from Aotearoa may not always know how to draw on deeply rooted traditional cultural language and practice, which can affect their research experience with older individuals from the community. Maintaining a strong vā or relational connection based on the tuakana-teina relationship is a sign of respect and a reminder of Pasifika/Indigenous researchers' positionality in relation to Māori and other Indigenous academics. The deliberate move to utilise and foreground Tongan concepts and frameworks such as Tatala 'a e Koloa 'o e To'utangata Tonga i Aotearoa mo Tonga is one approach to actively disrupt research thinking and practice.

Acknowledgements

Glossary

Tongan

fakakoloa	purposefully share cultural knowledge and practices
fakapotopoto	wise person who uses their knowledge to benefit others
fatongia	responsibility/ies, obligation
'ilo	knowledge
kāinga	extended families
koloa	material wealth and embodied knowledge
kolo'ia	realisation that their cultural knowledge is useful
koloa 'o e to'utangata Tonga	Tongan cultural knowledge and practices/Tongan cultural capital
me'a'ofa	gift
moana	ocean
Pasifika	term used by the Ministry of Education to "describe people living in New Zealand who have migrated from the Pacific Islands or who identify with the Pacific Islands because of ancestry or heritage"
poto	wisdom
tā	relational time/connection
talanoa	discussion, conversation
tatala	unfold/reveal
tauhi vā	maintaining relations and connections
to'utangata	generation
vā	relational space/connection

Māori

Aotearoa	New Zealand
Kaupapa Māori	research and evaluation done by Māori, with Māori and for Māori
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
tangata whenua	people of the land, Indigenous people
teina	younger person
tuakana	older person

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