

# Transnational Pacific Health through the Lens of TB

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on behalf of the research group  
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# Current project grew from a broader NZ-based one

- Cook Islands, Tuvalu & NZ

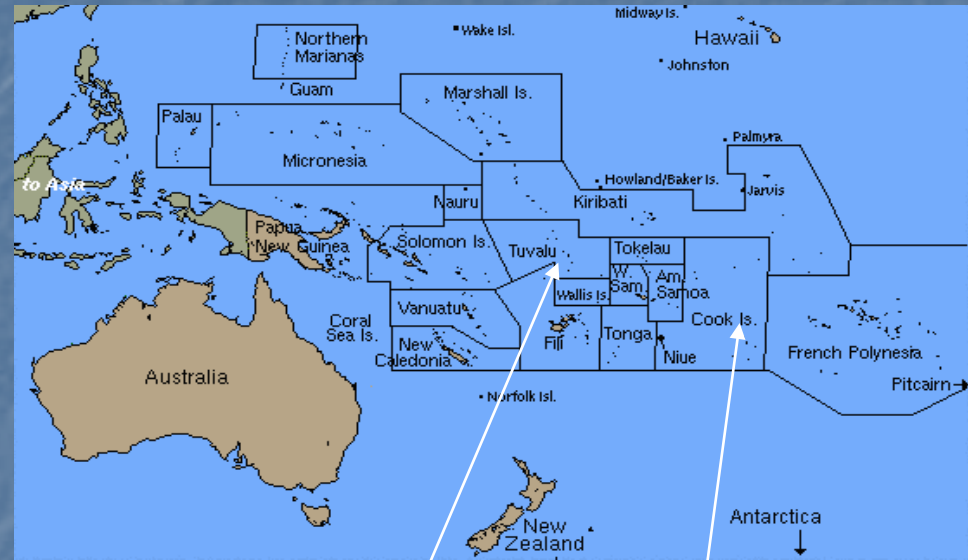
- Historical and contemporary research

- Community partnerships

- Training of Pacific scholars

- Applied aspects

- But why?





# Puzzles and contrasts

- Difference in TB rates between Tuvalu and Cook Islands: high in Tuvalu, low in Cook Islands
- TB rates higher in NZ for Cook Islanders than in islands
- Shared challenges in the island nations
  - Many islands in each group spread over large ocean distances
  - Budget problems
  - Climate change
- Different political relationships and histories (including with NZ)
- Active transmission in New Zealand



# Syndemics

- A framework for examining situations where multiple health and social issues cluster
- Syndemic specifically describes
  - “two or more afflictions acting synergistically, contributing to excess burden of disease in a population” (CDC website)
  - ie not just two diseases but two diseases interacting for the worst e.g. TB and HIV AIDS
  - Interactions over time

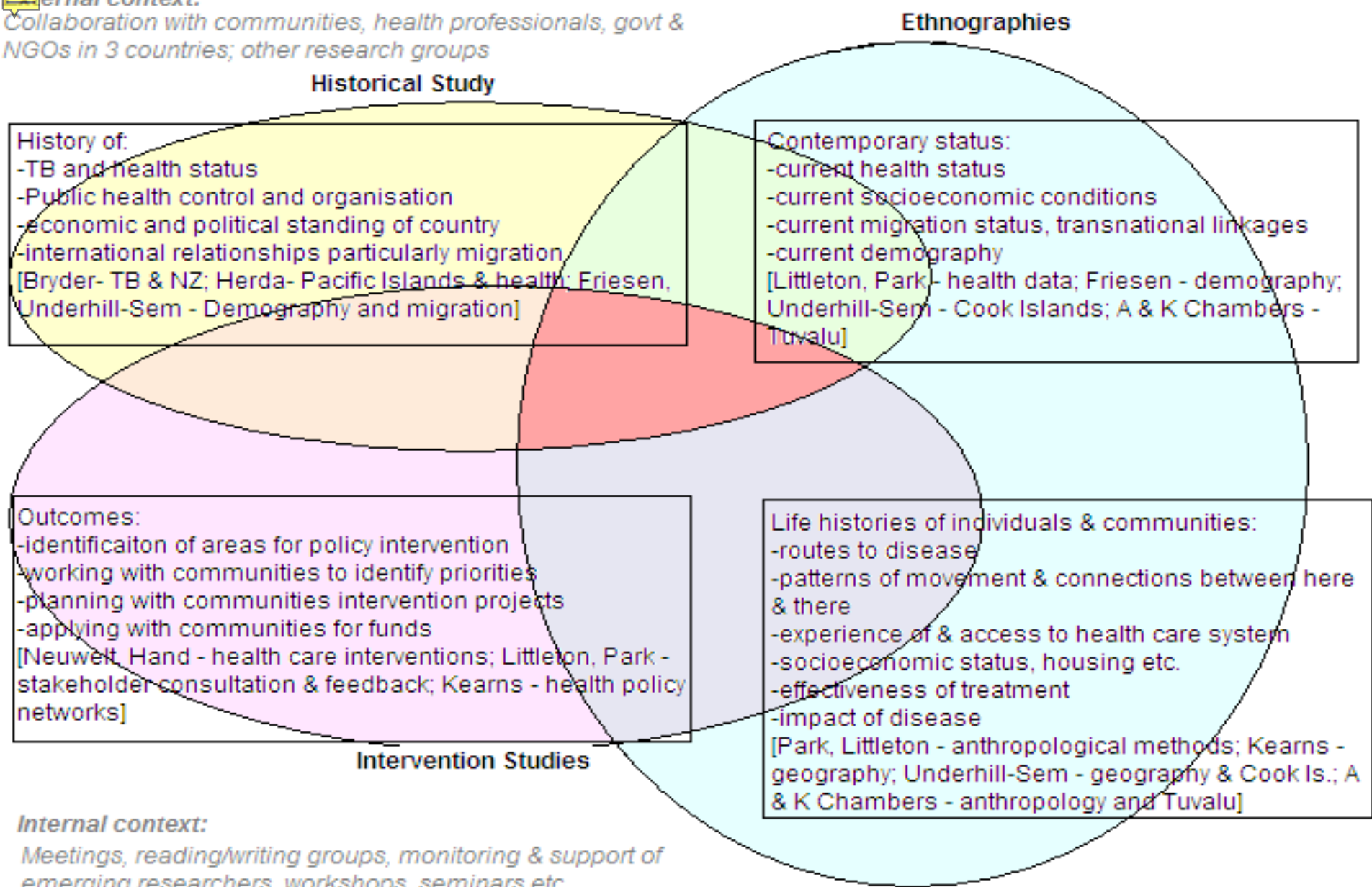
# Aims

- To understand how TB occurs in the context of transnational, gendered life courses and co-morbidities, and the implications of this **transnational** perspective for population health and disease prevention.
- To identify conditions **promoting TB** reactivation and transmission.
- To **identify** historical and contemporary barriers and **plan** for effective interventions.
- To produce **culturally specific information** that can contribute to services and policy directed at health and esp. TB control and treatment in New Zealand and the Pacific.
- Pacific health **researcher development**

To do this we needed a research group!

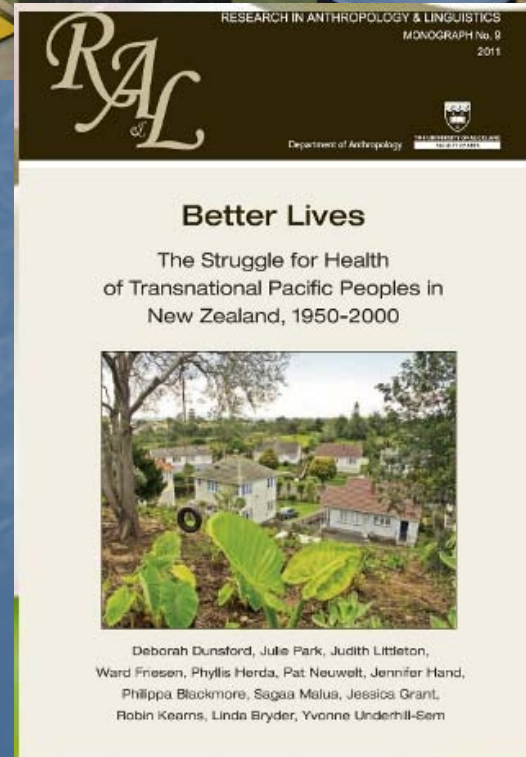


**External context:**  
Collaboration with communities, health professionals, govt & NGOs in 3 countries; other research groups



# To date

- Historical theses about TB and health services in Cook Islands and Tuvalu
- Dissertations on aspects of health promotion and policy
- “Better Lives: the struggle for health of Pacific peoples in New Zealand 1950-2000”





# On-going work

- Individual student research -- the subject of the next two presentations
- Integrative analysis and publishing by different groups within the overall team – which we highlight next

# The past in the present

- In both the Cook Islands and Tuvalu the different colonial and post-independence conditions are still influential in today's health
- High, but decreasing, rates of TB in Tuvalu can be seen as a product of limited health resources in colonial times, labour patterns, and current struggles. The decrease occurred earlier in the Cook Islands.

# Continuities in health and illness

- Very evident in New Zealand –
  - Infectious diseases are still a problem-
    - We detected a pattern of recurrent surprise at this
  - But non-communicable diseases were forecast as a looming problem 50 years ago
    - Accompanied by urging that this needed to be urgently addressed
    - We are still hearing the same message
- Clearly we are missing something!

# What's missing?

- Recognition of implications of syndemic interactions, e.g. between diabetes and TB
- Recognition that Pacific peoples are transnational i.e. here AND there and what that implies
- By Pacific, for Pacific AND all health related services, Pacific – friendly
- Social context, including income, jobs, housing, education and policy regime.

# Acknowledgements

- All our participants
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