

## **Promoting widening participation and its social value amongst Pacific people in Australia**

**Jioji Ravulo\***

University of Wollongong

**Shannon Said**

University of Wollongong

**Jim Micsko**

Western Sydney University

**Gayl Purchase**

Western Sydney University

### **Abstract**

Pacific people in Australia are less likely to access university due to structural disadvantages, including isolation from the dominant culture; the overlapping nexus between low socio-economic status and race; and cultural expectations. The PATHE (Pasifika Achievement To Higher Education) program addresses this inequity by a range of interactive student workshops and on-campus visits, support meetings, peer mentoring sessions, and a yearly conference. This paper analyses the effectiveness of the PATHE program through online and paper surveys. The program's effectiveness was then evaluated utilising the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodological framework. The methodology assigns a financial proxy to the impacts and places participants at the centre of the research process. The results showed the PATHE program is appropriate, effective and efficient. Critically, Pasifika students reported an increased understanding of how further education and training can help their future, an increased confidence to go onto further study, increased interest in university and a deeper understanding of how to use time appropriately to cater for study. The success of the PATHE program is demonstrated by the SROI ratio (represented as a return in dollar value, for every dollar invested), which equated to \$4.93 for every \$1 spent on the program.

**Keywords:** higher education, Māori and Pacific Islander students, structural disadvantage, social barriers.

---

\*Corresponding author: Jioji Ravulo, University of Wollongong, [jioji@uow.edu.au](mailto:jioji@uow.edu.au)

---

## Introduction

Widening participation (WP) departments across many universities are responsible for engaging with local schools and communities throughout outreach, and seek to raise aspirations for local school students to attend further education and training. A key focus of many widening participation programs is engaging with ethnic minority groups in low socio-economically defined areas across Australia. Pacific populations within the region this research project took place in form considerably large diaspora communities from Pacific nations (Ravulo, 2015). Indigenous students – in this context those First Nations peoples from Australia, New Zealand Māori and the Pacific – have unique epistemological and ontological ways of interpreting the world that need to be valued if more effective engagement with these minority communities is to be achieved (Buckmiller, 2017). Models that seek to understand Māori and Pacific Islander epistemologies and ontologies are more potent in delivering services that are relevant to these target groups (Faleolo, 2009, 2013; Tuafuti, 2011; Gunther et al., 2009; Tamasese, et al., 2005; Tamasese, 2002). Champagne (2006: 161) argues that where “home culture is not valued; some Native students will have little or no motivation to participate or succeed in education”. Where a non-recognition of culture and cultural realities is consistent, it can lead to what Mihesuah (2004) calls “internalized colonization” – believing that the dominant culture is “superior, accepting negative stereotypes [and] not questioning [them]” (ibid: 164). Correspondingly, there are cultural differences and ideological clashes emerging along the fault lines of individualistic versus collectivist paradigms of selfhood and autonomy, religious affiliations and practices in the homeland and the new land, and community-based expectations of behaviour, which often affect migrant students’ socialisation within their peer groups and in educational institutions (Talbani and Hasanali, 2000; Huang, Teo, and Yeoh, 2000).

The reality of being from a migrant background can have an impact upon the institutions selected by these students, as some desire to be in contexts that are not predominantly White, so as to feel more culturally understood (Ball, Reay and David, 2002). Engaging these students therefore demands a greater awareness of what it means to be Indigenous, which can be ascertained only through ongoing dialogue and engagement with the needs of such students and their communities. Within the school context, there are some students who are on the “educational exclusion of the ‘dead zone’ of the widening university participation agenda” (Harwood et al., 2013: 26), and the thought of going to university is not simply “a far-fetched idea, it is a topic of abjection” (ibid). According to this understanding, there is often a ‘we’ in higher education – those students that are assumed to be engaged in education, and thereby assumed to be reached by widening participation programs. In reality, connections that build aspiration between students and parents “need to occur at varying points along the experience of education...if participating in university education is to be reached or maintained” (Harwood et al., 2013: 26), especially for those from migrant and low-socioeconomic backgrounds.

## Expectations and higher education

Familial and cultural expectations are present for students both in school and at university, where the demands of family, amongst others, can be compounded by health, financial hardship, and other factors that affect a student’s ability to maintain their studies (Andres and Carpenter, 1997: 31). Additionally, the likelihood of dropping out increases where students do not feel integrated with the university system as a social and educational setting (Spady, cited in ibid: 12). The processes of integration are affected by family background and the “influences, expectations and demands” (ibid) that derive from these. Integration is understood by Tinto (cited in ibid: 14) to be a combination of academic performance alongside “positive interaction with peers and faculty and involvement in extracurricular activity” (ibid). Social integration can also be of detriment to study, with Pascarella, Smart and Ethington (1986) maintaining that students with “high affiliation needs” often drop out earlier than others (ibid: 16). Overall, then, elements of one’s background combine with those of the institution to afford successful access and transition within the first and second years of university study (ibid).

## Cultural identities and socio-economic status

Alongside the need to engage from a socio-cultural perspective, many from Māori and Pacific populations are situated in low-SES areas across the region where this research took place – greater Western Sydney] (Ravulo, 2015). Doyle (2011) argues that university students from these areas have different needs compared to other students. For example, Loveday (2016) investigates how shame impacts upon students from low SES status in the UK, and shows that shame can be used as an intentional practice that reinforces a sense of socio-economic inequality through low expectations being ‘seeped into’ students through condescending staff-to-student interactions (1146).

Often, assessments of SES status do not take into consideration the import of “factors such as age, ethnicity, indigeneity, and rurality” (Rubin et al., 2014: 196) and the subjective implications of low SES status – that is, how the student perceives their own socio-economic status, and this perception’s impact upon how the student engages with education (ibid). Where objective measures are present to determine low SES, they “need to be benchmarked and interpreted relative to population-based standards” (ibid: 197), which are often difficult to establish.

There is an awareness that students from middle- and upper-class families are typically afforded the skills and cultural capital that “schools reward” (Davies and Guppy, cited in Edgerton and Roberts, 2014: 198). Thus, “socioeconomic advantage translates into academic advantage” (ibid). As a result of having this ‘cultural capital’, those from higher SES backgrounds are better able to orient themselves to engage with higher education, as their parents understand the “‘rules of the game’ or ‘logic of practice’” (ibid), thereby passing down “relevant institutional contexts, processes, and expectations” (Rubin et al., 2014: 196). In this way, the current education system is understood to reinforce “socioeconomic inequality” (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014: 193), as the system is ostensibly based upon “gifts or merit” (ibid), but in reality, these forms of cultural capital keep those from higher SES backgrounds in greater stead to be able to access and gain the maximum benefits from higher education.

PATHE is widening participation and engagement program within the Office of Widening Participation at Western Sydney University. PATHE seeks to engage with Māori and Pacific Islander students’ cultural, emotional and social practices, celebrating their cultural heritages, and thereby promoting access to, progression, completion and transition from university studies into professional careers. This is achieved through three components of the program:

1. ongoing student support
2. outreach programs to over 60 schools across Western Sydney, and...
3. projects that bring together students, staff, community members and academics to celebrate Māori and Pasifika cultures at the University.

This article will provide an evaluation of how the PATHE model engages with all stakeholder groups in a holistic fashion, and share reflections on how the stakeholders have perceived the social impact of the program.

## Methodology

The PATHE program draws upon the perspectives of students, parents, teachers, WP internal staff and academics, as well as community group leaders. An appropriate methodology to evaluate the program would not only consider the monetary (cost-benefit) analysis impact of the program, but also the stories of those who have taken part within it. The Social Return On Investment (SROI) methodology seeks to do exactly that, as it measures social impact of projects and how stakeholders (participants) shape the outcomes of these evaluation, determining what has been most valuable based on their needs and their context.

Salverda (n.d.) acknowledges that this methodology seeks to understand social impact through various factors – economic, social, environmental, and others (paragraph 1). This holistic treatment of change shows if the project has been beneficial to the communities that have engaged with it (ibid), and seeks to enrich the lives and communities therein. As such, the participants determine what this impact is, and the methodology therefore places them in the middle of this research approach, based on quantitative and qualitative data being collected and analysed.

Each step of the methodology will now be expounded, to show how the principles of SROI highlight the effectiveness of the program. For the purpose of this analysis, steps two and three have been inverted, so that questions asked in the data collection flow chronologically.

### **Step one: involve stakeholders**

The PATHE program has been running since 2012, and is a unique program within the Office of Widening Participation at Western Sydney University. Apart from regular engagement with the 8 primary schools and 58 high schools in its portfolio, the program also offers access, retention, progression and transition to work support for the more than 1400 Pacific students that study at Western Sydney University<sup>1</sup>. The program includes a range of interactive student workshops and on-campus visits, support meetings, peer mentoring sessions, and a yearly conference. Three partnering high schools took part in the data collection and analysis phase of this research project, with all students being in either year 9 or 10, stated as 7-10 to keep with the categories established for the survey.

Participants completed either a paper survey (high school students and student ambassadors) or an online survey (all other groups). Questions asked in the survey pertained to personal background (gender, year, age group), if their parents attended university, if parents encourage university attendance, as well as the best parts of the PATHE program, and what they learned from it. Three matrix response (a lot, somewhat, a little, not sure) questions were asked around what participant groups considered important from a range of school and career-oriented questions, as well as what had improved and changed as a result of engaging with the program. In total, 35 survey responses were collated, with a strong qualitative focus upon the impact of the program.

It is important to note that the majority of respondents were female, as one of the participating schools was an all-girls school. Close to half of this group did not have parents who attended university, which is known to be the single most important influence when it comes to higher education access by young people (Spiegler and Bednarek, 2013). It should also be noted that, despite this relatively low level of university attendance by parents, more than 75% strongly encouraged their children to attend university, whilst 22.22% did not really do so. For high school students, then, the PATHE program is engaging either with parents that aspire for their children to attend university, or is providing a bridge between school and further study for students who do not receive this encouragement at home.

Stakeholder responses to two qualitative questions are now considered:

What are the best parts of being involved in the PATHE program?

### **Years 7 – 10**

Student responses to this question highlighted how they were exposed to other Māori and Pacific Islander high school and university students who had experienced similar life circumstances, which fostered a sense of self-

---

<sup>1</sup> As per Western Sydney University 2017, enrolment records, which as a result of the PATHE program, now asks students if they are Māori or Pacific Islander when enrolling. Although Māori and Pacific Islanders are not considered the same, in Australia, these cohorts are considered in New South Wales as Pacific communities.

belief and hope that future education could be a viable option for them. Other students talked about how they liked meeting new people, meeting Pacific role models through the PATHE program, and learning how to achieve their goals and being exposed to new kinds of knowledge. The importance of this bridge-building across different educational and cultural spheres cannot be overemphasised, as it is often the case that Pacific students' socio-cultural backgrounds and life experiences are quite different to those from the dominant culture. Having role models and support systems in place that understand these challenges, fundamentally sets PATHE apart as unique in its service delivery for these students, and demonstrates that it is therefore meeting a specific and necessary function amongst its communities.

## **Teachers**

Teachers were encouraged to realise the impact of engaging with PATHE student ambassadors and how cultural similarities led to information being retained at a much deeper and more meaningful level by students. One teacher stated that:

Students really engaged by having presenters from Pacific Island backgrounds deliver the workshop.

Additionally, PATHE's models of engagement have the potential to serve as templates when Pacific students may be seen by teachers as not engaging fully in their work, by encouraging diversity in delivery methods and teaching styles.

## **Community members**

Community members were encouraged by the fact that PATHE engages students in early conversations around the importance of accessing higher education, as well as the ability to use the program as a referral for potential Pacific students in their own communities. The grassroots approach of the program was also highlighted, which made engagement fluid and organic from a community/school perspective.

## **Project officers**

Project Officers valued the ability to walk alongside Pacific students' journeys throughout their time at university, change perceptions of the role and impact of higher education, and discuss issues that affect Pacific Island nations today, such as climate change.

A project officer considered the change in students' attitudes before and after an event, where:

Some of the students are quite reluctant to participate because university isn't really something that they have thought about but after our sessions we have a number of students change this idea that they cannot be more than what they are told by parents, family, friends, and in some cases schools.

Attitudes towards higher education are therefore being challenged through the PATHE program, as well as work that is highly collaborative in nature; and many different members of Pacific communities engage with the program, which is one of its greatest strengths.

## **PATHE students**

PATHE university students valued the fact that there was a dedicated team ready to help them with issues that they face, and that these issues are understood at a cultural level. They also highlighted the importance of having a social platform that celebrated Pacific culture, and lent itself as a means of meeting "other Pasifika students

whom [sic] were on the same journey as you”. This combination of educational aspiration building alongside cultural affirmation and support is another unique aspect of the PATHE program, and has proven to be very helpful to students that have engaged with it.

## **Student ambassador**

Student ambassadors were grateful for the ability to engage with their cultural communities and help them in seeing education as a “viable avenue”, as well as providing relevant work experience that will assist them in future. One student commented that:

I was able to meet other students from the Pacific Islands and felt like I was part of a community. There was also a lot of support provided by fellow ambassadors and PATHE coordinators.

The connection to culture for this student was not a superfluous addition to their studies, but rather created an atmosphere that encouraged the advancement of study through culture.

The second qualitative question will now be considered: What did you learn from being involved in the PATHE program?

## **Year 7-10 students**

School students learned many things as a result of the program, including:

That anything is possible through Christ and surround yourself with friends who reach your destination.

That for Pacific Islanders you can make it to university.

A key aspect of Pacific identity is faith, and for many students and ambassadors, this is something that is part of their worldview and therefore has appeared here. Whilst PATHE does not promote a particular religious outlook, it does promote Pacific epistemological and ontological engagement, which often is Christian for some of its participants and facilitators. Other students mentioned the importance of hard work, which leads to one’s dreams being realised. These considerations show that the program not only bolsters aspirations towards educational attainment, but also affirms cultural identity through self-belief, spiritual affirmation and motivation towards achieving one’s goals, whether or not university is a part of one’s future plan and direction.

## **Teachers**

Teachers consider it important:

To have young presenters from a similar cultural background deliver the workshops to students. I witnessed first-hand the respect and connection between students and presenters.

PATHE is therefore instructive around how to engage meaningfully with Pacific students, and participation in the workshops creates a reference point that teachers can use to motivate Pacific students throughout their school careers.

## Community participants

Community participants highlighted how imperative it is to work together, and that only when working collaboratively will there be success. Another stated:

That we need to invest more in outreach culture specific forums, groups to reach out and impact our PI community and young people.

A combined effort to engage Pacific communities in the processes of learning and aspiring for better educational outcomes is therefore being advocated by the program.

## Project officer

There is a clear recognition of the fact that Māori and Pacific Islander students need more support at university due to family expectations that are placed upon them that may be foreign to students from other cultures. General administrative and other services are typically engaged with far less by Pacific students, as they “do not respond to being referred to services they are not comfortable with”. It was also stated by one project officer that students feel “ashamed to ask” such services to help them.

There is a considerable cultural gap between the services offered by the university, which inherently assume a level of self-confidence present in university students, and the lived socio-cultural experiences of some Māori and Pacific Island students. As such, project officers are attempting to bridge two worlds when engaging students with such services, which can be perplexing and fraught with challenges, but also inspiring when students come to understand their own sense of agency and self-determination, which may not be realised at all without the presence of PATHE and like programs.

## PATHE students

PATHE students considered the importance of the program being a resource and information service, which benefits students in their courses and helps to “get them to graduate”. Paid work through the program helped to professionalise skills for job readiness, and social activities for Pacific students fosters social cohesion. One student stated that their confidence was built through the fortnightly meetings, whilst another shared that the program taught them:

To work hard, to always ask for assistance if I need it.

Correlating with the need for Pacific student assistance, this student considers that the PATHE program does in fact bridge the gap between the daunting experience that is venturing into university life, and the life that Pacific people live in their homes (i.e. their cultural settings). The support offered through the program is reassuring for these students, and bolsters their confidence toward progression and completion of their studies.

## Student ambassador

Pasifika people are a minority in the education sector... [PATHE] has given me insight as to how I can instil the importance and value of education & learning amongst my people...

As a result of engaging with the program, ambassadors are learning to value their culture, and are also deciphering the skills and abilities they require for personal success in their chosen fields, whilst maintaining

the goal of collective success for their communities, which is realised as they themselves become individually successful. The program is therefore meeting a plethora of needs through its current modes of delivery, and is set to continue to bolster aspirations towards further education and training for years to come.

## **Step two: value the things that matter**

How important are the following to you?

Stakeholders were then asked to respond to a series of questions. Each of the questions asked for an evaluative response to the question; the key findings for each stakeholder group are discussed below.

## **Years 7-10**

Completing their Higher School Certificate was considered important by all participants in this group. Getting into a job one is passionate about was similarly responded to very positively, alongside supporting one's family. The altruistic focus of this group is again not surprising, given the collectivist cultural focus that is the norm amongst not only Māori and Pacific Islander cultures, but also with students from lower socio-economic statuses. As with most high school students, there is a constant focus on time management, and no less within this group. Part of the cultural ethos and understanding inherent in the program is the desire to support one's family, and, as with any widening participation program, the need to balance time in order to be successful.

## **Teachers**

Teachers' considerations were around students completing year 12, going to university, TAFE/college, and getting a traineeship or apprenticeship, getting a job one is passionate about, and being able to balance study, family and other commitments alongside paid work commitments. Teachers were open to students progressing to any form of further education and training, which differed from student considerations. Teachers also considered it important that students maintain their commitment to activities outside of school, showing that they are wanting students to maintain other interests for their wellbeing, with a lesser emphasis on supporting the family financially.

## **Community participants**

Again, this group considered it important that students finish year 12, get a job they are passionate about, and balance study and family commitments alongside work. They considered all forms of further education and training – university, TAFE/college and getting an apprenticeship/traineeship – as important for Pacific students as well.

## **Project officers**

This group considered it most important for students to complete their year 12 studies, get a job they are passionate about, and balance study, family and other commitments. They considered access to TAFE/college and apprenticeships and trainees as important, though not as important as the aforementioned. This is not surprising, given that their roles include encouraging students to pursue university study, which is their context and therefore a more primary focus, followed by admissions to other forms of further education and training.



## **PATHE students**

Students completing school by finishing year 12, and then going to university, alongside getting a job they are passionate about and supporting their families, were all responded with 100% 'a lot', as were the needs to balance study, family and other commitments with study and paid employment.

## **Student ambassadors**

As with PATHE students, ambassadors responded quite broadly to which categories are most important, namely completion of year 12, students going to university and also TAFE/college, students getting a job they are passionate about, and students being able to balance study and paid commitments.

As a result of being in the Fast Forward program, the following areas have improved/changed.

The two final questions of the survey were used to determine the outcomes for each stakeholder group. The responses to these questions were stated as 'a lot', 'somewhat', 'not really' and 'not sure'; and they reflect the degree of change that the PATHE program has instigated for these stakeholder groups. Many of the responses showed multiple outcomes for each group, highlighting the fact that the PATHE program is engaging with a range of needs that are otherwise not addressed by other support networks, including family, friends and schools, in a way that is of the same level of import as the program.

## **Years 7-10**

This group stated that PATHE had taught them to balance time appropriately for homework and study most of all, followed by an understanding of the importance of higher education and training on their futures, and greater interest in going to university. They are now more comfortable with going onto a university campus as a result of the program, and are more motivated in general to attend university. A vast array of aspirations are therefore being realised by the PATHE program for these students, underscoring the unique work and outcomes of the program.

## **Teachers**

The four most significant impacts were shown to be student interest in university study and comfort on campus increasing, alongside them having more confidence to talk to their parents about university, and an increase in motivation to attend it. Other areas of improvement, though lesser than those mentioned, were students' understanding of how to get into university and TAFE/college, their understanding of the impact that further education and training can have on their future, prioritising time to fulfil the requirements of their school careers, and becoming more familiar with how a university operates. These outcomes are diverse, showing how the program is addressing multiple needs at once through its unique service delivery.

## **Community participants**

Students' confidence to engage with further study, their understanding of the benefits of higher education and their comfort when on campus, were the most significant areas of change for this group. Community participants have emphasised the more macro outcomes of PATHE, and how these translate into increased aspirations for Pacific young people.

## **Project officers**

Project officers described how students had more confidence and more interest, and were more comfortable in relation to going to and being at university, as well as an understanding of how to access it. Students came to understand how further education can improve their future, how to manage their time efficiently, and how a university operates. These skills equip these Pacific young people to have goals, and to realise that assistance is available for them in further education; and empowers them to make decisions that promote a sense of autonomy and passion for future learning and/or employment.

## **PATHE students**

This stakeholder group had a large number of outcomes – ten in total – and this reflects that the program deeply impacted their journey as a support and cultural network. A greater sense of confidence was developed through PATHE, as well as interest in finding out more about going to university, the importance of tertiary education upon their futures, how to use time appropriately for homework and study, and feeling more comfortable on campus. They also spoke of how the program made them more familiar with university services, gave them more confidence to talk to parents about university, become more motivated to attend university, gain a better understanding of access and the functions of university generally. These outcomes, taken together, equate to a greater sense of confidence and autonomy for PATHE students, showing that the program is creating an effective and culturally responsive conduit between the desires of students and their ability to transition into higher education successfully.

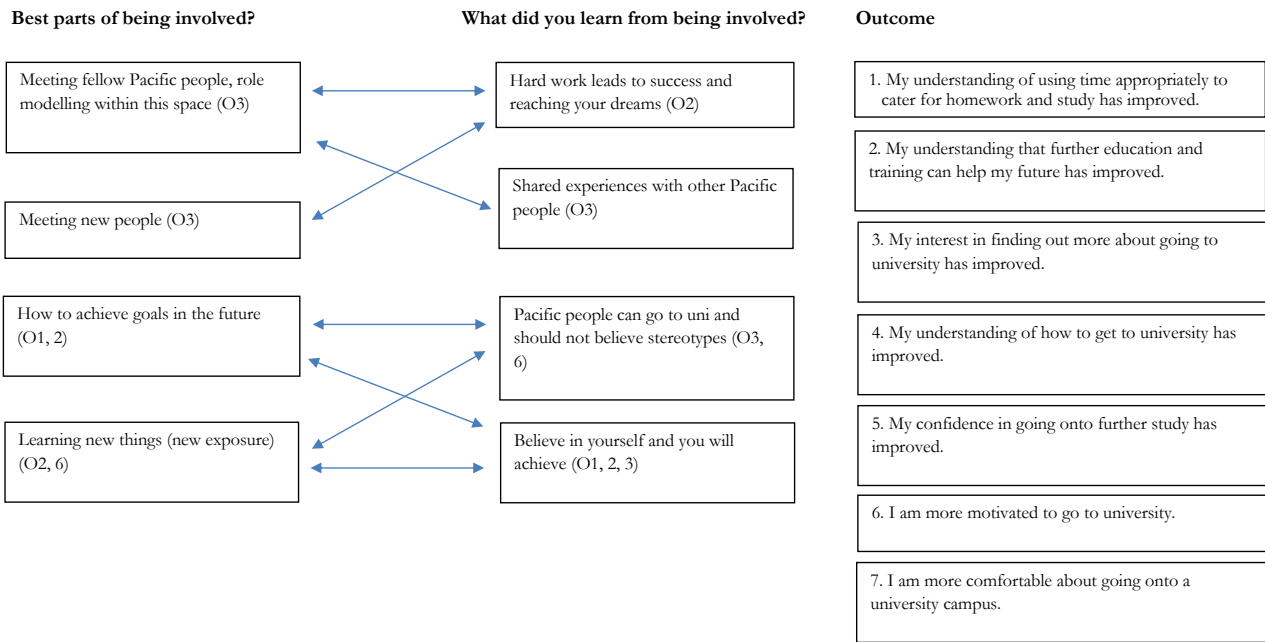
## **Student ambassadors**

Students' understanding of how to get into university, its benefits for their futures, their ability to balance time for homework and study, and confidence to talk to parents about university all increased as a result of PATHE, from the perspectives of the Ambassadors. The program also transmitted understanding of how to access TAFE/college, inspired interest in finding out more about going to and motivation to attend university, increased confidence to want to do so, and made them more familiar with the services available there. These diverse responses show that PATHE is engaging Pacific young people in meaningful ways that are being translated into gainful understandings and knowledge that equip these young people to make informed decisions about their futures.

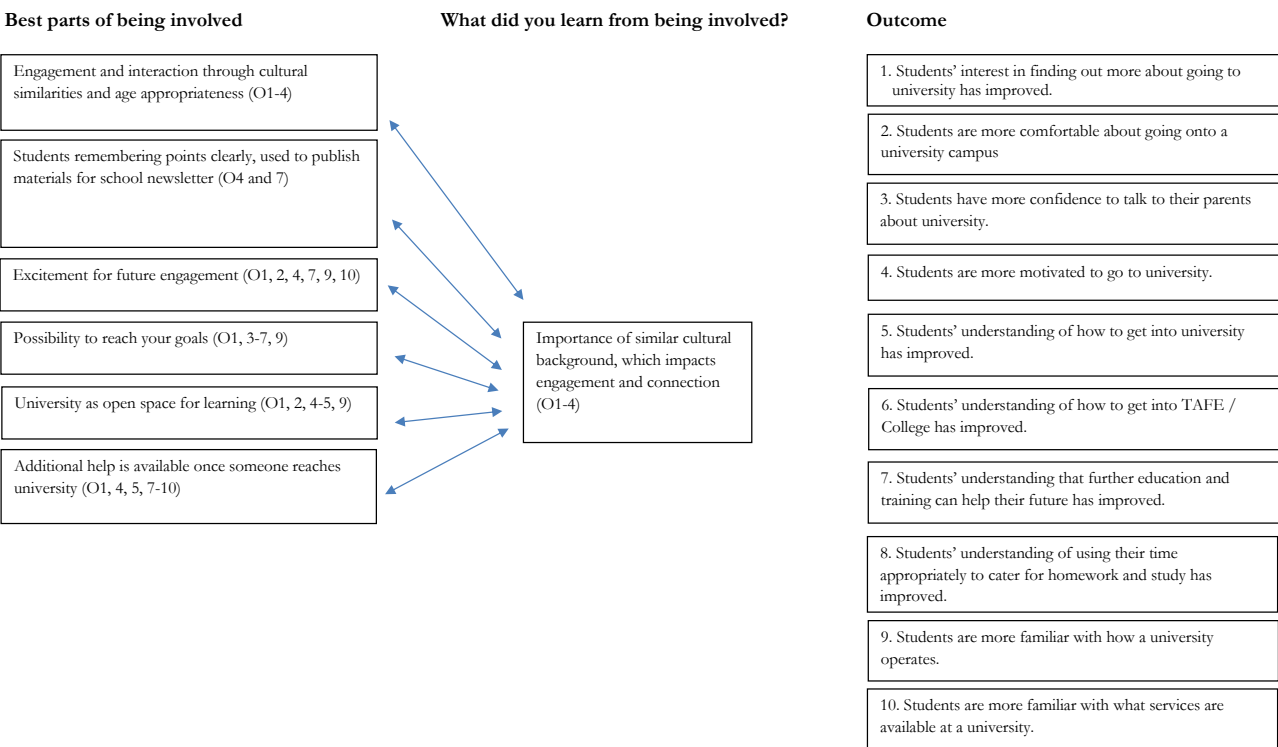
## **Step three: understand what changes**

The following figures present these changes in graphic form, known in SROI as theories of change, and in another context as program logic. Related concepts between the first and the second qualitative questions are shown by arrows; these concepts are then connected to the aforementioned outcomes, creating a link between qualitative and quantitative data. In the below figures, 'O' is short for outcome.

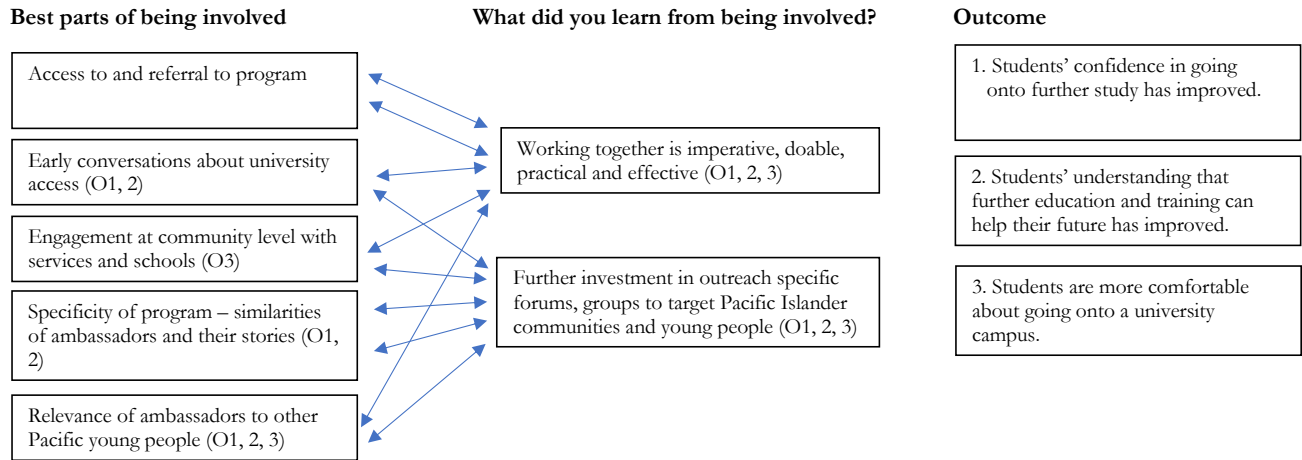
**Figure 1: Years 7-10 theory of change**



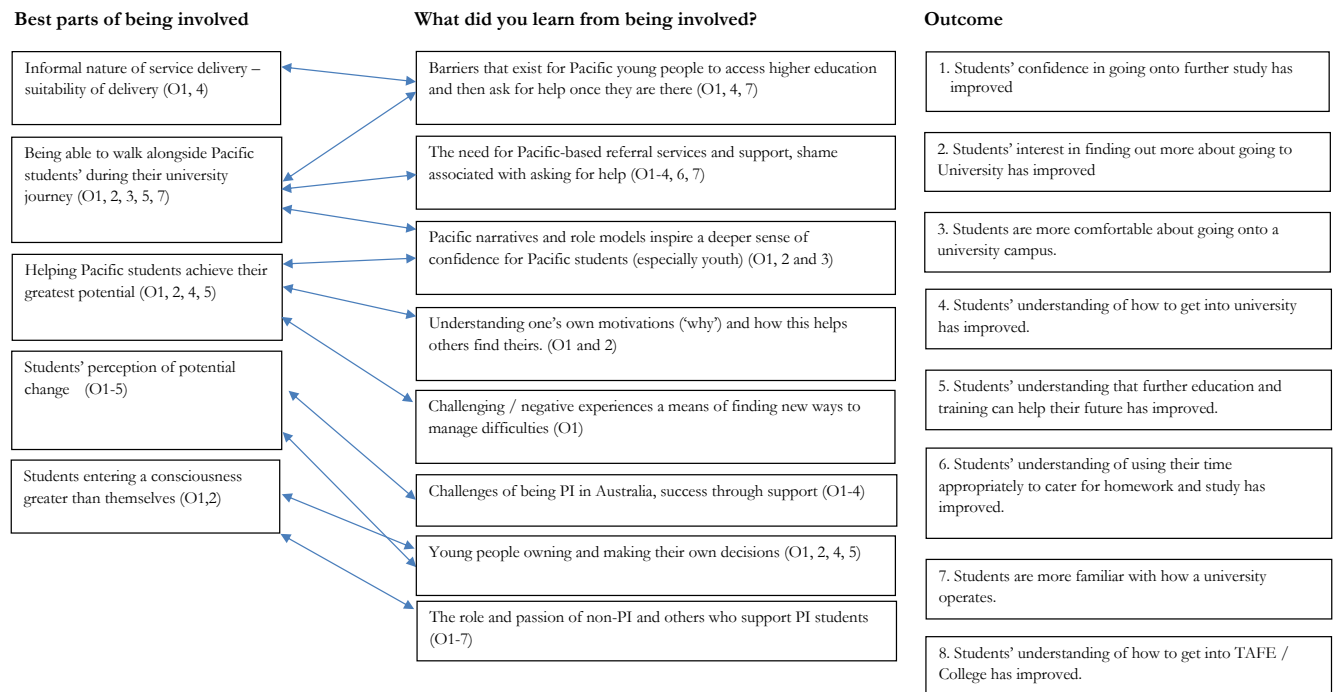
**Figure 2: Teacher theory of change**



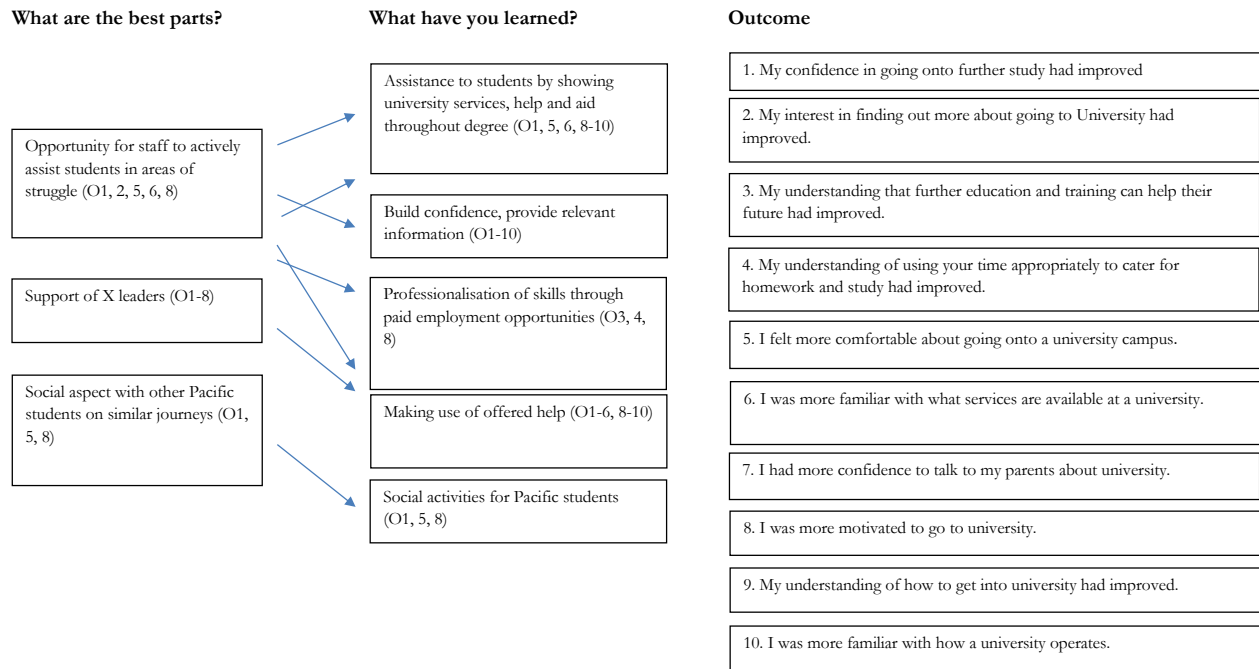
**Figure 3: Community participants' theory of change**



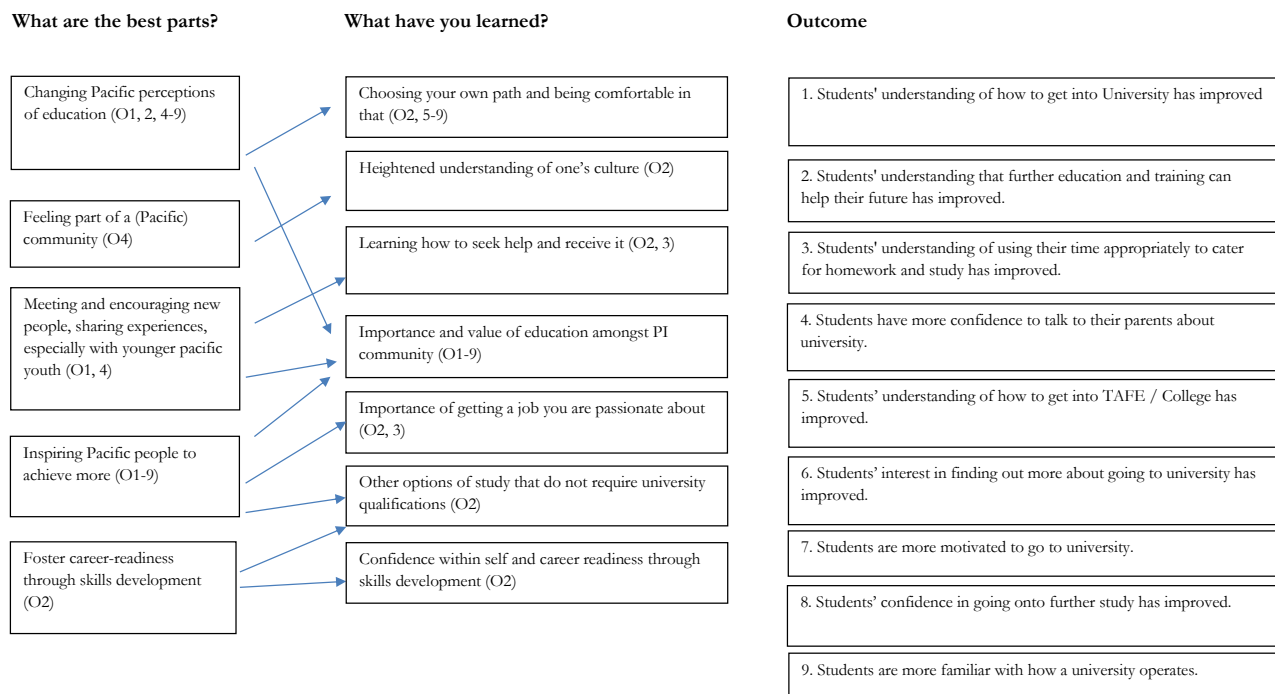
**Figure 4: Project officer theory of change**



**Figure: 5 PATHE students' theory of change**



**Figure 6: Student ambassadors' theory of change**



## Step four: only include what is material

A monetary measure was allocated to each outcome, seeking to monetise the things that have changed as a result of the PATHE program. The financial proxies that were used to do so are stated in Table One below. The logic behind these attributions is linking the affect change (motivation, comfort, increased understanding) to a monetary reality with its associated cost. For example, feeling more comfortable about going onto a university campus was linked to the price of clothing (for the ‘a lot’ response), and the price of a mobile phone and monthly credit (for the ‘somewhat’ response), as one’s clothing and a mobile phone typically make people feel more comfortable.

**Table 1 Financial proxies for fast forward stakeholder groups**

Years 7-10

Item	Cost per week	Calculation	Cost per year
<b>1. Personal Space</b>	\$150 per week	150 x 52	<b>\$7800</b>
<b>2. Work</b>	\$7.10 (average of 6.21 and 7.98, year 9 and 10 average pay)	12 hours per week = \$85.20 p / week, x 52 = per year	<b>\$4430.40</b>
<b>3. Food</b>	\$50 per week	50 x 52	<b>\$2600</b>
<b>4. Clothing</b>	\$50 per week	50 x 52	<b>\$2600</b>
<b>5. Mobile</b>	\$800 outright purchase of phone; \$50 per month on credit	(50x12) + 800	<b>\$1400</b>
<b>6. Internet (Social Media)</b>	\$100 per month	100 x 12	<b>\$1200</b>
<b>7. Gaming</b>	\$500 outright purchase of console; \$10 per week	(10x52) + 500	<b>\$1020</b>
<b>8. Transport</b>	\$15 per week	15 x 52	<b>\$780</b>

**Teachers/community groups**

Item	Cost per week	Calculation	Cost per year
1. Work	\$38.04 per hour	40 hours per week $40 \times 38.04 \times 52 =$	<b>\$79123.20 (rounded to 79130 as per website)</b>
2. Mortgage/rent	\$600 per week	$600 \times 52$	<b>\$31200</b>
3. Food	\$150 per week	$150 \times 52$	<b>\$7800</b>
4. Transport/ vehicle maintenance	\$150 per week	$150 \times 52$	<b>\$7800</b>
5. Bills	\$100 per week	$100 \times 52$	<b>\$5200</b>
6. Leisure Income	\$100 per week	$100 \times 52$	<b>\$5200</b>
7. Clothing	\$50 per week	$50 \times 52$	<b>\$2600</b>
8. Mobile	\$800 outright purchase of phone;  \$100 per month on credit	$(100 \times 12) + 800$	<b>\$2000</b>
9. Internet	\$100 per month	$100 \times 12$	<b>\$1200</b>

**Project officers**

Item	Cost per week	Calculation	Cost per year
1. Work	\$46.21 per hour	35 hours per week. $46.21 \times 35 = 1617.35,$ $\times 52 = 84,102.20$	<b>\$81,102.20</b>
2. Mortgage/rent	\$600 per week	$600 \times 52$	<b>\$31200</b>
3. Remittances	\$540 per week (@30% of weekly income)	$540 \times 52$	<b>\$28080</b>
4. Church/community events	\$200 per week	$200 \times 52$	<b>\$10400</b>
5. Transport/vehicle maintenance	\$150 per week	$150 \times 52$	<b>\$7800</b>
6. Bills	\$100 per week	$100 \times 52$	<b>\$5200</b>
7. Mobile	\$800 outright purchase of phone;  \$100 per month on credit	$(100 \times 12) + 800$	<b>\$2000</b>
8. Internet	\$100 per month	$100 \times 12$	<b>\$1200</b>

**PATHE students**

Item	Cost per week	Calculation	Cost per year
<b>1. Work</b>	\$14.70 per hour – minimum rate of 18-21-year-olds averaged from ACTU (2013 - <a href="http://worksite.actu.org.au/youth-entry-level-wages/">http://worksite.actu.org.au/youth-entry-level-wages/</a> )	15 hours a week = 220.50 per week, x 52	<b>\$11466</b>
<b>2. Rent/board</b>	\$150 per week	150 x 52	<b>\$7800</b>
<b>3. Remittances</b>	\$75 (@30% of weekly income)	75 x 52	<b>\$3900</b>
<b>4. Church/ community events</b>	\$75 per week	75x 52	<b>\$3900</b>
<b>5. Transport/ vehicle maintenance</b>	\$100 per week	100 x 52	<b>\$5200</b>
<b>6. Leisure Money</b>	\$100 per week	100 x 52	<b>\$5200</b>
<b>7. Mobile</b>	\$800 outright purchase of phone; \$100 per month on credit	(100x12) + 800	<b>\$2000</b>
<b>8. Internet</b>	\$100 per month	100 x 12	<b>\$1200</b>

**Student ambassadors**

Item	Cost per week	Calculation	Cost per year
<b>1. Work</b>	\$52.69 per hour, average 3 hours work per week	52.69 x 3 x 52 =	<b>\$8219.64</b>
<b>2. Rent / board</b>	\$150 per week	150 x 52	<b>\$7800</b>
<b>3. Remittances</b>	\$75 (@30% of weekly income)	75 x 52	<b>\$3900</b>
<b>4. Church / community events</b>	\$75 per week	75x 52	<b>\$3900</b>
<b>5. Transport / vehicle maintenance</b>	\$100 per week	100 x 52	<b>\$5200</b>
<b>6. Leisure Money</b>	\$100 per week	100 x 52	<b>\$5200</b>
<b>7. Clothing</b>	\$50 per week	50 x 52	<b>\$2600</b>
<b>8. Mobile</b>	\$800 outright purchase of phone; \$100 per month on credit	(100x12) + 800	<b>\$2000</b>
<b>9. Internet</b>	\$100 per month	100 x 12	<b>\$1200</b>



### **Step five: do not overclaim**

The outcomes and their financial proxies were then given a measured (percentage) of deadweight (what would happen without the program), and attribution (who else is contributing to the change). After some discussion, the authors nominated not to apply displacement, which is the moving of one service in place of another. PATHE students engage with the program uniquely, in that they are typically (though not exclusively) of Māori and Pacific Islander heritage if they take part. To the authors' knowledge, no other program in New South Wales functions like this at university level, and therefore the program was not displacing the work of other programs. The impact of the program was measured only for 2017, with PATHE students considering (though not formally evaluating) the impact that the program has had on their entire university journey. As such, drop-off, or the ongoing effects of the program after its year of evaluation (2017), was not considered here, as students involved in the program typically move on in it from one year to the next, starting in year 5 and going through to year 12.

### **Step six: be transparent**

The PATHE program sits as a unique source of support for Māori and Pacific Islander and students at PATHE. This evaluation has sought to highlight the diverse range of services PATHE delivers for its stakeholder groups. One of the authors initiated PATHE in 2012, with another being involved at a voluntary, and later, a professional capacity. The authors therefore recognise and inherently believe in the program, and advocate for its unique service delivery within Western Sydney University and the Western Sydney context and, from these positions, consider the program as innovative and pioneering in the service needs it meets for Pacific communities and those that engage with them.

Data stated in this article were entered into a specially designed Excel spreadsheet<sup>2</sup> that calculated the overall cost-to-benefit (also referred to as the SROI) ratio, which yields a dollar-for-dollar cost/benefit amount. This ratio came to be 1:4.93, or \$4.93 for every \$1 spent. This shows that the PATHE program is not only meeting a myriad of needs as expressed by the participants of this research, but also proving its financial viability, especially when considering the qualitative and one-to-one support offered through the program.

### **Step seven: verify the result**

A 2-page summary sheet was sent to the schools that participated in the evaluation program, which can be accessed by contacting the authors (note removal of website).

This provided further context to the stakeholders, and discussed the key findings and insights of the research. The summary sheet further engages the stakeholders and increases transparency of the SROI process.

### **Conclusion**

There were more than 1400 Pacific students studying at Western Sydney University in 2017, a number that is nearing 5% of the overall student population and is growing exponentially. This evaluation of the PATHE program shows that it is meeting needs that no other widening participation or access/retention program in Western Sydney University has, due to its inherently Pacific epistemological and ontological framework and service delivery. It is creating pathways for Pacific people to engage with higher education, and is therefore fostering social, economic, academic and personal mobility, and alleviating the effects of socio-cultural disadvantage for communities that engage with it. The SROI framework measures impact by intertwining

---

<sup>2</sup> Available from <http://socialvalueint.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/SOCIAL-VALUE-UK-IMPACT-MAP-TEMPLATE-1.xlsx>

narrative based data with quantitative measures. The qualitative data from all stakeholders show that the PATHE program is building aspirations towards accessing higher education and training for these students. The positive impact of the program is also quantitatively supported. The SROI ratio measures financial value relative to the resources invested. The benefits or social return (present value) accumulates to \$385,365.16, with the financial investment (present value) adding up to \$78,134.79. This gives a SROI ratio of 4.93:1 – for every \$1 dollar invested, PATHE is providing \$4.93 in social value. It is important to note that the figures presented here are a cross section of three out of 58 schools that took part in the PATHE program in 2017. As such, the findings in this article are representative and do not speak for each individual school.

## References:

- Andres, Lesley and Susan Carpenter. 1997. "Today's higher education students: Issues of admission, retention, transfer, and attrition in relation to changing student demographics." University of British Columbia: Centre for Policy Studies in Education.
- Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). September 11, 2013. "Youth and entry level wages." Retrieved 28 May 2018 from <http://worksite.actu.org.au/youth-entry-level-wages/>
- Ball, Stephen. J., Diane Reay, and Miriam E. David. 2002. "Ethnic choosing: Minority ethnic students, social class and higher education choice". *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 5(4): 333–357. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1361332022000030879>
- Buckmiller, Tom. 2017. "Generating strategies for success: Understanding the lived experiences of Native American adult learners." (pp. 157-172) In M. Shah and G. Whiteford (Eds.), *Bridges, Pathways and Transitions: International Innovations in Widening Participation*. Cambridge, MA: Chandos Publishing.
- Champagne, Duane. 2006. "Education, culture, and national building: Development of the tribal learning community and educational exchange." (pp. 147-168) In Ismael Abu-Saad, & Duane. Champagne (Eds.), *Indigenous education and empowerment* (pp.147-168). Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Doyle, Erin. 2011. "Career development needs of low socio-economic status university students." *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 20(3): 56–66.
- Edgerton, Jason. D. and Lance W. Roberts. 2014. "Cultural capital or habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the explanation of enduring educational inequality." *Theory and Research in Education*, 12(2): 193-220. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1477878514530231>
- Faleolo, Moses Ma'alo. 2013. "Authentication in social work education: The balancing act." (pp. 105-131) In C. Noble, M. Hendrickson and I.Y. Han (Eds). *Social work education: voices from the Asia Pacific*, 2nd edition. Sydney: University of Sydney Press.
- Faleolo, Moses Ma'alo. 2009. "Culturally valid social work education: a Samoan perspective." (pp. 149-172) In C. Noble, M. Henrickson and I.Y. Han (Eds). *Social work education: voices from the Asia Pacific*. Victoria: The Vulgar Press.
- Gunther, Shelley, Shailo Emery, Viena Lasike, Jenny Marsh, Mau Pauta, Sisilia Peini, and Carmen Timu-Parata. 2009. "Mental health and well-being: A Pacific nursing perspective." *Whitireia Nursing Journal*, (16): 35–37.
- Harwood, Valerie, Sarah E. O'Shea, Jonnell Uptin, Nicoli Humphry, and Lisa Kervin. 2013. "Precarious education and the university: Navigating the silenced borders of participation." *International Journal on School Disaffection*, 10(2): 23–44. Retrieved from [http://search.proquest.com/docview/1651854312?accountid=15293%5Chttp://sfx.ub.edu/ub?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft\\_val\\_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&sid=ProQ:ProQ%3Aericshell&title=Precarious+Education+and+the+University%3A+Navigating+the+Sil](http://search.proquest.com/docview/1651854312?accountid=15293%5Chttp://sfx.ub.edu/ub?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&sid=ProQ:ProQ%3Aericshell&title=Precarious+Education+and+the+University%3A+Navigating+the+Sil)
- Huang, Sherlina, Teo, Penny, and Yeoh, Brenda. S. A. 2000. "Diasporic subjects and identity negotiations: Women in and from Asia." *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23 (4): 391-398.
- Mihesuah, Devon Abbott. 2004. "Academic gatekeepers." In Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson (Eds.), *Indigenizing the academy*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

- Loveday, Vik. 2016. "Embodying deficiency through 'affective practice': Shame, relationality, and the lived experience of social class and gender in higher education." *Sociology*, 50(6): 1140-1155. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515589301>
- Pascarella, Ernest T., Smart, John C., and Ethington, C. A. 1986. "Long-term persistence of two-year college students." *Research in Higher Education*, 24(1): 47-71. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00973742>
- Ravulo, Jioji. 2015. *Pacific Communities in Australia*. Western Sydney University.
- Rubin, Mark, Nida Denson, Sue Kilpatrick, Kelly E. Matthews, Tom Stehlik, and David Zyngier. 2014. "I am working-class": Subjective self-definition as a missing measure of social class and socioeconomic status in higher education research." *Educational Researcher*, 43(4): 196-200. <http://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X14528373>
- Salverda, Menno. Social Return on Investment. BetterEvaluation, n.d. Available online: <https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/approach/SROI> (Accessed 13th February 2020).
- Spiegler, Thomas and Antje Bednarek. 2013. "First-generation students: What we ask, what we know and what it means: An international review of the state of research." *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 23(4): 318-337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2013.815441>
- Talbani, Aziz and Hasanali, Parveen. 2000. "Adolescent females between tradition and modernity: gender role socialization in South Asian immigrant culture." *Journal of Adolescence*, 23: 615-627. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.2000.0348>.
- Tamasese, Kiwi. 2002. "Honouring Samoan ways and understandings: Towards culturally appropriate mental health services." *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, (2): 64-71. Retrieved from <http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=126407058629649;res=IELHSS>
- Tamasese, Kiwi, Carmel Peteru, Charles Waldegrave and Allister Busch. 2005. "Ole taeo afua, the new morning: A qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 39 (4): 300-309. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1614.2005.01572.x>
- Tuafuti, Patisepa. 2011. "Multiple challenges in research within the Fa'asamoa context." *Pacific-Asian Education*, 23(2): 33-42.

---

### Authors' biographies

Associate Professor Jioji Ravulo has an extensive history in working across greater western Sydney and beyond with diversity and equity groups striving to create sustainable initiatives and resources through meaningful collaborations and partnerships, including work with the NSW Police Force, NSW Justice: Juvenile Justice, NSW Department of Education, Mission Australia, the National Rugby League and Australian Rugby Union. Before becoming an academic in 2011 through Western Sydney University, Jioji worked 12 years in the community sector in youth justice, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, educational engagement and homelessness, alongside clinical private practice. In 2012, Jioji formed the Pasifika Achievement To Higher Education (PATHE) program, an initiative developing vocational and careers aspirations with Pacific communities. He has also worked with various Pacific nations through the Pacific Islands Field Education (PIFE) project that supports international social work field education placements across the region. He currently works as the Academic Program Director of Social Work at the University of Wollongong Liverpool campus.

Dr. Shannon Said was awarded his PhD (Music) in 2017, which explores Christian-Māori diaspora identity expressed through music in a local church based in South West Sydney. His research engages with how non-indigenous researchers can engage respectfully in diaspora indigenous communities, and how intercultural music making reflects identity. Shannon engages with his own diaspora community (he is of Maltese heritage), and this influences how engagement happens cross-culturally across different diaspora groups in Western Sydney. In his present research role, Shannon has worked with Pacific Islander diaspora communities in higher

education with programs that bolster aspirations to higher education and training. He is currently working on a Mental Health Talanoa project through the University of Wollongong that seeks to engage with Pacific communities across Western Sydney to create more effective intervention models to promote mental health engagement with these communities.

Mr Jim Micsko is an experienced practitioner in the field of Widening Participation and has successfully developed and implemented multiple programs which have led to increasing numbers of disadvantaged school students accessing Higher Education. Mr Micsko has extensive knowledge of the primary and high school educational sectors, Higher Education Participation Partnerships Program (HEPPP), and widening participation programs including membership of collaborative cross-institutional funding grant projects. Mr Micsko currently oversees successful and well-established programs working in over 130 western Sydney primary and high schools and community groups delivering aspiration-building programs to over 10,000 current school students.

Ms. Gayl Purchase has a strong practitioner background in the widening participation sector, having worked in tertiary education management for the past nine years, and has extensive experience with strategic management within the non-profit sector. Her remits included student recruitment and enrolment, student and staff welfare, widening participation, community engagement, staff requirement and management, enquiry management, admissions and training. In her current role as Manager, Strategy and Partnerships at Western Sydney University Gayl is responsible for the support of all widening participation and pre-access engagement programs. These programs aim to raise educational aspirations to drive increased participation and attainment among underrepresented groups in higher education towards lifelong learning.

---