Integrating Pacific research methodologies with Western social science research methods: quantifying Pentecostalism's effects on Fijian relationality

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Abstract

This paper discusses the attempts of two academics of European descent (one English, one American) who both lived and researched in Fiji for a number of years to develop a longitudinal quantitative research project examining the socio-economics of religious change in this Pacific nation. We explain how specific data gathering techniques and recent statistical advances in network analysis may offer novel means for documenting and visualising the relational ontologies of Pacific life. In quantifying the 'space between' individuals in Fijian villages and informal settlements by recording the flow of resources, labour and social support, over time and across the community as a whole, the data captures the relational dynamics of Fijian social life. Thus, this intended study seeks to reveal the relative socioeconomic effects of intra-Christian conversion, namely the rapid growth of Pentecostalism, on Fijian practices of reciprocity and sharing. We also consider the ethical implications and the suitability of longitudinal methods for research in the Pacific and how they may be strengthened and contextualised by attention to Pacific Research Methodologies scholarship.

Keywords: Fiji, quantitative methods, Pacific research methodologies, religion, relationality, pentecostalism, conversion

Introduction

Over the past few years, Western psychological and behavioural scientists have increasingly engaged with cultural diversity, responding to the critique that current research overwhelmingly draws inference from the study of WEIRD people (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic) (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan, 2010). Without a broadening of scope, studies are likely to mistake culturally-specific traits as universally human ones. While data collection in the human sciences is increasing across non-Western societies, especially among Indigenous groups (Broesch et al., 2020), there is still much work to be done and ethical issues to address. With such research interrupting communities with distinct cultural, economic and social contexts, urgent questions are being raised regarding the application of comparative methods and concepts in these diverse settings (Hruschka et al., 2018).

At the institutional level, university research boards have responded by calling for informants' interests to be more squarely situated in research planning, execution and outcomes. This means that ethics protocols for securing informed consent, deepening participant buy-in and assuring local ownership of research outputs need to be carefully tailored to the specific needs and goals of the researched community. Tighter researcher/informant collaboration is also required for improving data validity; offering crucial insider insights for effectively framing questions, clarifying responses and avoiding social situations that create bias, harm or offense. Closer co-ordination with local research institutions is also important for addressing extant structural inequalities between foreign and local researchers, where uneven access to funds and resources entrench North/South hierarchies across the global academy (Urassa et al., 2021). Yet in the blossoming field of Indigenous methodologies, an approach that recentres Indigenous voices and knowledge in the study of Indigenous peoples, decolonialising research requires much more than such ethical add-ons to research processes (Bennett et al., 2013; Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith, 2008; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). From this perspective, modern social scientific research itself is viewed as an integrally Western and colonial cultural practice, and its core conceptual frames, data gathering and dissemination processes require close scrutiny. In Pacific Research Methodologies scholarship (PRM henceforth), critique gathers especially around the failure of research to recognise and respect the relational lifeworlds of Pacific peoples (Anae, 2019). Such a fundamental shortcoming has authorised certain knowledge systems that misidentify Pacific beliefs and behaviours, alienate Pacific peoples from practices of social research, and often result in the flouting of cultural protocols and the failure of research initiatives to deliver back to communities the benefits first promised (Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Naepi, 2019; Smith, 2021).

This paper discusses our attempts as two academics of European descent (one English, one American), who both lived and researched in Fiji for several years, to plan a quantitative social research project examining religious change in this Pacific nation, or more specifically, the economic and social effects of a rapidly growing Pentecostalism on customary practices of sharing, cooperation, support and community. From its early problematics (i.e. how to position research in regards to Fijian Pentecostalism) through to meeting our ethical obligations to informant communities across the full length of the project, we highlight how principles of relationality and PRM, especially Nabobo-Baba's

Vanua Framework Metholodology (Nabobo-Baba, 2008), might be integrated into – and therefore significantly improve – our research practice.

In particular, we seek to show how quantitative research tools that may at first appear rooted in reductive logics that are conceptually antithetical to Pacific relational ontologies, may align with and be informed by PRM. Quantitative research techniques of network analysis that measure local behaviours can document the relational ontologies of Pacific life, and in this sense, reveal vectors of social change that are most meaningful to Pacific communities themselves. Specifically, these research tools can quantify the dynamic 'spaces between' individuals in Fijian villages and informal settlements, and visually represent them to communities. By recording the flow of resources, temporal investments, labour and social support over time and across the community as a whole, the data substrate captures the relational dynamics of reciprocal social behaviour and community. We suggest that this helps address the Western methodological bias centred on the individual, better reflects Indigenous perspectives of community, and sheds new light on the socio-economic and cultural effects on religious change sweeping the Pacific region. It may also map a new path for engaging with one of the most contentious and enduring debates in the social sciences: the functions of religion.

1. Pacific Relationality and Fijian Pentecostalism

In her introduction to The Relational Self: Decolonising Personhood in the Pacific (Nabobo-Baba and Vaai, 2017: 6), Nabobo-Baba writes "the self is relational, or it is nothing. It is shaped by relational values and principles whereby the self is part of the whole and whole is part of the self." This relational framing of the person, emphasising belonging, inter-connection, reciprocity and fluidity, as well as a non-binary logic of "'both/and' rather than 'either/or,'" figures centrally in Pacific descriptions of Indigenous lifeworlds (itulagi) (4). This relational framing, moreover, is typically presented in contradistinction to Western ontologies, which are received as reductive, atomising and hegemonic, rooted in a Cartesian dualism or an extractive dominion theology of the Great Chain of Being (Salmond, 2021). From Hau'ofa's Sea of Islands to the multidimensional cosmic principle of the va which "holds life in balance and harmony" (Anae, 2019: 77), principles of relationality are repeatedly affirmed as constitutive of Pacific thought and recurrently emerge as a core value in PRM. For example, in Nabobo-Baba's account of the Vanua Research Framework, where vanua is described as "the essence of being Fijian" and the "the heart of his/her existence," Nabobo-Baba explains that vanua "refers to that universal whole, which is inclusive of a chief or related chiefs, their people and their relationships, their land, spiritualities, knowledge systems, cultures and values" (Nabobo-Baba, 2008: 143). In the context of such relationality, Pacific scholars frequently affirm the centrality of the community in Pacific life, which as a condition of knowing and being is undermined by modern epistemologies that privilege the autonomous individual as the primary unit for social description (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Meyer, 2001; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Smith, 2021; Thaman, 2009). In a creative illustration of this point, Upolu Vaai and Aisake Casimira italise the 'i' of 'colonisation' throughout the pages of their edited collection Relational Hermeneutics: Decolonising   the Mindset and the Pacific Itulagi (Vaai and Casimira, 2017).

It is in its apparent rejection of principles of relationality, therefore, that the explosive rise of Pentecostalism in Fiji and across the Pacific – outstripping growth rates elsewhere in the world (Anderson, 2013; Brison, 2007b; Gore, 2019) – threatens a radical transformation of the social, economic and cultural landscape (Ernst, 1994, 2006). As Fijians reappraise their religious beliefs, practices and identity in an increasingly globalised society, these new churches offer novel spiritual regimes for reformulating the self, the community and God, as well as for how these existential anchors should inter-relate (Brison, 2017). Rejecting the village religious orthodoxy (typically Methodist) headed by the chief and the talatala (church minister), Pentecostalism promises a ritual levelling by bringing each individual fully into their own personal relationship with God, unmediated by customary authority structures. In this centring of the individual, Pentecostals open themselves up for the direct and personal receipt of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly this-worldly blessings of health and wealth (Robbins, 2004; Yong, 2005). When these new churches vilify the traditional village order for its unbiblical syncretism with pre-mission norms and beliefs, they also attack the Indigenous cultural foundations of a holistically-structured and highly communal village life (Tippett, 1955; Tuwere, 2002). As a result,   Pentecostalism is often seen to undermine customary practices of governance and sociality (Gershon, 2006; Newland, 2004; Ryle, 2010), including institutions of food, labour, resource sharing and mutual support embedded in the socio-ritual order. In this sense, Pentecostalism appears as a cultural force of uprooting, turning converts from a locally embedded religiosity, connected to parochial genealogies, customs and the land itself, to a modern religiosity that is a deterritoralised, globalised and removed from the traditional forms of relationality celebrated in Pacific Islanders' cultural self-descriptions (Brison, 2017; Eriksen, Blanes, and MacCarthy, 2019).

It is in this context of ecclesial and community fragmentation, globalisation and rising individualism that the first major pan-Pacific study on these new Christian churches, commissioned by the Pacific Conference of Churches and led by sociologist Manfred Ernst, lambasted Pentecostalism's rising popularity (Ernst, 1994). Its American-style materialism, its hostility to ecumenical ideals, and its focus on personal salvation to the neglect of the community issues, figured centrally in his critique. For Ernst, these new churches targeted individuals at the social and economic margins and drew them to abandon traditional support networks for a prosperity gospel of wishful thinking. For Ernst, then, Pentecostalism's social and economic effects were both atomising and deleterious, deepening poverty with regressive tithing practices that transferred wealth from poor congregants to a nascent bourgeois class of charismatic preachers. Pentecostalism's emphasis on ritual equality cloaked a neoliberal economics of precarity and disparity, whereas the old village hierarchies, ritually stratified and privileging chiefly rank, actually facilitated a more egalitarian and secure redistribution of communal resources. In Fiji, for example, kerekere is the widespread cultural practice of exchanging material for social capital, operating to ensure economic inequality does not develop as an existential threat to the social harmony of group (Nayacakalou, 1978; Thomas, 1992; Tomlinson, 2009).

Studies on Pentecostalism in the Pacific have multiplied significantly since Ernst's initial report, but they focus on a wide range of issues, from the ideological and political implications of insurgent village belief systems (e.g. Macdonald, 2019; Newland, 2004), to the effects on gender (Besnier et al., 2018;

Eriksen, 2012, 2014) and personal care (Hardin, 2018). In the studies that seek to nuance Ernst's economic critique, the tendency is to focus on Pentecostal converts' agency and rationality. In other words, rebuttals focus on rejecting the idea that converts are naïve and misled, as Ernst suggests. For example, Besnier's study of denomination switching in Tonga discusses the onerous burdens of fundraising under the mainline village church establishment (Besnier, 2020: 209). While tithing practices in Pentecostal churches can easily exceed ten percent of income (Newland, 2004: 13), a fixed quota affords all members an equal dignity in meeting these expected contributions. By comparison, financial obligations to the established village churches are less predictable and can be much less edifying, often functioning as arenas for status rivalry played out in terms of competing gross donations (Besnier, 2020: 209, 212; see also Eräsaari, 2013: 202).

The unaffordability of traditional religious costs may also reflect a sense of poor returns on these costs. In the established churches, religious returns are typically framed as long-term and mostly spiritual (i.e. salvation in the afterlife). Moreover, low status villagers can be overshadowed in church services where the chief's religiosity is platformed (Shaver, 2015). By contrast, not only does Pentecostalism's health and wealth message blend together a promise of spiritual and this-worldly enrichment (Besnier, 2020: 228), active participation in glossolalia, visions and healing enables low status villagers to publicly receive the Holy Spirit and communicate their religiosity to greater effect (Olson, 2001). These new religous opportunites, for example, have helped women challenge patriarchal ritual structures across the Pacific (e.g. Tuzin, 1997), although not without reaffirming more Christian conservative gender norms in their place (Eriksen 2014). The lifestyle requirements of new religious movements, such as prohibitions on alcohol, tobacco and kava, also provide members opportunities for a better life, establishing new technologies of the self for better navigating the market-economy, appealing to middle-class sensibilities and aspirations (Besnier, 2020). Notably, Brison takes a different approach and questions whether Pentecostals actually do shirk their old community obligations after converting, arguing that converts simply come to reimagine these contributions in newly personalised and globalised terms instead (Brison, 2007a, 2017).

These analyses are all important for highlighting the economic agency and rationality of converts' religious choices – as well as their religious rationales for their economic choices – yet the reliance on standard ethnographic methods such as informal interviews, surveys, focus groups and other approaches, centres analysis around individual decision-making in a marketplace of competing social/religious groups. This leans explanation towards rational choice theory, highlighting individual experiences of – and preferences for – different religious groups under various social and economic conditions. This approach provides little authoritative data on how such religious change actually affects patterns of exchange and sharing across the group as a whole, and how these changes in turn affect community structures. Is Pentecostalism an engine for socio-economic uplift, reflecting households judiciously opting out of holistic religious systems that no longer redistribute competently in a modernising economy? Or is Pentecostalism complicit in a regressive capitalist capture and commodification of the (spiritual) public good, accelerating patterns of rising economic inequality and deprivation? At a more basic level, how are these churches altering the vast webs of relationality

inherent to Fijian life? From the logistics of public health, to the status of churches as public or private actors, to inter-denominational conflict resolution, determining the effects of religious change in Fiji is important for a range of pressing policy, governance and social concerns. Yet despite decades of debates, these questions remain unanswered.

To quantify, understand, visualise and communicate Pentecostalism's socio-economic effects requires methods that can document dynamic webs of exchange, reciprocity, cooperation and support over time. This moves the analytic frame from the individual, where personal narratives are offered up as illustrative vignettes or ideal-types, to the community as a whole, conceived as vast networks of social and economic relations. Individuals do not disappear in such analyses, but become embedded within a social network – understood and represented as relational selves. Such a meso-level approach is hardly unknown to the study of religious change. In the 1960s, Lofland and Stark argued that personal ties across groups better predict conversion than individual circumstances (Everton, 2018; Lofland and Stark, 1965). Ernst himself notes that Pentecostalism's rapid growth is driven by the evangelistic zeal of its lay members, energetically pursuing friends and colleagues to attend services (Ernst, 2006; 716). Similarly, Fer's study of Pentecostalism links its international evangelical 'network culture' to the high levels of trans-Pacific migration by Polynesian peoples (Fer, 2012). But a study that reveals how religious change reorders the community's social relations and economic practices – rather than simply explains who converts and why – must assemble a richness of data that can effectively quantify the lived practice of Pacific social relationality, as well as how it changes over time (i.e., as people convert). In order for such comprehensive data collection to be possible, it also requires broad and willing participation by the community. In addition to binding ethical considerations, therefore, researchers must build enduring relationships with community members, and involve the community at all stages of the project as a basic condition of accessing data. In other words, at the level of ethics and efficacy, researchers require contextually appropriate PRM.

Among the most prominent studies in PRM advanced over the last twenty-years, including the Vanua Research Framework methodology (Nabobo-Baba, 2008), the Kakala Framework (Fua, 2014; Thaman, 1993; Malungahu, Huggard, and Buetow, 2017), tok stori (Sanga et al., 2018) fa'afaletui (Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Tamasese et al., 2005) and talanoa (Vaioleti, 2006), there has been less attention paid to specifically conforming quantitative research methods with Pacific relational forms of being and knowing (Anae, 2019; Kovach, 2021). Emphasis has fallen on creating richer, more representative and more accountable institutions and practices of knowledge-construction, honouring customary protocols and replicating in research praxis embodied forms of knowing and being, such as garland-making, wayfaring and weaving. Cutting across these frameworks is the principle that the relational life-worlds of Pacific Islanders demand that research approaches better recognise and value distinctly Pacific ways of being. For example, talanoa emphasises the importance of traditional values of respect and reciprocity for establishing a mutual trust between researcher and informant, involving taking the time to share experiences and discuss contexts that, at first impressions, may appear to outside researchers only tangential to the research question at hand (Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Vaioleti, 2006).

Yet quantitative research appears to fall short in this regard, and in ways far more subtle than Fiji's government banning national statistics data that measures poverty against ethnicity and religion (Nailatikau, 2021). Unitary measurements depicting social groups through the cumulative totals of their unit parts (e.g. censuses) or the persistant use of Gross Domestic Product as a metonym for well-being, are patently inadequate for measuring the lived reality of Pacific communities. In a rare and recent discussion on decolonising quantitative methods for the psychometric testing of Pasifika participants in kava consumption trials (Aporosa, Atkins, and Leov, 2021), the authors concentrate on adjusting base-line measures to avoid imposing Eurocentric anatomical norms and adding vanua-informed procedures of respect into the research process.   The latter best practice is one we seek to emulate below. But in what sense can the quantitative data substrate itself be decolonised? We ask this question with an eye to a Critical Indigenous Statistics (Coburn, 2015). How might we both militate against the misuse of statistics that erases Indigenous identities in national reports and constructs 'deficit' Indigenous communities for a state governmentality (Walter and Andersen, 2013), and also develop new social science statistical techniques for documenting cultural diversity's varied phenomenological encounters with the world. Thus, the concern is not only to better frame our statistical questions for advancing the interests of disadvantaged groups (Kukutai and Walter, 2017), but to actually remodel statistical procedures to amplify voices and perspectives that view life differently from the modern West.

In the second section of this paper we introduce the broad theoretical ambitions of our research project and discuss its implementation in accordance with Nabobo-Baba's Vanua Research Framework (Nabobo-Baba, 2008: 146). We discuss how a project first prompted by a big evolutionary question on religion's effects on human sociality may be rooted within the values and interests of the Fijian communities we seek to work with to answer this question. As this section envisages our progression through the principles of Nabobo-Baba's framework, among other best practice principles for Pacific research, we lay out both how we will conduct research with and for these communities, and how we will construct quantitiative data that, in grasping the effects of religious change on Fijian relationality, may participate in wider efforts to decolonise Pacific research.

2. Quantifying Religion's effects on Relationality

At its broadest, the Te Aparangi New Zealand Royal Society research project 'Investigating the impact of religion on cooperation and inequality in Fiji,' led by the second author, aims to shed light on the effects of religious change on community dynamics (Shaver et al., 2021). Comparative studies in the social sciences locate religious belief and behaviour across all societies (Johnson, 2005; Norenzayan, 2010; Shaver and Sosis, 2014) and from a naturalistic viewpoint, this suggests that there is something inherently useful about religion (Alcorta and Sosis, 2005; Shariff, Purzycki, and Sosis, 2014). Functionalist accounts have traditionally fallen one of two ways: cooperation theories argue that religion supports equitable cooperation (Durkheim, 1965; Turner, Abrahams, and Harris, 2017; Van Gennep, 2019), while disparity theories argue that religion is a tool for elite exploitation (Bourdieu,

2007; Marx, 1970). In local contests between Fiji's traditional mainline churches and its Pentecostal churches, accusation that the other side's religiosity is profaned by elite interest can fly both ways.

We suggest the persistence and potency of this dualistic rhetoric on religion – as either social glue or ideological opiate – is partly due to the general tendency to overlook how religion, cooperation and social inequality dynamically inter-relate over time (de Aguiar and Cronk, 2011; Cronk, 1994; Shaver, Fraser, and Bulbulia, 2017). Or, as per Nabobo-Baba's description of relationality, it is a case of 'both/and' rather than 'either/or'. Time-series studies that aim to understand this dynamic interplay of religious cooperation and disparity, however, have been limited to the examining of historical transformations of societies in the far past (Watts et al., 2015; 2016). Researchers have yet to systematically record religion's social and material effects within and between communities over time as they occur, leaving our understanding of these effects and their underpinning mechanics unclear.

To understand how religion structures and affects communities and their boundaries, it is necessary to track resource exchange and mutual support among people within different groups, over time, while also accounting for the dynamic status of interactants. Resource exchange data, social network data, religion data and sociodemographic data collected from the same individuals over time, and among groups that differ in their social and economic conditions, along with following the movement of individuals as they change groups, can show how group level ideological conditions affect individuals socially and economically. Such data can also map out how shifts in community socio-economic networks unfold as different religious systems rise and fall. In other words, in order to clarify religion's social-economic effects, research needs to be located where religious and economic change is occurring, and where ritual and economic statuses vary between households and within communities. It is with these considerations in mind that the proposed research is approaching four adjacent population centres in Fiji. Namely, two villages and two informal settlements that are experiencing a rapid rise in the popularity of Pentecostalism. These sites comprise a mix of settings with and without land tenure, and are either singularly iTaukei (Indigenous Fijian) or ethnically plural communities. This variation will help to distinguish between kin, ethnic and religious structuring of relationships. There is also a diversity of economic behaviours, including small scale farming and fishing, low-income peri-urban work and a range of employed roles at a local factory. Given the expense and long duration of such a project and the volume of data collection required, its is vital that significant benefits are delivered to these communities to maintain support and properly compensate for participation.

In Nabobo-Baba first step of the Vanua Research Framework, na navunavuci (conceptualisaton) Nabobo-Baba combines the theoretical framing of the project with the seeking of research permissions (Nabobo-Baba, 2010: 146). In terms of attaining initial consent from "chiefs, leaders of the researched community, and from the appropriate government institute or body" which in this instance means the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, the project is advantaged by engaging a leading Fijian social scientist from the area to co-lead the project. As such, consent-seeking is facilitated by a cultural broker (Coxon et al., 2002; see also Fitzpatrick et al., 2016) which provides space for frank communication between the community and research team, at both formal

and informal levels. This is important for enabling the prompt raising of concerns, or the expressing of non-consent, which may otherwise be difficult to glean by cultural outsiders. Local knowledge at the point of initial conception has also provided on-the-ground expertise of local histories and human geographies not available elsewhere, such as regarding the religious and ethnic make-up of the informal settlements.

After official consent is attained and 'preparations' made (na vakavakarau) (Nabobo-Baba, 2010: 146), including arranging convenient dates for a first visit, a sevusevu will be performed (Meo-Sewabu, 2014) where the primary researchers' language proficiency will allow for fuller participation in customary protocols. Following the presentation of yaqona for village contexts (this may not be appropriate, however, in settings where Pentecostalism predominates), and the donation of a substantial community gift (e.g. a diesel generator), local researchers, in tandem with the authors, will brief the community about the intended research, and ask the community of the kinds of research they would like to see done by the researchers. These first steps aim to privilege informants' interests, which are likely to emphasise issues around social justice and empowerment (Lovo et al., 2021; Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). Below we describe how this project allows locally relevant concerns to emerge. We also anticipate, however, that novel community concerns will be raised during our initial talanoa (Halapua, 2000; Vaioleti, 2006) and these will be integrated into the data collection.

This project employs network analysis to understand, document and communicate the multiple exchange relationships and communities in one area of Fiji. Social network analyses are most informative when all people (called nodes in a network) are included in the research. Initial work entails mapping the geographic layout of the households of the four communities as proximity is a significant variable affecting cooperation. This mapping process also allows the researchers to create relationships with everyone in the communities. Alongside kinship mapping, ethnographic interviews will collect demographic data (household composition, ages, reproductive histories) and researchers will take photographs of all adult members of the community. Photographs will help researchers to associate names with faces, and be used in subsequent data collection. Following best practice guidelines, in addition to consent-seeking at the group level, the solicitation of informed consent will be repeated for each consulted household (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016; Lovo et al., 2021; Meo-Sewabu, 2014), and compensation for community members time will take the form of locally appropriate foodstuffs such as breakfast crackers, tinned fish, or powdered milk.

In order to identify vectors of locally relevant instances of cooperation (Jaeggi et al. 2016), small samples of randomly selected participants from each community (10 men, 10 women; n=80) will be asked to freelist (Weller and Romney, 1988) all of the forms of cooperation and support they have given and received in the past month. We anticipate that food, labour, money, other material goods, and childcare will be frequently exchanged, but we also expect other categories of valued exchange to become apparent during our systematic coding of these data. Other questions will ask about the different types of non-material support and advice given and received. These methods allow for locally appropriate networks of exchange and support to emerge from open-ended ethnographic techniques.

Networks will be created through the "name generator" approach (Isakov et al., 2019; Power, 2018; Power and Ready, 2018) in which participants are asked to provide the names of people who have provided them with different types of cooperation and support in the past month, as well as lists of the people who they have helped, along the culturally salient dimensions uncovered in earlier data gathering. Because Fijian society is highly gender segregated (Shaver and Sosis, 2014), we expect different network dynamics for each sex. For example, men are more likely to cooperate with men, and to exchange labour in each other's fields; women are more likely to cooperate with women and exchange ceremonial woven mats (Hulkenberg, Tarabe, and Ryle, 2021; Shaver, 2012). Along with local survey teams, we will interview the male and female heads of each household (N ~ 1,000) to assess gender differences in the composition of social networks as well as differences in the resources and social support exchanged according to ethnicity, kinship membership, gender, religion and status. For this project, we will build networks based upon reported cooperation and different forms of social connection (e.g., who one asks for advice, who one receives food from), and among different potential communities, such as among genders, families, neighbours and among religious denominations.

As one that seeks to document social change, this project is necessarily longitudinal, which, as a form of research in the Asia-Pacific, has been mostly concerned with public health (Yoddumnern-Attig et al., 2009). Network data will be collected at three intervals, each separated by one year. This requirement of repeated and prolonged visits to local communities over a period of several years will help establish enduring personal relationships, built on and informed by local norms of respect and reciprocity and immersion in the community (Bennett et al., 2013; Putt, 2013). It is only through researchers committing to these extended time-frames that such relationships can be fostered (Nabobo-Baba, 2010; Tecun et al., 2018; Vaioleti, 2013). Over this time, people may change religions, get married, have children, go through hardship, move and/or their circumstances may change in a variety of ways. All of these changes may impact a person's network and their relative standing in the community, and it is by engaging informants on personal terms, in addition to the provision of locally relevant compensation at each repeat household visit, that we hope community members will consent to share their time and stories with us.

The latter stages of the research process, following data collection, are when statistical techniques can begin to map out how global forces and ideologies, such as Pentecostalism, affect Pacific relationality. In this regard, they offer communities the 'hard statistics' for communicating existential concerns of social decline, which, when otherwise discussed as narrative or metaculture (Tomlinson, 2009), may struggle for recognition in bureaucratic public policy circles. In our analysis and evaluation of data we will model the extent to which religious involvement, after assessing and adjusting for status, is associated with the number of cooperative partners (network ties), reciprocal exchanges, and unidirectional exchanges. These models will examine the flow of specific resources, as well as total resource flows, and a person's position in a social network. These models will therefore measure the degree of inequality within networks. We will also examine how religious affiliation and involvement impacts inequality in a network, within the larger village or settlement community, and crucially, the effect of affiliation on overall cohesion within the community. Models will also explicitly document

different networks of relationality, and determine predictors for those people in the network who are more central in terms of bridges between subgroups, which individuals have the most influence on others in the network, and whose influence on the network is the most broad.

At milestone dates and at the project's conclusion, data visualisations of networks, and how they change over time, will be presented to community members for their feedback and interpretation. We hope such milestones will help carry momentum through the project's course and build accountability into the research processes (Nabobo-Baba, 2010: 145). At the close of the project and the final presentation of the research findings, a period Nabobo-Baba labels the vakarogotaki lesu tale (Nabobo-Baba, 2010: 147), further talanoa will seek to learn from the community's own interpretations of the results. This wil be done in advance of publications so that we can incorporate local insights into complex social phenomena, while local researchers will be asked to contribute to, and be supported in, the writing of articles for publications. This desire for greater support in publishing research was expressed to us in our preliminary fieldwork, and this will stand as one of several benchmarks for evaluating the project's delivery of local benefit. Dynamic social networks will also be available on our project's webpage (https://www.fijiannetworks.org), and this will allow for accessible and interactive engagement, in visual form, with the shifting patterns in Fijian social relationality.

The concluding step of Nabobo-Baba's framework, me vakilai/me na i vurevure ni veisau se na vie ka e vou ka na kata mai an bula e sauta (transformative processes/change as a result of research reports), tallies with the third and final stage in Konai Helu Thaman's Kakala framework: the provision of tangible beneficial effects from the research for the consulted community (Nabobo-Baba, 2010: 148; Thaman, 1997). While we confirm our openness to the research's outcomes being shaped by the communities themselves – who will know better than we do regarding how to best deploy the information this project will construct – we offer two briefly sketched outcomes that can address issues that we already know to be core community concerns.

First, practices of reciprocity and sharing are a source of ethnic pride across Indigenous Fijian communites. Prominent cultural values of loloma (loving kindness) and vakaturaga (chiefliness) and practices of solesolevaka (working together) are held integral to cakacaka vakavanua (acting in accordance to the way of the land) and the vaka iTaukei (the Fijian way) (Ravuvu, 1987). Indigenous Fijians take seriously their stewardship of these cooperative institutions, and in everyday discourse lament how bula vaka ilavo (the life of money) (Presterudstuen, 2014) threatens the demise of these venerable institutions (Tomlinson, 2009). This research provides a means to depict these cultural values, while also promising tangible and targeted data for addressing experiences of cultural change.

Second, Fijians are also keenly aware of how polarising rhetorics can flow out from and feed inter-denomination Christian division. Indeed, the success of the now defunct Asssembly of Christian Churches of Fiji (ACCF) – a rival ecumenical body to the Fiji Council of Churches that sought to reconcile the national Methodist Church with Pentecostal churches – in part lay with the opportunites

it gave Fijians to participate in activities across churches, particularly for ex-Methodists to re-engage with village community events (Newland, 2006). When absent of active provocation, and despite countervailing institutional pressures, there are substantive norms of good will and accommodation across Fiji's different religious groups (Norton, 1990; Reeves, Vakatora, and Lal, 1996; Trnka, 2008; White, 2020). Using graphics software to digitally visualise community social networks (though with identities anonymised), made accessible to the communities they map, and to the public at large, can assist community leaders with drawing attention to the assistance and care that crosses religious boundaries. It will also record patterns of community support in informal settlements that can be overlooked in state-led rehousing initiatives (Hamdi, 1995). This is especially salient when such networks may be assumed as absent because of a settlement's ethnic diversity.

Conclusion

One of the founding scholars of Pacific Reseach Methodologies, Manulani Meyer, stated with reference to Pacific researchers and communities, "we simply see, hear, feel, taste and smell the world differently" (Meyer, 2001: 125). This principle simultaneously helps to explain why cognitive, behavioural and social scientists are coming to Pacific shores to conduct research, and why their analyses can be so incongruous, misrepresentative and even distressing for local audiences. Western researchers have just begun to attempt to account for centuries of inappropriate methods and questionable practices. For real change to occur, Western researchers must fundamentally alter their methods and practices in order to better align these different worldviews and engender mutual respect.

Here we take seriously the de-individualised and highly relational Fijian social world and choose methods that follow from this recognition. The important questions about Pentecostalism – and the ones we feel are most important to Pacific communities – have yet to be fully addressed because of a default tendency in standard ethnographic methods to privilege individual perspectives and accounts in such research. While such qualitative research is vital for understanding the lived experience of transformative social change in the Pacific, we suggest network analysis can capture and explain this change in a way directly relevant to the relational ontologies of Pacific peoples. Morever, by co-constructing new data that quantifies shifting relational practices, this research does not merely report on local experiences of social change, but collaborates with communities to clearly map out its currents, establishing new means by which it can be visualised and navigated. With this approach, moreover, we recognise that Fijian religion is not reducible to supernatural belief, but is intricately embedded in the moral, material, ritual and kinship connections that tie the community together. It is from this approach that we can start to understand, document and create conversations about the multivate and changing webs of relationality that characterise Fijian social life. Additionally we have drawn from Nabobo-Baba's research framework not only because these map out important ethical principles for conducting research in Fiji, but also because in contextualising our research within this approach we best ensure the veracity and comprehensiveness of our data. Though once again, we happily note this as a case of 'and/both' rather than 'either/or'! We also recognise that these efforts must be part of a continuous process of decolonalising our research practices, and that this can only be achieved through active listening to Indigenous experiences and critiques of Western research. To

this end, we are both indebted to all the members of the Pacific Thought Network based at the University of Otago for being privileged to join in their lively monthly discussions, which we add, have never been anything but profoundly welcoming to two kai valagi. Vinaka vakalevu sara ga.

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