Welcome to the second issue of the SPEAR newsletter. This month we profile doctoral candidate Roannie Ng Shiu, doctoral alumni Dr Lonise Tanielu, Senior Lecturer in Pacific Studies Dr Melani Anae, and Postgraduate Pathways Equity Co-ordinator Tapeni Fa’alogo.

July promises to be an exciting month for SPEAR with the launch of our new blog SPEAR: Interact. SPEAR: Interact will enable Pacific doctoral students to use a blog format website to connect with fellow Pacific doctoral students as well as doctoral students who engage in Pacific related research at The University of Auckland. In due course we envision the blog site to expand into a global network that will engage with Pacific doctoral students and researchers at other national and international Universities such as LeHarve, Cornell, Berkeley and University of Hawaii: Mānoa.

With rapid changes in communications through social media networks and new mobile technologies, we at SPEAR acknowledge this shift as a powerful tool to advance Pacific research both here and abroad. One recent example of national research based networking was the BRCSS 5th Talanoa held over the Access Grid in May, 2011. This event enables masters and doctoral students to present their research to a number of university institutions simultaneously through video conferencing. The 5th Talanoa was hosted by The University of Auckland and featured papers by Roannie Ng Shiu, Nina Tonga and Vaiolesi Manogi Haaku Passells whose presentations were transmitted live to a number of other tertiary institutions. The presentation was well attended and its success demonstrates the importance of collaborative enterprises and its benefit to an ever-expanding Pacific knowledge base.

Please enjoy our second issue from the SPEAR team and do email our SPEAR coordinator Dr Graham Fletcher (g.fletcher@auckland.ac.nz.) if you would like to comment on past, current or forthcoming issues.

I wish you all a safe winter season!

Dr Caroline Vercoe
SPEAR Director
Learning is embodied and contextualized. Bodies are a discursive text where dimensions of class, ethnicity and gender are inscribed on the body. Therefore in classrooms students are not all considered equal because visible bodily markers such as skin colour establishes difference. In the same way that we cannot escape or mask our physical bodies in the classroom we also cannot escape our social and cultural identities. Our social and cultural identities are very much a part of how we teach and learn (Vygotsky, 1978). Many students experience themselves being minoritized in the classroom as they feel themselves being made acutely aware of their differences whilst paradoxically feeling that what makes them different is ignored. For example, Pacific learners describe feeling as though they have to prove themselves because of their skin colour whilst also talking about their sense of isolation in the classroom. However, classrooms also become important sites of resistance in which participants made a conscious effort to disprove statistics and racial stereotypes. University academic discourse potentially institutionalizes difference and perpetuates ‘othering’ through language and discourse. The power relationships within University create a barrier for Samoan learners to try and dispel dominant stereotypes. Students often spoke of a sense of powerlessness as a Pacific student as illustrated in the following quote,

"Um, when they [lecturers and tutors] make generalisations about Māori and Pacific Island people it’s a lot harder to disagree with them because I feel like I’m disrespecting them because they’re older than me and they’re more senior to me. Yeah so it’s hard - to stand up for yourself when you know they’re wrong because you feel like you’ll be disrespectful” Sarona, female, 3rd year BHSc Student.

Sarona’s quote brings in to question the power relationships between student and educator, and between ethnicities. University is viewed as a critical space where students are encouraged to feel free to critique and challenge ideas. Although the rhetoric is sound, in practice it is difficult to do so especially if students feel they lack the authority and status to question educators.

From the narratives and diaries of the students I identified the key factors that constrained and enabled their learning under the categories of individual agency, family, university, spirituality, and friends. A central concern of this thesis was to examine the role of family and parental support for tertiary students. Parents and students describe how family support for academia is embedded within fa’asamoa. Students identify key discourses used to position themselves within their home and university and how their ethnic and cultural identity impacts on their learning. The findings from this thesis describe how some participants had successfully managed the competing demands of academia and Samoan cultural obligations. The findings also suggest learning environments that facilitate meaningful engagement and participation enable positive learning outcomes. The results illuminate important teaching implications for educators when engaging with Pacific and other ethnic minority learners. In addition the results aid in formulating recruitment and retention initiatives for Samoan and Pacific tertiary health learners.

Roannie Ng Shiu

Dr Lonise Tanielu

Pacific Doctoral Alumnus
Dr Lonise Tanielu
Manager Mataaga Aoga Amata Education & Care Services, Grey Lynn

The Auckland University of Technology (AUT) launched a ‘new’ education course, The National Diploma of Teaching (ECE Pasifika), designed to meet the needs of Pasifika communities in July 2004. It was a response to the increasing numbers of Pasifika children requiring early childhood education, and a growing need for qualified teachers. The Ministry of Education contracted the AUT School of Education to design and deliver the NatDipTchg (ECE, Pasifika). I was appointed as Programme Leader for the new course in May of the same year. The school designed a unique programme which for the first time met the needs of the Pasifika communities, Cook Island, Māori, Tokelau, Samoan, Tongan, Niue and Fijian. The course integrates Pasifika languages and cultures into early childhood education. Pasifika communities account for 7 percent of the country’s total population and Auckland is the world’s largest Pasifika city. That strong population growth has led to an unprecedented demand for quality Pasifika-based ECE services taught by qualified teachers. I left after a year and the programme has advanced and made much progress under the guidance of Salā Faasaulala Tagoleleagi-Leota the present Programme Leader.

Pasifika people have relatively high rates of child abuse, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, suicide, depression and underachievement. Even though New Zealand is supposedly a temperate, peaceful, ethical and developed nation in which children should flourish, sadly many Pacific Island children do not. They make up the bulk of underachievers in our education system. What should be done about this?

“I believe that the introduction of universal preschool education and making preschool compulsory beginning at 2 years of age should be a must for all children.”

Firstly, I believe that the introduction of universal preschool education and making preschool compulsory beginning at 2 years of age should be a must for all children. Ensuring that good quality education is available for all children in their first 3 years should be a number one priority. Unless this is made possible, Pasifika children will always underachieve and the cycle of

— Roannie Ng Shiu
underachievement will be repeated and past mistakes are being recycled because we are not learning from them. It is too late to tackle the problems in the teen years. According to Chris Carter the solution to anti social behaviour is preschool education. I agree with him and with theorists and educators of preschool education who have proved that the first 3 years of a person’s life are critically important because that is when the brain is effectively “wired” for learning and socialisation. Children will not forget the things that they learn in those first 3 years because up to 85% of brain development occurs in the first 3 years when the brain’s neurons get connected. Graeme MacCormick said that there are “windows of opportunity” in those 3 years that if not opened up for a child; delimit the development of the brain. It is within those early years that moulds or schemata are constructed for future learning. If violence, low self-esteem and abuse for example are shaped during the early years of one’s life especially in those 3 years, it is almost impossible to wipe those experiences or even reshape them in the future into more positive outcomes. The recurrence of the resultant behaviour from those early bad experiences has repercussions for life. We read about them in the news almost every day. Abused children become abused parents and the cycle goes on. While it may be too late for those children, we need to address the problem by giving all future preschoolers positive experiences at home and especially at pre-school by preparing them for life as responsible citizens.

Secondly, there should be a closer relationship between the government and the Pasifika churches. The church ministers are often only called upon when their church members ‘misbehave’. In 1996 I was a researcher for the Achievement Initiative in Multicultural High Schools (AIMHI). Eight decide one secondary schools with high ratios of Pasifika students were selected to be part of this developmental project. One of the principals I interviewed said that it was not the students who went to church that were the problem but rather the ones that did not go to church. Pasifika churches provide a base and a refuge for many Pasifika people and for many the church is like their second home, a home away from their island homes, a place where they belong, something they own in a strange and sometimes hostile world, a setting where they could practise and ‘play out’ their roles in their traditional cultures. The initiatives run by Pasifika churches include homework centres, day care preschools, health programmes, sports programmes and programmes for the elderly people. Churches advise and support parents’ initiatives for their children which are usually funded by the churches themselves. Our own Grey Lynn EFKS Church carries out many of these initiatives. The Pasifika churches have a part to play in the education of their church members’ children. Children respect their church ministers as well as the older members of the congregation. The Pasifika churches would only be too happy to accommodate any government initiatives targeted for the education of Pasifika people.

Thirdly, there is an urgent need for a Pasifika parent education programme. Many parents look upon early childhood education as a waste of money, time and resources. They keep children at home and only enrol them in preschools when they are four years old or a few months before they start Primary School. Sometimes children only become important when they are in Secondary School or when they excel in sports. Many Pasifika parents also have minimal understanding of the New Zealand education system and do not understand changes to the curriculum and qualification structures or the ways schools organise themselves. Pasifika parents wholeheartedly support their children during school cultural festivals. They would go to great lengths to support their children in this because they know and understand what is going on, as it is about their cultures and ways of life. But they would naturally shy away from things they do not know or understand. The AIMHI project highlighted these aspects. The evening parent interviews were not well attended. Newsletters, fliers and notices went out to parents well before interview dates and reminders were sent closer to interview dates. We provided refreshments for the evenings and had Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island, Niuean and Maori interviewers so that parents could be interviewed in their own respective languages should the need arise.

It is crucial that we stop the cycle of underachievement amongst our Pasifika children. From my own journey in education, I have had to make choices that have broadened my understanding of the importance of education to me, my children and grandchildren but ultimately to our Pasifika children. I went to Palmerston North Teachers College in 1969 from Samoa as a scholarship student and trained as a Primary School teacher. I went back and taught in Samoa in intermediate for one year and in high schools for 7 years before I was sent to University to get “proper” knowledge to teach high school students. I was not interested in preschool education until I did my PHD research into the role of the Samoan pastor’s school in the education of the Samoan child, where I found a very interesting piece of history. John Williams the pioneer London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary in Samoa introduced the Infant School System in Samoa in 1838. He prioritised training in the infant school system and looked to the future generation as the key to the success of Christian missions. The younger generation could be moulded to the desired ends. My research changed my whole perspective of education and since then I have been advocating preschool education as the cure of all ills in society. I believe in the talent and expertise that Pasifika people have if only they are given the right kind of guidance and education right from the start.

I would like to thank Dr Graham Fletcher for giving me the opportunity to express in this newsletter my views and beliefs on education. May God bless you and the work that you do to advance Pasifika students at the University, especially those pursuing PhDs. We need more of them.

Soifua ma ia manuia
Lonise

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1 Carter Chris, (23 February 2008), ‘A good start in life is very important’, Address given at 2008 Graduation of Early Childhood Education Graduands, Epsom, Auckland. (Minister of Education)

2 Graeme MacCormick is a former Human Rights Commissioner and Family Court Judge (NZ Herald 17/3/08)
Dr Melani Anae

Hi, I am Misatauveve Dr Melani Anae, currently Senior Lecturer in Pacific Studies and the Postgraduate Student Advisor at the Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

A bit about me and being a researcher

I am part of a large extended Samoan aiga, and am the mother of three children. My father hails from the villages of Apia and Falelatai; my mother from Siuimu from which my matai title of Misatauveve originates.

“My philosophical leadership as a researcher is based on the Pacific cultural reference of teu le va, a Samoan cultural reference focussing on the valuing and nurturing of sacred and secular relational spaces between people, knowledge, environment, ancestors, the cosmos and things.”

As former Director of the Centre for Pacific Studies I have been privileged to provide the leadership for the Centre for Pacific Studies to grow from a small language-based programme into a collaborative hub for studying Pacific indigenous knowledges centred on a modern Fale Pasifika complex. My research work and service to Pacific communities in New Zealand was acknowledged when I was awarded the Companion to the Queen’s Service Order (QSO) in 2008.

I have lectured and carried out research internationally, most recently at the University of Hawaii Manoa as a Fulbright New Zealand Senior Scholar where I examined ethnic identity journeys for first- and second-generation Hawaiian/US-born Samoans, and at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan as Visiting Scholar at the Summer Institute of Indigenous Graduate Studies where I taught a course on Pacific research methodologies.

As an anthropologist I have carried out research and published extensively in the areas of ethnicity, health, education, relational ethics, Pacific research methodologies and Pacific approaches to a broad range of social issues. My research interests include regional processes of migration, urbanization, ethnicity, and the politics of identity, more specifically focusing on more finely nuanced understandings of identity journeys and identity construction of Pacific peoples and communities in New Zealand.

My philosophical leadership as a researcher is based on the Pacific cultural reference of teu le va, a Samoan cultural reference focussing on the valuing and nurturing of sacred and secular relational spaces between people, knowledge, environment, ancestors, the cosmos and things. Teu le va provides a Pacific approach to relational ethics and focuses on the researcher developing and maintaining relationships which will provide optimal outcomes for all parties involved in the research process.

I practice ‘native research’ in that I try to ‘do’ research that will lead to transformative change for Pacific peoples and communities in New Zealand.

My current research

• As Theme leader of the Identity and Well-being stream of Te Whare Kura, one of the University of Auckland’s Thematic Research Initiatives, I am part of an interdisciplinary project - The relationship between ethnic identity and well-being: towards indigenous transformative models. This project will examine the ways ethnicity and cultural identity interact in the lives of young indigenous (Maori and Pacific) New Zealanders; how a commitment to and disinterest in ethnicity/cultural identity is fostered; how this impacts on their lives; and the transformative potential of their justice, education, and health experiences.

• I am the University of Auckland BRCSS Coordinator for the Pacific Postgraduate Seminar Series, a grid which enables regular research talanoa between Postgraduate students and academic staff about their research work, covering New Zealand’s 7 Universities (Auckland, AUT, Massey, VUW Wellington, Waikato, Canterbury, Otago). The following are some Postgraduate student evaluations of the sessions:

All three presentations were very interesting...all were different...but it was great to experience different types of references and paradigms...

...presenters have done an excellent job in promoting Pacific worldviews and Pacific methodologies in the midst of dominant western worldviews...These newly/proposed methods, worldviews [are] very encouraging for upcoming current and future Pacific students....

• Translating Pacific research into policy using the teu le va cultural reference

As main author of the Ministry of Education’s Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (2001), and one of the main authors of the second Ministry of Education Pasifika education guideline document, Teu le va: Relationships across Research and Policy: a collective approach to knowledge generation and policy development for action towards Pasifika education success (Airini, Anae et al 2010), I have used the philosophical cultural reference of teu le va to promote the forging of optimal relationships in research to translate research into policy for indigenous and ethnic minority communities.

http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/pasifikaeducation/75763/75764/1

Integral in providing a conceptual and philosophical reference and methodology for future Pacific educational, and other social science research in New Zealand, this document was informed by my conceptual paper commissioned by the Ministry of Education in 2007 “Research for better Pacific schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va – a Samoan perspective’, in Mai Review

Research interests
Pacific identity and ethnicity, NZ born Samoans/communities, research methodologies.

Current research
Melani is involved in much local and international teaching, research, and consultancy in the areas of ethnicity, health, education, Pacific research methodologies, and Pacific approaches to a broad range of social issues, and has published extensively in these areas.

Her current research interests include regional processes of migration, urbanisation, ethnicity, and the politics of identity. Her work focuses specifically on finely nuanced understandings of identity construction of Pacific peoples and communities in New Zealand. She was one of two principal investigators for the Ministry of Consumer Affairs project “Pacific Consumers’ Behaviour and Experience in Credit Markets, with Particular Reference to the ‘Fringe Lending’ Market”.

Melani is a principal investigator in the development phase of a longitudinal study of children and families in New Zealand for the Health Research Council and Ministry of Social Development. Melani is also a member of the project Academic Reference Group for Star Path: Project for Participation and Success, which deals with the widening of Māori and Pacific educational participation and success.

In 2007 Melani was a recipient of the Fulbright New Zealand Scholar Award, in which allowed her to examine changes in ethnic identity among first- and second-generation Hawaiian and US-born Samoans arising from the Samoan diaspora.

Postgraduate supervision
Melani supervises dissertation and thesis students in Pacific Studies, as well as others from other Faculties at the University.

Recent publications


Career history
Melani was Senior Research Fellow for the Pacific Health Research Centre, School of Medicine, University of Auckland 1996-97, and lectured in the Anthropology Department 1998-2000. In 2000 she was appointed Senior lecturer in Pacific Studies at the Centre for Pacific Studies. She was Director of the Centre 2002-2006 and was instrumental in growing it from a small language-based programme into a collaborative hub for the study of Pacific culture, history, identity, art, language, performing arts and literature, all centred on a modern Fale Pasifika complex.

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3BRCSS - Building Research Capacity in the Social Sciences
4These guidelines focussed on research relationships between researcher and participant/community research stakeholders.
Tapeni Fa’alogo

Some Recent Publications