

## Research for better Pacific schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va – a Samoan perspective

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**Abstract:** The tendency of much research on Pacific communities in New Zealand to gloss multi-ethnic and intra-ethnic complexities limits the possibility of real change for these marginalised communities. In place of the existing proliferation and fragmentation of Pacific research methodologies, frameworks and models, I offer the Samoan cultural reference of '*teu le va*', a Pacific indigenous methodology for directive action in negotiating research relationships, as a philosophical and methodological turning point in education research praxis. '*Teu le va*' is aligned with a cultural ecology research approach in its focus on the significance of context in understanding the domains of social relationships for all stakeholders in Pacific education research. Various relational contexts in which '*teu le va*' should be valued and acted on are identified. By reconciling connections within and between these contexts, the possibility of a transformative education agenda for Pacific communities will be advanced.

**Keywords:** Pacific education; Pacific research methodologies; Samoan cultural reference; teu le va

### Introduction

Politicians are often bemoaned as the cause of unnecessary clutter, whilst scholars, researchers...are heralded as the poor souls who have to 'unclutter the clutter'. But agreeing on a methodology for how best to do this is as important to politicians as it is to researchers and evaluators. The exercise of uncluttering the clutter therefore draws as much on professional expertise as it does on personal temperaments and political manoeuvrings (His Excellency Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, 2004, p. 8).

With the growing pool of researchers able and motivated to undertake quality research on improving Pasifika student outcomes, it is imperative that good practice that has enhanced Pasifika education research/policy linkages is identified. It is also essential that Pasifika education research methodologies are explored and that ideas for and about Pasifika education research methodologies are shared. These measures together will improve the quality and quantity of evidence informing Pasifika education policy.

In this article, I contend that much Pacific research in New Zealand has glossed over and ignored the cultural complexities of not only the multi-ethnic nature of Pacific communities, but also the intra-ethnic nuances of the diverse groupings and identities of Pacific peoples in New Zealand. Some of these complexities were outlined in the Ministry of Education's *Pasifika education research guidelines* (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2001). Pacific research in New Zealand is currently ineffective in enabling real change for one of New Zealand's marginalised populations. I argue that this can be addressed by the provision of a second guideline for educational research. One that will expose pathways through these complexities which will lead to more robust research processes and more effective outcomes which recognise and embrace the cultural diversity of the Pacific cohort.

It is timely, therefore, that we reflect on Pacific research guidelines and cultural competency development in New Zealand in order to conceptually consider, at a broader level, how these

developments can lead to best practice and/or successful outcomes for all stakeholders including: Pacific researchers, research teams, funders, participants, communities, Ministries and policy planners. Moreover, it is time to consider both a philosophical and methodological basis for the development of a second Pasifika education research guideline document (Airini, Anae, Mila-Schaaf, Coxon, Mara, & Saga, in press).

Much of the development of Pacific paradigms, concepts, metaphors, models of ‘well-being’, research methodologies and cultural competencies has occurred in the health sector (Agnew et al., 2004; Koloto, 2001; Ministry of Health, 1997; Tamasese, Peteru & Waldegrave, 1997). Indeed, there is a sense of urgency in the way Pacific health researchers are heeding the call to “...disrupt hegemonic research forms and their power relations and to alleviate and reinvent new research methodologies and perspectives” (Smith, 2004, p. 2). With current government demands for ‘evidence-based’ and ‘culturally appropriate’ research, and Pacific communities’ calls for research which is ‘for Pacific by Pacific’, the drive to develop new ways of thinking about research and the need to build Pacific research capability and capacity has become more and more apparent (see Anae, 2005), especially in the areas of health and education.

Much of this development appears to be ad hoc, piecemeal and fragmented, highlighting the necessity for more coordination and focus. There is a need for a comprehensive conceptual framework for research with Pacific communities which offers holistic, theoretical foundations to improve and enhance the quality and quantity of evidence informing various governmental policies, and Pacific education policy in particular. I argue that we need to clear a path through the ‘clutter’ of mainstream research and the proliferation of Pacific paradigms, approaches and cultural competencies that have developed in New Zealand since the original Ministry of Education guidelines document (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Samu-Wendt & Finau, 2001).

Impacting on the ad hoc development of new ways about thinking about Pacific research are the changing demographics of the Pacific population. The population is growing, both in number and diversity, bringing about a complex Pacific cohort consisting of Pacific immigrants and recent arrivals, New Zealand-born (NZ-born) Pacific people and people and children of mixed heritages. Hence, ethnicity has taken on new salience. This growing diversity necessitates unprecedented multi-ethnic considerations in terms of research, policy formation and service delivery. Indeed, future projections indicate that ethnic diversity is set to increase further. While all ethnic populations are expected to grow, the relative proportion of each ethnic group within the New Zealand population is projected to change considerably (New Zealand Census, 2006). In 2021, it is expected that Māori will comprise 17 percent of the population (from 15 percent in 2001) and Pacific peoples will increase from seven percent (in 2001) to nine percent. The most significant change, however, will occur within the Asian group, predicted to increase from 7 percent in 2001 to 15 percent in 2021.

In the second Ministry of Education guideline document (Airini et al., in press) the Samoan indigenous philosophical ‘teu le va’ cultural reference, which focuses on the centrality of reciprocal ‘relationships’, is used to offer a conceptual reference and methodology for future Pacific educational research in New Zealand. The philosophical reference point is the Samoan concept/tenet/practice of ‘teu le va’—to value, cherish, nurture and take care of the *va*, the relationship. This provides an essential and significant contribution to research praxis in highlighting the need for both parties in a relationship to value, nurture and, if necessary, ‘tidy up’ the physical, spiritual, cultural, social, psychological and tapu ‘spaces’ of human relationships (see Anae, 2005; Duranti, 1992; Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2004; Ka’ili, 2005; Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2006; Mahina, 2004; Poltorak, 2007; Shore, 1982; Wendt, 1996).

This new cultural reference—teu le va—conceptually draws together issues outlined in Samu’s Ethnic-Interface Model (Figure 1; 1998, 2006) and Sasao & Sue’s Ecological Cube

Model (Figure 2; 1993), and recognises the centrality of context as a holistic environment. It is defined as a cultural ecology perspective (see Marquette, 2007) of the inter- and intra-ethnic diversity of multi-ethnic communities, recognising the fluidity of sub-groups within these communities. In this way, types of research, research problems and the implications of findings can be more explicitly conceptualised, approached, valued and acted upon in terms of the sacred/spiritual and secular/practical aspects of the *va* in relationships (in)formed by the research process.

This article comprises three sections. The first, 'Settings: new starting points', focuses on some core issues which underpin the position taken in this article. In the second I will discuss the Ethnic-Interface Model and the Ecological Cube Model, followed by a section on the Samoan reference (*tenet/concept/practice* for it is all these things and more) of *teu le va*. In this section I will present four relational contexts in research praxis where *teu le va* must be valued and operational. The simultaneous engagement of what is offered in these three approaches has produced a unique point of reference. I argue that a combined re-conceptualisation of all three approaches provides a framework for an internally and externally robust guideline, which will encourage best practice research and outcomes, and will be influential in future policy (in)formation and service delivery of quality education for Pacific learners.

## **Settings: New starting points**

### ***Literature review on Pacific education issues***

As part of the Pasifika Education Plan 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001), a commissioned report for the Ministry of Education's Pasifika Research Framework Team identified the current range of information and findings related to Pasifika education issues from early childhood education to post-compulsory/tertiary education (Coxon, Anae, Mara, Samu-Wendt & Finau, 2002). This report also helped to identify research needed to improve achievement for and with Pasifika students. Key issues included the need for more research regarding the inequitable access to, participation in and outcomes for Pasifika learners throughout all educational sectors; the limitations of pan-Pacific/Polynesian targeted research; the need for more sophisticated methodologies; the need for more research investigating gender differences in educational experiences across all sectors; and a more coordinated approach to Ministry project evaluations. (This is with the exception of the Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara [SEMO] and AIMHI projects.)

In addition, the report identified new research directions. These included: more focus on school and the classroom, and the structures and processes of teaching and learning; more ethnic-specific research, qualitative research and/or research which combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches; the development of best-practice strategies and the identification of educationally successful Pasifika perceptions and experiences; research which explores the full range of language and literacy issues; and research which addresses transitional experiences within and between sub-sectors. Finally, the report urged that professional development be aimed at boosting Pasifika education researcher capability in contract research design and implementation (Coxon et al., 2002, pp. 137–138). Overall, the report signalled that a strategic approach is required in order to prioritise where further research resources should be directed.

### ***Praxis and empowerment***

Conducting research in Pacific communities whether using qualitative or quantitative methods, or both, will help us to better understand what really makes a difference in meeting the needs of Pacific students, families, teachers and communities to achieve optimal educational outcomes. In particular, how to meet both home-culture and New Zealand education needs. This is important work which must not only meet rigorous scientific

standards, but must also “honour the wisdom of native/local traditional knowledge” (Benham, 2006, p. 35).

Benham (2006) is critical about the variability in the quality of interdisciplinary qualitative research work on Pacific islanders in the United States. The most important issues regarded the lack of social, cultural, and historical context of the home community studied and the absence of researcher positioning.

What came to mind as I reviewed each study was the need for the researcher (whether insider, outsider, or external-insider) to examine her/his own lenses to articulate her/his current understanding of voice in this particular community, and to make a sincere effort to either or both suspend and/or unlearn colonizing perspectives. (Benham, 2006, p. 37)

For some it is a need to unlearn Western philosophies in order to re-learn and embrace one’s spirit as a ‘native’. So, presenting both the context of the community as well as one’s own positioning (in regard to that context) is extremely important in qualitative work.

We need to create and participate in conversations that advance multi-dimensional references that explain the rich ethnic identities of Pacific children, youth and their families. These cultural references must include the socio-political history, spiritual and/or religious values, mother-tongue language, cultural as well as contemporary traditions, sub-cultures (for example, non-ethnic self identities) and issues within the larger cultural context. Additionally, the implications of each unique group’s worldview must also be considered. Benham argues that the work of indigenous researchers is to create policy and inform practice through research, programmes and interventions that will empower communities, teachers and children and, enriched by history and spiritual foundations, be applied in dynamic ways to address larger, global issues (Benham, 2006, p. 37).

### ***Expanding parameters of ‘Pacific’ demography***

In this article, ‘Pacific peoples’ is used to refer to diasporic Pacific (migrants) and NZ-born Pacific people. Too often in New Zealand, the terms indigenous and Pacific are used cognately. In the New Zealand context, indigenous peoples are tangata whenua, or tangata Māori. Other important key terms such as Pacific peoples, communities, research, Pacific models of well-being, and base-line assumptions, such as Pacific values, capacity building, Pacific research teams, reference or advisory groups, and importance of language, are found in pages 6–18 in *Pasifika Education Research Guidelines* (Anae et al., 2001), and provide adequate definitions and reference points for the purposes of this article.

It is crucial to note the changing demographics of the Pacific cohort of New Zealand’s population. The 2006 census states that of the 265,974 Pacific peoples living in New Zealand, 172,932 (or 65 percent) were NZ-born. This shows that approximately 30 percent were born elsewhere (mainly in the islands), and who were likely to be more fluent in their mother tongue (see Pacific Profiles, 2006). This is an important point as most of the Pacific guidelines, models and/or competencies that are being developed are geared towards island-born peoples or communities, and therefore only embrace a minority of the total Pacific population. The ethnic make-up, acculturated or not status of the NZ-born cohort may differ from those of their island-born parents. The importance here is in the context. All future Pacific research in New Zealand should explicitly address the context(s) of the research and research stakeholders when designing research questions, methods and approaches, in order to account for the multi-inter/intra-ethnic specificities of NZ-born and island-born Pacific peoples.

The socio-economic positioning of Pacific peoples in New Zealand is gradually improving and there is a small but growing cohort of Pacific people, many of them NZ-born, who are

upwardly mobile with middle-class incomes (Anae, 2004). However, the Pacific cohort of the New Zealand population is generally marked at the bottom of all social indicators (Macpherson et al., 2001) and it is clear that, as a whole, the cohort is marginalised especially in areas of health and education and in situations of crisis. As such, all efforts and links in terms of research programmes, evidence-based policy and service delivery must include focus on alleviating poverty and suffering.

### ***The salience of culture, ethnicity and diversity***

Regarding the development of supposedly Pacific indigenous research guidelines, models, competencies – I want to stress that these developments are needed and welcomed. However, we must be wary about how easily the object of an exercise, that is to develop understandings of cultural competencies, guidelines etc., can become befuddled and unnecessarily cluttered by competing unclear designs, as well as by gaps in the transference of customary knowledge across space and time (Efi, 2004, p. 8).

The development of Pacific research paradigms, methodologies and cultural competencies currently being undertaken is a clear indication of the need to understand how Pacific people, as individuals as well as collectives, as researched and researchers, prefer to participate in research, and what it is that informs their participation in this research. These instruments identify a broad spectrum of issues affecting Pacific participation at all levels, and argue that cultural ontologies, epistemologies, nuances, meanings and metaphors, customs and beliefs all impact on the methodology and methods of participation used both at an individual level and collective level of participation.

Current theories of research participation have largely ignored culture as a resource that informs participation. New theories of research participation must be developed to challenge existing theories and herald where and how culture fits in the larger picture of research praxis. Indeed, recipes and guidelines are also being developed for outsiders to learn how to research Pacific peoples in culturally appropriate ways. From ethnocentrism to cultural relativism in a few short leaps. The Pasifika Education Research Guidelines, 2001 contribute other inter/intra-ethnic Pacific intersections such as shame, gerontocratic principles, as well as highlighting the intersections of individuals within diverse Pacific ‘communities’ (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 27–28).

In New Zealand, three types of Pacific cultural models, guidelines and competencies have been developed. One type is those that have been funded by government ministries and agencies focussed on a bottom-up approach, seeking Pacific worldviews and epistemologies. Examples are: the Pasifika education research guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2001); the National Pacific cultural competencies (Ministry of Health, 2003); the Health Research Council of New Zealand Guidelines on Pacific Health Research (Health Research Council, 2004) and Pacific Models of Mental Health Service Delivery in New Zealand (Waitemata District Health, 2004). A second type is those that have been devised by institutions in a top-down manner; an example is the Alcohol Advisory Council’s (2002) Practitioner competencies for Pacific alcohol and drug workers working with Pacific clients in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The third type is those that have been developed ad hoc by practitioners such as educationists, health practitioners, researchers and others (Helu-Thaman, 1993; Koloto, 2001; Maua-Hodge, 2000; Mitaera, 1997, personal communication; Ministry of Health, 1997; Tamasese, Peteru & Waldegrave, 1997).

The Pacific models, guidelines and competencies, some pan-Pacific and others ethnic specific, are used as models to be emulated in the various fields, disciplines, organisations and institutions. The guidelines funded by government ministries, the Health Research Council, City Councils and District Health Boards have been developed to improve culturally

appropriate research outcomes for Pacific peoples and communities. The cultural competence frameworks, decreed by Acts of Parliament are largely developed by institutions, groups, and agencies in the hope that they reflect the skill, knowledge and attitudes necessary for effective cultural practice.. For example, the New Zealand Psychologists Board's (2006) 'Standards of cultural competence for psychologists registered under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act [2003]'. It is hoped that research projects using these guidelines and cultural competencies will provide robust evidence to persuade policy makers to shift their policy-making clout from the mainstream 'one-shoe-fits-all' approach to addressing specifically Pacific or ethnic-specific issues.

Rose, Siantz and Viehweg (2002) define cultural competence in terms of a top-down approach as "a set of congruent behaviours, practices, attitudes and policies related to embracing cultural differences that are integrated into a system or agency or among professionals. It is a state of being able to function effectively in this area ... and in cross-cultural situations..." (p. 139). In their assessment of cultural competence of policy organisations, they found in the case study that the "this agency recognised that cultural competence was important to its effective functioning in a diverse society and influenced programmes and policies it supported philosophically and fiscally" (p. 140). But this is not easily achieved.

Kleinman and Benson (2006) state that:

Cultural competency has become a fashionable term for clinicians and researchers. Yet no-one can define it precisely enough to operationalise it in clinical and best practices...One major problem with the idea of cultural competency is that it suggests that culture can be reduced to a technical skill for which clinicians can be trained to develop expertise (p. 1)

Of course, this originates from how culture has been defined in the sciences and in popular culture and elsewhere, which differs from the anthropological notion of culture. Culture is often equated with ethnicity, nationality, and language. For example, people of a certain ethnicity are assumed to have a core shared set of beliefs about various things owing to fixed ethnic traits. This leads to dangerous stereotyping (Aanae, 1997).

Kleinman and Benson (2006) point out that the problem then is that cultural factors are not always central to a case, and might hinder a more 'realistic' or practical understanding of what is required. Culture is not static (see also Sahlin's [2000] notion of the 'indigenization of modernity'). "Culture is inseparable from economic, political, religious, psychological and biological conditions. Culture is a process through which ordinary activities and conditions take on an emotional tone and a moral meaning for participants" (Kleinman & Benson, 2006, p. 2).

Furthermore, Kleinman and Benson state that to be effective one must understand through a 'miniethnography' (a qualitative approach) what really matters or what is really at stake for patients, their families, their communities, and also what is at stake for themselves. They state:

This is much different than cultural competency. Finding out what matters most to another person is not a technical skill. It is an elective affinity to the patient. This orientation becomes part of a practitioner's sense of self and interpersonal skills become an important part of the practitioner's clinical resources...It is what Franz Kafka said "a born doctor" has: "a hunger for people"...and its main thrust is to focus on the patient as an individual, not stereotype; as a human being facing danger and uncertainty, not merely a case; as an opportunity for the doctor to engage in an essential moral task, not an issue in cost-accounting (p. 6).

As researchers and as policy planners, we must all emulate this “hunger for people”, especially if we are to produce best evidence in our research tasks, and as we deal with people, culture and ethnicity in diverse contexts.

### **Appreciating the complexities: the Ethnic Interface Model**

Coxon et al. (2002) state that Pacific peoples in New Zealand comprise a multi-ethnic group with inherent diversities at a number of critical levels. For example, the cultural diversities in language and culture between Samoans, Tongans, Niueans and so on, and the intra-cultural diversities associated with having very youthful populations. Despite the fact that more than half of each population are NZ-born and/or raised, some groups incorporate and/or have traditional diversities and differences based on village or island heritages, for example, Pukapuka, Atiu in the Cook Islands. Identification as a member of an island takes precedence to affiliations to a national birthplace.

The emergence of a visible middle class amongst some Pacific communities (see Anae, 2004) means the general socio-economic patterns that have united Pacific peoples in the past are shifting. There are also ‘hidden’ subgroups within ethnic groups; for example, gangs, cliques, or other groups whose membership are along non-ethnic lines. These diversities (among others) affect and reflect the nature of the interactions between groups of Pacific learners and educational institutions, and the potential for these interactions to be riddled with complexities (Coxon et al., 2001, p. 10–12).

The Ethnic Interface Model (Samu, 1998, 2006) has been conceived as a tool or a framework to enhance educators’ understandings about intra-group diversities of Pacific schooling, to enable educators to unravel and take these complexities into account, and to signal the implications of teaching and learning (see Figure 1). The features or characteristics that Pacific learners bring to the interface between themselves and the educational institution, which shape their world view or perspectives, can be grouped together as: gender, socio-economic status and developmental stage (for example, adolescence; religious affiliation and so on). On the other hand, features or characteristics which are largely within the domain and control of the institutions include governance, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and evaluation.

In analysing the Ministry of Education’s successive *Pasifika Education Plans*, it has been possible to identify those areas or characteristics which are open to institutional control or influence and which generally coincide with the interface model. Such areas identified in the plans are pedagogy, governance, community relations, assessment and qualifications, literacy and numeracy, at-risk factors and study support/skills. Of course, Samu’s model is not unitary, there will be ‘models within models’. For example, there will be varying Pacific ethnic inter and intra-ethnic interactions within Samu’s ‘Tagata Pasifika’ group.

#### ***Underpinning centrality of contexts and cultural complexities***

International interdisciplinary literature (Mayadas, Ramanathan, & Suarez, 1999; Oyserman, Brickman, Bybee, Celious, 2006; Oyserman & Bybee, 2006; Stacey, Sidanius, Levin, 1998) also addresses cultural and ethnic complexities as illustrated by Samu’s Ethnic Interface Model. Of special note is the Cube Model (Sasao & Sue, 1993), which mirrors the issues inherent in the Ethnic-Interface Model, that of cultural complexity. The Cube Model, however, provides two additional nodes: research questions and methods, and focuses on the dynamic three-dimensional interactions between cultural complexities, research questions and methods (see Figure 2).

## The Ethnic Interface Model

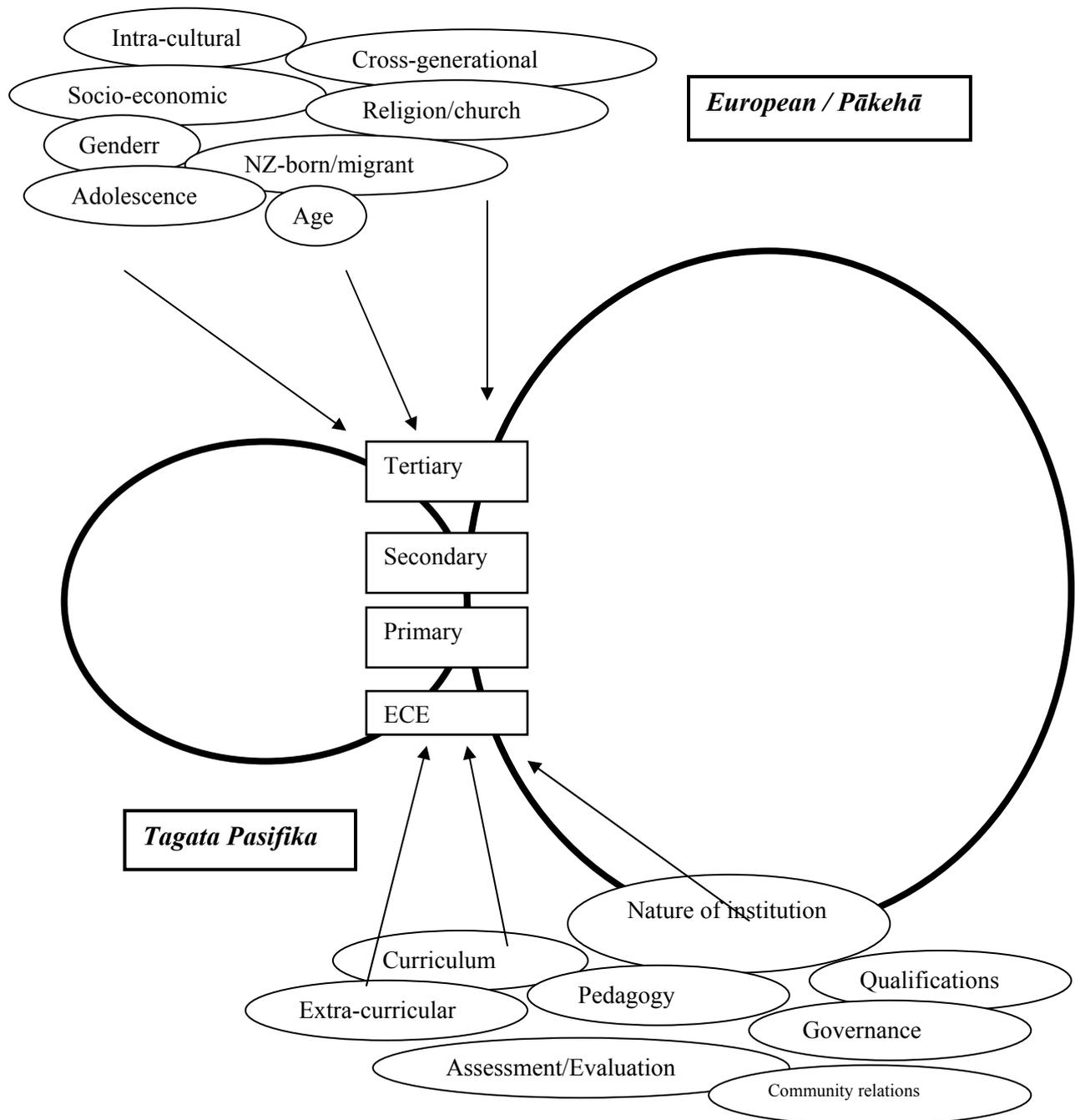


Figure 1. The Ethnic Interface Model. (From Coxon et al., [2002], p. 2)

In Sasao and Sue's (1993) proposed research framework, community psychologists working in multi-ethnic cultural communities can make appropriate decisions on conceptual and methodological issues from a culturally anchored, ecological-contextual and 'holistic'

perspective. The intent is to articulate multi-ethnic heterogeneity in community research by elucidating three meta-methodological issues: definition of a multi-ethnic community; applicability of cross-cultural theories and methods to multi-ethnic community research; and geographical/ecological stability of a multi-ethnic community.

The Cube Model posits that multi-ethnic community research can be conceptualised as a three-dimensional structure that represents a dynamic relationship between: the type of research questions being asked; the selection of methods; and cultural complexity (referring to the extent to which an ethnic-cultural group is defined in a larger ecological/holistic context or community, both at the individual and collective levels; Sasao & Sue, 1993). In designing and conducting research in multi-ethnic communities, these three elements interact and should determine the design of a study as well as outcomes. Therefore, they must be examined simultaneously and weighed against one another to obtain scientifically valid research, albeit constrained by increasing diversity and issues as discussed earlier.

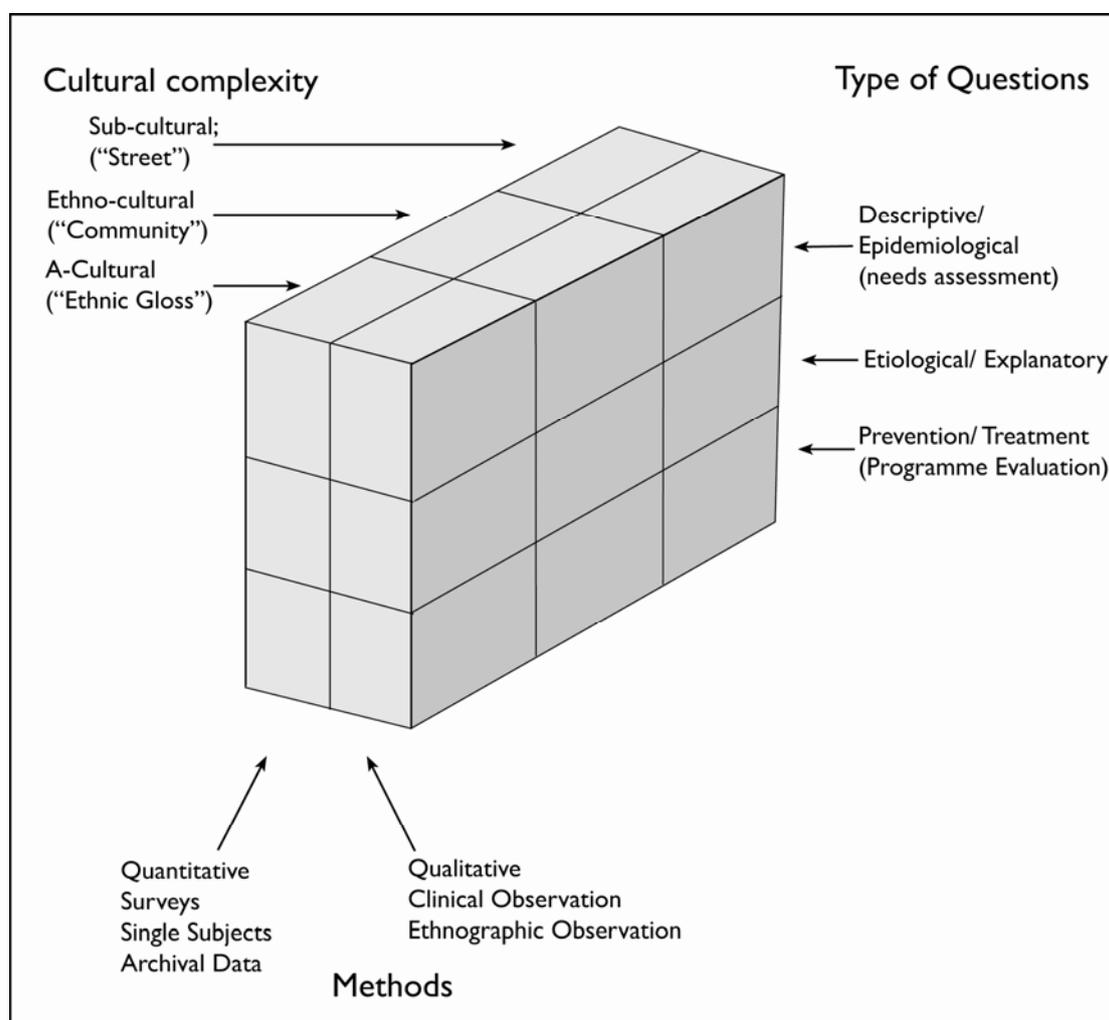


Figure 2. The 'Cube model' (From Sasao & Sue, 1993)

Research questions and methods are covered in the original guidelines (Arae, 2001). In addition there are more recently developed Pacific research guidelines, frameworks and models described earlier. Some of these are ethnic-specific, others are Pacific generic. However focussed, attention to the cultural complexity in diverse contexts remains unaddressed.

A focus on cultural complexity allows the identification and assessment of community phenomena or social regularities in culturally anchored settings. These can be defined at the individual and collective level. The individual level reveals the degree in which an individual is defined, both in terms of ethnicity and by his/her affective, behavioural and cognitive representation of that social category (social identity). At the collective level of context or setting (For example, community, neighbourhood, school), it locates where individuals are located or embedded. Sasao and Sue (1993, p. 719–720) state that three layers of complexity can be examined:

- 1) *A-cultural complexity*: because researchers collect data based on physical markers as ethnic glosses or physical characteristics, without regard to ecological/holistic context of the research setting, and analyse data using ethnicity/culture as a categorical variable. In addition, the individual member's social identity is blatantly ignored in collecting and interpreting such data. Sometimes this type of ethnic-cultural data collection is inevitable.
- 2) *Ethno-cultural complexity*: in which the community/group being studied must be defined by members of the community/group, not only by the ethnic group of interest but also by members of other ethnic-cultural groups within the same ecological context.
- 3) *Sub-cultural context*: research involving illegal/hidden populations within certain ethnic-cultural groups; for example, gangs, drug abusers, in/out-groups, religious sects. That is, members are no longer defined according to imposed social categories such as race/ethnicity per se, but source a definition of their own subculture, and an individual's social identity in that subculture or 'street' culture, from a combination of various cultural elements or categories.

Thus, this implies that in order to identify and address culturally anchored social regularities, a community needs to be defined more clearly by incorporating the concept of cultural complexity into the research design, such as self-perceived identification with an ethnic category or acculturation status, or how their community or neighbourhood is viewed or defined, in the context of other relevant social categories.

Promotion of culturally relative and culturally diverse approaches in Pacific research documents in New Zealand reflect the growing multi-ethnic heterogeneity amongst the Pacific cohort because of high rates of inter-ethnic marriage and immigration (Statistics New Zealand, 2009). The challenge has been for ethnic-Pacific researchers, and others who are working with Pacific communities, to implement in practical ways and in research praxis the plethora of palagi, ethnic specific and Pacific generic methodologies and concepts currently being developed and promoted.

Sasao and Sue (1993) state that given the lack of methodological guidelines for conducting multi-ethnic community research, it is important to focus on improving existing methods and/or creating innovative methods that match research questions at appropriate levels of conceptualisation for multi-ethnic communities to the extent that both external and internal validity would be enhanced. Up to this point, 'traditional' research (by both Pacific and palagi) in New Zealand has not fully understood or articulated multi-ethnic diversity, and its implications for community research, in meeting the needs and concerns of local multi-ethnic communities. It is imperative, therefore, to investigate the entire ecological context/discourse/habitus in which a target cultural group and other relevant cultural groups exist.

Moreover, there is a need for culturally anchored guidelines to suggest appropriate methods for addressing a phenomenon of interest to community researchers as well as the local community. Without elucidating these and other issues in the research framework, multi-ethnic community research becomes fragmented, and continues to harbour tensions among researchers, local community institutions, and policy planners (Baba, 2004; Sasao & Sue, 1993). What is needed are guideline research principles that integrate ethnicity and culture-specific issues, contextual issues and the dynamics of community institutions.

Pacific research needs to be conducted with consideration given to the intricate community process that represents different epistemological orientations of constituents (For example, students, parents, communities, teachers, principals) in the target ethnic group and other relevant groups in a specific ecological context or community. Generational and intra-ethnic considerations have been largely neglected in Pacific research to date. Such considerations may expose different sets of needs at diverse levels and thereby result in divergent views or conflicts on diverse group priorities.

### ***Assumptions in multi-ethnic research***

To supplement those contained in the original guidelines, it is necessary to stress even further the need to *define* Pacific multi-ethnic communities; that is, are they geographical, relational and/or spiritual? What is needed is an informed reflection of social, historical and cultural experiences and values of individuals in overlapping and cross-cutting community contexts (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 7). Past research has not adequately defined a multi-ethnic community in a way that captures experiences of multi-ethnic individuals in context (Sasao & Sue, 1993). That is, past research has perpetuated an illusion that any multi-ethnic group automatically forms a community by virtue of its ascribed or assumed ethnic or cultural attributes. For example, the myth of a single Pacific community (Macpherson, 1996, Macpherson, Spoonley, & Anae, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2001) or the notion that culture is evenly shared by all members of a community (Anae, 1997).

Defining a multi-ethnic community, therefore, entails more than classification based on simple 'ethnic glosses'. Instead it requires a closer examination of multiple social and cultural categories relevant to the individual as well as the community. By defining a multi-ethnic community within a larger ecological-contextual framework, Pacific researchers should be able to address more valid community phenomena that focus on the interactions among significant units or entities, such as the inter/intra-ethnic climate in school and other settings (Sasao & Sue, 1993).

While much previous Pacific research in New Zealand has focussed on population specific groups defined by broad ethnic categories such as generic Pacific, and a smaller amount on ethnic-specific groups, there is a dearth of research which looks at the growing diversity and heterogeneity of each population. For example, there have been very few methodological advances in addressing issues and defining NZ-born individuals/communities, mixed heritage individuals/communities or growing but largely hidden or ignored populations.

To summarise, issues of concern include the relative inattention to ecological contexts where demographics are constantly and rapidly changing and the relative negligence of complex socio-political climates in which various stakeholders represent ethnic-cultural communities. Moreover, the dynamic nature of multi-ethnic communities needs to be recognised. In a multi-ethnic society, research issues need to be pertinent and addressed in a way that balances solutions and paradoxes of various multi-ethnic and mainstream perspectives, within and across groups in a dynamic ecological context (Sasao & Sue, 1993).

## Teu le va

The concept of the Samoan self as a ‘relational self’ is explicit in the literature on Samoan wellbeing in New Zealand (Lui, 2003; Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave & Bush, 2005). The Samoan self is described as reliant on relationships that are occurring in the va, or space between. Samoan discourses on the va, va fealoa’i (spaces between relational arrangements), va tapuia, (sacred spaces of relational arrangements) and teu le va (to value, nurture, look after, and if necessary to tidy up the va) are covered comprehensively in the literature (Duranti, 1981; Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2004; Shore, 1982) as well as in a paper delivered in 2005 which traces Samoan understandings of va/teu le va (Anae, 2005). In the latter I examined va and teu le va in the context of the Samoan voices conveyed by Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave and Bush (2005), a linguistic interpretation of va by Dr Emma Kruse Va’ai (2002), a personal communication from Tupua Tamasese Tupuola Efi on the vafealoa’i and teu le va which is “the fatu (essence) of faasamoa”; and Aiono Fana’afi Le Tagaloa in her publication Motugaafa (1996, p. 18), who sets out the tapu (sacredness) of the va between specific human relations. She states that there is a va tapuia between brother and sister, parent (especially father and mother) and offspring; male and female; male and male and female and female; host and guest; matai; the dead and the living; man and his environment; sea and sky; flora and fauna; the created and the “Creator” (Aiono, 1996).

This cultural reference has also been practically applied in areas of mental health in New Zealand (Lui 2003; *Pacific Health Dialog*, 2009) and also by the Samoan Government in environmental issues. Setefano (2002) states that va tapuia is “a vital value at the heart of the Samoan culture”. In Samoa, the Ministry of natural resources and environment has incorporated va tapuia as a core concept in its management of land resources and relations with customers: “Va tapuia is the sacred relationship between brother and sister which extends to all Samoan relations, between human beings, with the dead, with the divine, and with nature. The ministry’s service charter lists customary principles of respect and va tapuia as key regulators of its service standards. Equally, customers are required to be responsible for recognising and understanding the va tapuia between our people, our environment and its resources” (Setefano, 2002).

In summary, these indigenous reference points accentuate the va, va fealoa’i and va tapuia and teu le va as:

- the centrality of the communal group, focussing on the collective rather than the individual;
- the centrality of the concept of *fa’aaloalo* as face-to-face conducting of relational arrangements manifested and performed formally and informally;
- the Samoan person as sacred;
- the relational arrangements as sacred;
- that personal and collective well-being is assured if relational arrangements are maintained;
- that *tapu* and *sa* contained within the protocols and etiquette protect and enhance the sacred nature of people;
- the centrality of language and how the metaphor and nuances of language become indicators shaping/illuminating the va;
- how language and ritual facilitate day to day conduct;
- the va fealoa’i is both physical and metaphysical;
- that relationships have boundaries guarded by tapu;
- that the infringing of tapu introduces risk and offence to the guardians of tapu;
- that placing people and oneself outside of the correct relational arrangements results

- in an unbalanced relationship;
- that through protocols and etiquette this imbalance can be corrected and parties allowed to return to the correct relational arrangement; for example, a formal apology followed by forgiveness;
- that maintaining good relational arrangements can bring blessings; and
- that body language (facial expressions and gestures, proxemics) in terms of physical and social distance can *teu le va*.

Put simply, if one views all reciprocal relationships with others as sacred, then the relationship will be more valued and nurtured more closely. The *teu le va* cultural reference uses Efi's notion of *va tapuia* and genealogy and focuses on the centrality of reciprocal relationships in the development of optimal relationships (Efi, 2007). But it also focuses on how to *teu le va* and how, within the *va*, there is (inter)action by parties involved. To *teu le va* requires that one regards these (inter)actions as sacred in order to value, nurture and, if necessary, tidy up the *va*. In this context *va* refers to the social and sacred space that separates and yet unites in the context of *va tapuia* experienced in research relationships. This is not to say that to *teu le va* in all one's relationships is doable, nor an easy process. More often than not, it is complex, multi-layered and fraught with difficulties. But if all parties have the will, the spirit and the heart for what is at stake then positive outcomes will be achieved.

### **Teu le va: maintaining good relationships can bring blessings**

*Teu le va* is significant because not only does it infer reciprocal protocols, cultural etiquette, both physical and sacred, and *tapu*, it implies both proscribed and prescribed behaviour and the concomitant moral and ethical underpinnings of behaviour. That is to say, direct action must follow to correct the relationship and/or the relational arrangement. Thus, when one is told to *teu le va* during formal rituals or small family or village meetings the matter is taken very seriously and action is taken immediately the incorrect relational arrangement occurs. For example, during formal rituals such as a wedding when an orator during his *lauga* (formal oratory) says "*teu le va*", he is usually referring to the *va* between husband and wife and is advising both parties to look after/tidy up the relational arrangement of marriage. Also, during an *ifoga* ritual *teu le va* would mean that both parties, the perpetrator and the victim, regardless as to whether who is right or wrong, must tidy up the relational arrangement between their families. Thus, by its very nature *teu le va* has multi-relational, situational and spiritual inferences. It is particularly important that the action taken is not transient or token but is one that is long-lasting and respectful and implies commitment to looking after/tidying up the correct reciprocal relational arrangement between the parties in a relationship. Thus, in this point of reference, in all human relationships the action/behaviour and consequences consist of a duality of reciprocal practical action being sanctioned by spiritual or sacred support, and vice versa.

### **Teu le va in Pacific research relationships**

The developments in Pacific research outlined earlier in this article have provided us with the tools and wherewithal for the palagi academy, researchers, politicians, agencies, institutions, service providers and those who are NZ-born who lack fluency and access to metaphor and nuance contained within our Pacific languages, to *teu le va* in Pacific spaces. Thus, the intellectual discussions about what counts as indigenous knowledges and Pacific paradigms provided by our Pacific scholars, bolstered by tools such as Pasifika educational research guidelines, and other models, metaphors, concepts and cultural competencies, provide those of us with limited language abilities the opportunity to engage. Within these paradigms are a plethora of notions of what counts as Pacific cultural knowledges in terms of our cultures, our histories, our worldviews, our institutions, our values, our moralities, and will provide all with what is required to *teu le va* in Pacific spaces. But where does it end?

What remains unaddressed, neglected and ignored in research in New Zealand is the need for tools for Pacific researchers to *teu le va* in *palagi* spaces and Māori spaces. More significantly, it is my contention that we have paid an inordinate amount of attention and resources on schooling New Zealand institutions on how to *teu le va* in Pacific spaces, yet it has been assumed that to *teu le va* in *palagi* spaces occurs by a process of osmosis. Unfortunately this has not happened. The result is that there is a sense that any Pacific researcher who is culturally competent in his or her own culture can ‘do’ research because they can *teu le va* within their own communities. Similarly, that our emerging, recently graduated Pacific scholars/researchers can ‘do’ research because they can *teu le va* in *palagi* spaces! This ‘either/or’ positioning is not good enough for high quality research outputs that our research institutions and Pacific communities require and deserve. What we need are balanced Pacific researchers who are skilled and experienced, and who can *teu le va* in *palagi* spaces, their own Pacific spaces, Māori spaces and others.

For optimal research outcomes, we as Pacific researchers must first acknowledge and *teu le va* with *tangata whenua*, the research institution, the funders, our colleagues who make up the research team (Pacific and others), our emerging researchers and our Pacific research participants and communities. Moreover, funders and policy planners must also *teu le va* in terms of valuing and morally (and financially) supporting research designs and recommendations, and implementing such recommendations to create and/or change existing policy. But how can this be done?

## **The challenge**

The challenge for researchers and funders in their relationship with the researched is to *teu le va* to ensure that diverse Pacific peoples’ own narratives gain traction and become the dominant discourse. In turn this will determine possibilities for Pacific ‘ownership’ and will provide realistic opportunities for Pacific people to engage productively in successful educational outcomes. I now present four relational contexts in research praxis in which *teu le va* must be valued and operational. I contend that the simultaneous engagement of what is offered in the Ethnic Interface Model, the Cube model and *teu le va* will produce a unique point of reference with which to construct the next set of guidelines (See Table 1).

### **1) *Untangling ‘Pacific’ population cohorts in New Zealand: tidying up the ‘va’ between Pacific indigenous and Pacific diaspora (island-born and NZ-born) in terms of inter- and intra-ethnic spaces and positionings***

As there is ecological flexibility, or fluidity, in one’s ethnic identity and in the multi-ethnic community to which one belongs, future research on ethnic identity and acculturation should take new directions. For example, there is a clear need for including ethnic specific contexts in which the level of acculturation can be measured (for example, school, home, public versus private spaces, work settings) because the effect of acculturation (or not) may differ in various contexts. Moreover, static concepts on ethnic identification and acculturation must be re-evaluated or replaced to accommodate changes due to the passage of time and significant events (Sasao & Sue, 1993; see Anae, 1998).

A third factor in reconceptualising ethnic identification and acculturation is a recognition that the behavioural focus of the measures must be juxtaposed with other dimensions or domains, such as affective or cognitive aspects of ethnic identity and acculturation. For instance, it is possible that an individual ‘behaviourally’ uses English almost all the time (which most acculturation measures indicate as attainment of high acculturation). However, it could be a reflection that he or she simply spends more time in English-speaking contexts, despite wishing to use his/her native language more often. Thus, the affective level of language use needs to be assessed to obtain a more comprehensive picture of an individual’s degree of acculturation (or not).

**Table 1:** How the teu le va approach can be used by researchers and policy makers (Anae, 2007).

Relational contexts	Concept/principle	Teu le va	
		Funders/Ministries	Researchers
Untangling Pacific population cohorts – the va between island-born/NZ-born	Untangling/acknowledging of inter/intra dimensions of ethnicity and identity. Recognising the salience of context	Research application (RFP) must be specific as to what Pacific population cohort is to be researched e.g. whether pan-Pacific or ethnic specific and whether inter-ethnic considerations also necessary	A clear unravelling and identifying of intra-ethnic complexities e.g. age/gender/status, as well as 'hidden' status considerations eg.gang/cliq. Also pan-Pacific and/or inter-ethnic considerations with diverse sub-groups as necessary, in proposal
Nurturing the va between researcher and participants regarding methodologies and methods	Avoiding the 'clutter' - maximising research methods/methodologies and research for optimal educational outcomes for Pacific students	RFPs should insist on methodology based on triangulation between ethnic interface model, the cube model and teu le va reference points.eg. the proposal's alignment with the MOE's requirements (Strategies etc.) as well as the three reference points as above. NB the ethnic interface model and variation of cube model, and teu le va reference could be included with RFP as reference documents to be aligned to proposal	Successful tenderer must show clear knowledge and experience of various palagi and Pacific methodologies and methods and is able to negotiate through triangulation of ethnic interface/cube/teu le va reference points in order to justify relationship between methods (quant/qual or both), types of questions (descriptive, explanatory, prevention), and cultural complexity ( sub/ethno/a-cultural) finally suggested in responses to RFP
Best practice reference points – the va between funders/researcher; researcher and team; researcher and participants; researcher and communities	Implementing principles in original guidelines (and others?) through six stages of research as outlined (Anae et al 2001:28)	RFPs should document these principles (and others?) and request how these are to be addressed in research design and implementation processes	Reciprocal relationships to be nurtured are: with tangata whenua, research institution, strategic priorities, the funders, research colleagues in team, junior researchers, research participants, communities, eg. Research participants acknowledged for their time, in terms of koha, feed-back, transcripts, research reports/summaries of findings; mentoring of junior researchers etc.. How this is to be done should be clearly delineated in proposal
The va between funders/policy planners/Ministries and the researcher.	Not only fiscal, but also philosophical and moral commitment to transformative change for Pacific students, families and communities to reduce education underachievement in NZ, through teu le va research processes.	e.g. negotiating with successful tenderer re ethical, timing and funding issues; Commitment to researchers/action that findings will be translated into policy development to preserve the va between funder and researcher and researcher and communities via participants.	Robust and best practice precedents considerations re approaches/methodologies and methods within negotiated funding and timing parameters; Well-researched and articulated findings to be disseminated widely to research participants, communities and policy-makers.

Future investigations of a target multi-ethnic group should begin by collaborating with other ethnic-cultural groups as no one ethnic-cultural group exists by itself in the everyday ecological context or setting. Rather it exists amongst other groups that influence its social regularities. For example, in studying interethnic relationships between NZ-born Samoans and palagi, one should not ignore the impact of Māori and other groups in the relationships in order to understand dominant/subordinate positionings of the various groups.

**2) Thinking about 'doing' research: 'Sifting through the clutter'. Nurturing the 'va' between researcher and participant(s) in terms of methodology and methods**

Approaches, methodologies and methods abound. Certainly, quantitative methods are mainly of the Western scientific kind. However, in terms of approaches and methodologies, a burgeoning of Pacific guidelines and methodologies are being developed such as ethnic-specific, cohort-matched etc. It is important, however, that researchers draw not only on Pacific methodologies, but also on traditional Western interdisciplinary methodologies. Whatever best suits the interaction between cultural complexities, research questions and methods. Some Western qualitative methodologies are very 'Pacific'. For example, Anae Fuamatu, Lima, Mariner, Park, & Suaalii-Sauni (2000) used the Life Story method for their data collection in their study of the roles and responsibilities of some Samoan men in reproduction. Because of the make-up of the research team, in terms of age/gender-matched researchers, the relationships forged between all stakeholders, the depth of data shared by research participants and the recommendations that were documented reflected many of the Pacific paradigms/metaphors noted above. Similar strategies were used in the 'O le tama ma lona a'oga, o le tama ma lona fa'asinomaga – nurturing positive identity in children project' (Podmore, Wendt-Samu, & A'oga Fa'asamoa, 2006). That is to say, we must be careful of clutter and even more clutter. We must be sure that existing approaches and methodologies, especially qualitative methodologies, (both palagi and Pacific) have been considered before 'inventing' anything new. In the same way, we must also question so-called Pacific methodologies that, in effect, duplicate existing ones.

In conceptualising and designing research projects, researchers working in multi-ethnic communities should be consciously guided by a consideration of interrelated factors which involve cultural complexity, methodology and type of question being addressed, as defined in the original guidelines. During the course of the research, for example in the case of multi-ethnic groups in which little research has been conducted, it may be wise for researchers to initially focus on descriptive questions, use qualitative methods, and examine groups using lower levels of cultural complexity. Such research may help to establish a baseline of knowledge, identify relevant parameters and variables prior to more intensive study, thus gaining insight into the appropriate methodologies and instruments to use. Due to the practical problems involved in multi-ethnic group research, it may not be appropriate to study various levels of cultural complexity as these groups are divided along various ethnic/subgroup lines. In such research contexts qualitative methods would be more appropriate (Sasao & Sue, 1993).

**3) Best practice reference points: the va between funders and researcher/researcher and team/researcher and participants/researcher and communities**

The original guidelines are instrumental in outlining some of the specific issues involved in Pacific research which need to be implemented through all stages of the research process (Anae et al., 2001).

In each of the six stages of the research process listed below, Pacific epistemological assumptions must be considered and appropriately woven into the methodological fabric of the research process to be utilised. Therefore, for Pacific peoples and for the advancement of Pacific issues, the best research methodologies are those that are:

- sensitive to contemporary Pacific contexts (including inter and intra ethnic dynamics, for example, see Anae, 1998; Tiatia, 1998; Tupuola 1999);
- capable of embracing existing Pacific notions of collective ownership (see Fana'afi, 1986);
- capable of embracing collective shame (see Mavoa & Sua'ali'i, 2001);
- capable of embracing collective authoritarian structures (see Anae, 1998; Coxon, 1997; Sua'ali'i, 2001); and
- capable of withstanding the test of time.

The 2001 guidelines then recommend that these issues be implemented throughout the six main stages of the research process: selection of research topic, research questions and methodological approach; instrument design; information gathering; analysis of data; drafting of final report; and finally the dissemination of findings (Anae et al, 2001). In addition, the relationships which must be nurtured by the researcher in the research process are as follows:

*With tangata whenua*

Nurturing the *va* and spaces that have already been created by tangata whenua. Acknowledgement of the special status of tangata whenua in New Zealand under the Treaty of Waitangi is particularly important.

*The research institution*

These include developing research infrastructure and support; building research leadership; establishment of Pacific research organisations; participation by Pacific peoples in a wide range of research projects; and building research communities and research cultures.

*Developing strategic priorities*

In particular, conversations and talanoa (see Prescott & Hooper, 2007) with Pacific and non-Pacific researchers; investigating promotion and career structures; building operational processes for managing Pacific research; and building linkages and institutional collaborations.

*The funders*

Developing the vision and conceptual framework for the research; developing intellectual property protocols; and building into the research design appropriate resources in terms of time and resources to *teu le va* with the research participants.

*Colleagues in research team*

Working collaboratively for the good of the whole; being a committed and active participant in all decision-making processes; and ensuring the Pacific component of research is well-managed and resourced in order to *teu le va* with emerging researchers, research participants and communities.

*Emerging Pacific researchers*

Acknowledging the different biographies of emerging researchers and strengthening the education, training and mentoring of Pacific peoples as researchers; employing and mentoring of Pacific peoples as researchers as necessary; and conducting conversations and sharing of research experiences, processes and outcomes.

*The research participants*

Develop and/or employ methodologies and methods which will *teu le va* with research participants in terms of respect for their cultural values and institutions (consultation, research design, methods and dissemination) as necessary.

*The communities*

Involve consultation and advisory protocols if warranted; generate research questions with communities as much as possible; apply appropriate research designs, approaches and

methods; disseminate research results and research outcomes so that they can lead to policy formation and improvements to service delivery and effect real change to the status quo.

#### **4) From research recommendations to policy formation: tidying up the 'va' between researchers and funders/policy**

If you seriously want better outcomes for Pacific...people and their families, then policy settings that impact upon them need to be congruent with this world. You need to be drawing upon the strengths, understandings and meanings of this world....That would lead to a plurality of policy settings, of research approaches, of methods of evaluation practices in the field...In the Pacific case, it would enable policies and practices that will enhance identity, draw upon positive strengths in the cultures and facilitate authentic Pacific development (Efi, 2009, p. 91).

Baba also states that the priority of Pacific research must be to avoid "bondage and patronage" (Baba, 2004, pp. 96–99).

Efforts by policy organisations to become 'culturally competent', as pointed out by Rose et al. (2002), should be applauded. More importantly, however, is that guidelines are required to advise how these organisations can philosophically and morally support programmes and policies as well as fiscally (Rose et al., 2002). According to Crewe and Young (2002), who examined how different international development policy areas are influenced by research, it is comparative research on different policy areas that is needed to understand the differences between political and institution contexts, what is seen as credible research, successful communication strategies, the influence of key actors, and the impact of relationships between researchers and policy-makers. They state:

It is our hypothesis that research is more likely to contribute to evidence-based policy making that aims to reduce poverty, alleviate suffering or save lives if:

- it fits within the political and institutional limits and pressures of policy makers, and resonates with their ideological assumptions, or sufficient pressure is exerted to change those limits;
- researchers and policy makers share particular kinds of networks and develop chains of legitimacy for particular policy areas; and
- outputs are based on local involvement and credible evidence and are communicated via the most appropriate communicators, channels, style, format and timing (Crewe & Young, p. v).

In all the research relationships outlined above, we can *teu le va* in Pacific research in general by exposing, understanding and reconciling our *va* with each other in reciprocal relationships in the research process. For me, it means that the people and groups we meet and have relationships and relational arrangements with all have specific biographies (a plethora of ethnicities, gender, class, age, agendas, whether they are family members, colleagues, leaders etc.). To *teu le va* means to be committed to take all these into account in the context in which these relationships occur. It is this, together with face-to-face interaction, words spoken and behaviour (body language etc.) and with purposeful and positive outcomes of the relationship in mind that the relationship progresses and moves forward. To not do this will incur the wrath of the gods, the keepers of *tapu*, and positive successful outcomes will not eventuate, progress will be impeded, parties to the relationship will be put at risk, and appeasement and reconciliation will need to be sought.

Finally, all of the three insights offered in this article, the simultaneous engagement of the Cube model, the Ethnic Interface model and the *teu le va* cultural reference, have informed

the second set of guidelines which organises and conceptualises Pacific research endeavours (see Table 1). The new guidelines ensure that, first, types of research, research problems and the implications of findings are more explicitly conceptualised and approached. Second, that the relationships formed during the multi-level research process are nurtured so that the approved practical action of researchers is sanctioned by moral support, especially on the part of funders and policy planners. Third, that the knowledge produced by research thus obtained can inform policy which will alleviate the subordinate positioning of Pacific peoples in New Zealand, especially in the area of education.

Teu le va provides a 'new' direction and a reference point for thinking about and doing Pacific research which calls on funders and policy planners to also *teu le va*, thus providing a 'decolonising moment'. It represents what Smith (1998) has already alerted us to:

...the unmasking and deconstruction of imperialism and colonialism in its old and new formations alongside a search for sovereignty, for the reclamation of knowledge, language and culture and for solutions to systemic problems be they social, political or economic. It recognises and engages in the tricky business of institutional and policy change, of collaboration with non-indigenous researchers and of developing a strategic approach to building research and making it work for us rather than against us. (p. 5).

How *teu le va* applies in practice across these relational contexts is dependent on the type of project, the resources assigned, time issues, pedagogies, epistemologies, ontologies, methodologies and methods acknowledged and applied, and how research outcomes are translated into policy.

Indeed, the second Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (Airini et al., in press) not only expects but demands Pacific research(ers), funders, policy planners and government ministries to work together reciprocally throughout the whole process to produce the bodies of research literature. This literature can then be used to lead and mentor others, to translate robust research into policy, to engage and to share. It emphasises and attempts to reconcile the connections between the academy of researchers, the policy makers, the diverse Pacific communities and others, and the larger political struggle of change for Pacific communities in New Zealand and abroad. It is and must offer a best possibility for a transformative agenda that moves Pacific communities to some place better than where they are now, and provides hope for our Pacific children to succeed educationally, unfettered and uncluttered.

Soifua. Fa'afetai.

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