


# Development of PARcific Approach: Participatory Action Research Methodology for Collectivist Health Research

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Michele Rumsey<sup>1</sup> , Pelenatete Stowers<sup>1,2</sup>, Harriet Sam<sup>3</sup>, Amanda Neill<sup>1</sup>, Nathalia Rodrigues<sup>1</sup>, Fiona Brooks<sup>4</sup>, and John Daly<sup>5,1</sup>

## Abstract

This article explores the evolution of a novel approach designed to advance qualitative methods in cross-cultural health research. This methodology was developed by synthesising several research methods and involved in-depth stakeholder consultation with participants of a Pacific-based nursing and midwifery health leadership program. Many of these participants played a crucial role in creating, exploring and evaluating several research methods and implementing and evaluating this co-designed research methodology. Starting with a Participatory Action Research framework, the research methodology evolved as it was informed by the local Pacific methodologies (in particular *Talanoa* and *Kakala* frameworks), where researchers, co-researchers and participants alike, working from within their own collectivist/individualist paradigms, negotiated cultural differences. Finally, a methodological framework of ‘best practice’ for future health research methods was developed for use with capacity building research. The new methodology could provide a foundation for future co-designed cross-cultural research in collectivist cultures.

## Keywords

participatory action research; Pacific; health; co-design; collectivist cultures; *Talanoa*; *Kakala*; midwifery and nursing leadership; PARcific

## Introduction

Tackling health inequalities, particularly when they relate to existing health systems and hierarchies, requires populations who are both informed and confident in advocating for change (WHO, 2017). Major issues for many Pacific Island nations include shortages of qualified health workers, inequitable distribution and retention of workers, inefficient skill mix poorly matched to population needs and financial constraints (Rumsey, 2011; (WHO, 2019, 2021b). To address those issues and help strengthen the health workforce, it is crucial to invest in leadership skills development so nurses and midwives can become involved in health policy decision-making (Rumsey, 2022a, WHO, 2020, 2021a).

Several regional reviews and studies have shown that an action-bias, top-down approach used to develop programs in the past has alienated partners and member countries (Bateman & Kubuabola, 2016; Tuipulotu, 2012). This approach led to a perception that an outside agenda, or more Euro-centric/Western way of working, was being pushed and considered more important (Tuipulotu, 2012).

Bateman and Kubuabola (2016) suggested that a ‘*top-down approach also places the locus of control with the funders of the program rather than with the broader Pacific community*’. Western academic research is now recognizing the necessity of culturally appropriate research methodologies, that are co-designed (Heame et al., 2019; Krusz et al., 2020). This is, in part, due to academics integrated from

<sup>1</sup>WHO Collaborating Centre Faculty of Health, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

<sup>2</sup>National University of Samoa, Toomatagi, Apia, Samoa

<sup>3</sup>Directive of Hospital and Curative Services, Ministry of Health, Port Vila, Vanuatu

<sup>4</sup>University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

<sup>5</sup>Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

\*Fiona Brooks is now affiliated to Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand.

## Corresponding Author:

Michele Rumsey, Director WHO Collaborating Centre Faculty of Health, University of Technology Sydney, 123, Broadway, Ultimo, Sydney, NSW 2007, Australia.

Email: michele.rumsey@uts.edu.au

these cultures demonstrating the need for more inclusive, culturally relevant and useful methods (Al-Bannay et al., 2014; Awad et al., 2016; Oberly & Macedo, 2004; Palafox et al., 2002; Papadopoulos & Lees, 2002; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Vaioleti, 2013; Wood, 2016). Co-designed research is where researchers and participants work in partnership to plan, design, deliver or evaluate the problem and solution. During the process, participants and researchers use their lived experience to work collaboratively and add value to the research, whilst recognizing and redressing power imbalances (Daya, 2020). In co-designed research participants may or may not be involved in the delivery of the final product (Daya, 2020). General guidelines for conducting culturally appropriate research in the Pacific region have been published, but these provided limited information or frameworks (ACFID & RDI Network, 2017; University of Otago, 2011). However there can be tension between where conventionally structured western research methods which can take a ‘*get it done quickly*’ approach, and more international-development appropriate, adaptive methods (Blodgett et al., 2011; Hearne et al., 2019; Lloyd et al., 2016). Negotiating cultural differences are complicated by the ‘individualist’ and ‘collectivist’ culture continuum, a concept which emerged from social psychology during the 1950s and 60s (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 1991; Lonner et al., 1980). Simplistically, in Pacific countries, which could be broadly classified as ‘collectivist’ cultures, people have a tendency to prioritise *the group’s* shared or communal goals, attitudes, beliefs and place emphasis on a sense of cohesiveness. In so-called ‘individualist’, European or Australian cultures, *personal* goals, attitudes and identity tend to be prioritised over the group’s (House et al., 2004; Triandis et al., 1988). Where research is concerned, it is not difficult to see how Western, and therefore individualist, models could cause considerable difficulty for indigenous and collectivist groups. It is argued that the predominant use of Westernised paradigms, steeped in European, white mainstream values has done more to serve the needs of mainstream academics and funders than to meet the needs of local Indigenous communities (Blodgett et al., 2011; Cammock et al., 2021).

The need for an appropriate research method that would ensure the Pacific voice was heard and that research was co-designed to meet the needs of cross-cultural research in collectivist cultures was therefore identified. In creating this methodology, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework was the starting point, with its focus on collaborative participation, action and reflection by members of communities affected by that research. Australian researchers in this study worked alongside the Pacific team members to determine social and cultural desirable approaches for participants and then developed a methodology that

evolved from these methods to minimize cultural bias (Bergen & Labonté, 2020)

The primary aim of this article is to chart the gradual evolution of a new research approach that was developed through a synthesis of several existing research approaches. The genesis of this methodological framework arose from the need to carry out research on leadership from a program delivered in the Pacific region. The Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) was conducted jointly between World Health Organization Collaborating Centre at the University of Technology Sydney (WHO CC UTS) and members of the South Pacific Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers’ Alliance (SPCNMOA) representing 14 Pacific countries from 2009 to 2017 (Neill & Homer, 2015; Rumsey et al., 2015). The program was designed to provide mentorship, succession planning, leadership, research skills and networking for nurses and midwives from their own specific countries with an aim of improving regional health care and health outcomes (Rumsey et al., 2017a). This in turn led to this collaborative investigation into various culturally relevant methodologies that could be used to gain the best understanding of the nursing and midwifery leadership within the Pacific.

The PARcific methodology developed and described in this article articulates the eclectic methodological framework used for complex research with multiple partners from different contexts and cultures. A modified PAR framework was used to ultimately achieve ‘transformative health leadership’ and, above all, ‘[be] trusted by Pacific communities’ (Passells, 2010, p. 36; Tuipulotu, 2012, p. 48). Transformative health leadership unlike more traditional leadership theories, is less about compliance and data, it is humanised, relational stories around the leadership, leading to sustainability (Rumsey et al., 2021; Western, 2019). Shields (2020) describes transformative leadership as an ‘*inherently normative and critical approach grounded in the values of equity inclusion, excellence and social justice*’.

Whilst it is vital to acknowledge that each research project and context is unique, the authors argue that the PARcific methodology attempts to provide a much-needed foundation for future cross-cultural and collaborative research in collectivist cultures.

The article sets out to provide background to the research context. After outlining the SPCNMOA PLP that initiated the leadership research, it details the context which frames and impacts on the social determinants of health in the region, then follows with a brief discussion around the importance of decolonisation of research and individualist/collectivist paradigms. An in-depth discussion of PAR, the Pacific research methods of *Kakala* and *Talanoa*, background to the evolution of PARcific methodology and overview of initial findings follow. Discussion covers the program and co-design of

PARcific methodology, reflecting upon its limitations and further applications.

## Background

### Decolonising Research in Collectivist Cultures

United by stewardship of the Pacific Ocean, the Pacific Islands are an incredibly complex region culturally, linguistically, economically and politically (Tuipulotu, 2012). The region encompasses 22 000 islands scattered over almost one third of the earth's surface divided into northern and southern states. The southern countries are further divided into three culturally diverse sub-regions; Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia.

The cultural assumptions which underpin most research tenets are Eurocentric, regarding European culture and perspectives as pre-eminent. Equally, the majority of literature informing how, when and where research should be, and is, conducted also tend to be from within Western contexts (Passells, 2010). Tuhiwai Smith (2012), in her seminal work on Maori research, *Decolonising Methodologies*, claims that '*the term "research" is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism*', and, from the perspective of the colonised, has extremely negative associations in the indigenous world's vocabulary. Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 4) elaborate on this by claiming that, '*qualitative research in many, if not all, of its forms serves as a metaphor for colonial knowledge . . . power [and] truth. . . . Colonizing nations relied on . . . field note-taking, journaling observers, to produce knowledge about strange and foreign worlds*'. The reports generated by such research often resulted in strategies for controlling and exploiting indigenous peoples (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). With increasing awareness of the effects of colonization on indigenous peoples, there has been a move towards ensuring that research needs to better serve the people and populations being researched. Decolonisation of research is concerned with having '*a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values that inform research practices*' (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Tu'ipulotu (2012), argues that the nursing profession in Tonga has been dominated by the policies and practices of external parties and expatriates who often have little understanding of her culture. Drawing on the work of Leininger and McFarland (2006), she argues that a 'grassroots', bottom-up response to health is imperative, and that this, in turn demands an understanding of the ways in which culture is embedded in, and foundational to, holistic nursing care. This approach promotes the most culturally appropriate, relevant nursing care, by addressing the social dimension of Pacific health and well-being thereby reflecting values and traditions that Pacific people incorporate into decision-making (Cammock et al., 2021).

The uneasiness which arises when using Western methodologies to research indigenous cultures has been widely acknowledged in the literature (Krusz et al., 2020; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Vaioleti, 2013; West et al., 2012) and was essentially captured by Kovach (2009, p. 31) in her comment, '*those who attempt to fit tribal epistemology into Western cultural conceptual rubric are destined to feel the squirm*'. In the context of the SPCNMOA PLP, one significant contributing factor was the wealth, health and power disparities which continue to exist between Western (in this case Australia) and many Pacific countries (Kemish, 2022). This has, in part, been historically shaped by a number of western nations' legacy of colonisation in the region.

### Developing Pacific Methodology: A Synthesis of Approaches

Until recently within the health and medical sciences, positivist and quantitative research frameworks have tended to dominate in the Pacific. Whilst nursing and midwifery have been ahead of other health disciplines in adapting qualitative research approaches in an attempt to acknowledge the depth and diversity of experiences and subjectivities, as well as the importance of culture, these approaches are still in their nascent stages of development and adaptation (Derose et al., 2018; Hearne et al., 2019; Krusz et al., 2020; Matapo, 2016; Norström et al., 2020; West et al., 2012). One qualitative research framework which is increasingly being used by nurses in the health science context is PAR. After outlining the context for PAR, this article reviews and synthesises the two Pacific methodologies, *Kakala* and *Talanoa*. By combining elements of each, a new methodology, PARcific, has been developed which embeds a 'Pacific worldview' whilst still seeking to understand qualitative human experiences.

### PAR

Participatory action research is a broad umbrella term encompassing an approach to research, rather than an explicit method or methodology, which seeks to produce knowledge. Participatory action research asserts that research cannot be done on others, but that people carry out action research together on themselves (Hearne et al., 2019) and with the key stakeholders and partners, with the ultimate aim of bringing about social change (Hearne et al., 2019; Kral & Kidd, 2018; Kunt, 2020; Schubotz, 2019). It is often described as an 'empowering' methodology (Kral & Kidd, 2018; Thompson et al., 2019) that promotes social transformation through attempting to address the inherently unequal power relations between researcher and researched.

Participatory action research's philosophical origins can be traced back to the early post-war period and attempts to counter the inequalities that had emerged from post-colonial experiences in Latin America (Freire, 2018). In the 1960s and 70s, PAR was used by feminist and critical theory as well as social psychology to explore the way entrenched hierarchies are socially constructed and therefore not set in stone; with awareness and action, these therefore have the potential to be transformed (Adelman, 1993; Cusack et al., 2018).

Within the healthcare context, PAR has been described as a way of encouraging individual development, sustainability in healthcare systems and promoting social transformation (Koch & Kralik, 2006). Previously it has been utilised by researchers to tackle issues of both nursing practice – leading to a greater uptake of evidence-based practice – as well as a way to create a framework for fundamental system changes in hierarchical institutions (Munten et al., 2010). Two articles (Corbett et al., 2007; Cusack et al., 2018), argue that PAR should be considered the method of choice to explore complex and deep-rooted nursing issues because it has such a diverse range of applications across nursing settings both within national and international contexts.

Community-based Participatory research (CBPR), which adopted some of the principles of PAR, has been used by some health researchers, particularly in relation to public health prevention campaigns/strategies – such as HIV, cancer screening (Tillyard & DeGennaro, 2019). However, CBPR is usually considered to lack the social/political transformation element of PAR in that it does not challenge existing dominant power relations, colonial legacies or how these perpetuate health inequalities. In other words, it does not seek to answer the broader question, '*what does public health research say about the historical and cultural legacies of colonialism?*' (Tillyard & DeGennaro, 2019, p. 1284). Key PAR and CBPR authors (Ozano, 2019) provide a clear understanding about what PAR and CPBR look like in practice through stages of action planning, implementation and reflection, and how they fit within the participatory health paradigm.

The change-oriented approach of PAR sets it apart from other research methodologies and involves four important elements; shared power, reciprocity, reflexivity, and the democratisation of research, incorporating use of visual and expressive methods with greater freedom (Conn et al., 2016). It is an emergent, action-oriented research paradigm which involves collective knowledge production through cycles of reflection and iteration from the ground up (Conn et al., 2016). Whilst an ethnographic methodology is primarily top-down, PAR seeks to redress the power imbalance in the production of knowledge and democratise the research process. This is achieved through ensuring that the local people who will

be impacted by the research outcomes are actual partners in the process, alongside the academics and external agencies. In the PAR model, the case health worker participants, are seen as professionals and experts on their own health issues themselves and therefore involved at every stage of the research process and able to co-design the research (Harris et al., 2013).

Part of the unique nature (and challenge) of PAR is its flexible structure which enables evolution of the research as it progresses, and assimilates the participants' expertise, focus and input. It has been suggested that the PAR process shares some similarities with existing qualitative Pacific methodologies, particularly with *Talanoa* and *Kakala* (Vaiotei, 2006).

*Talanoa* is a generic term meaning a 'conversation', 'chat' or 'sharing of ideas' and is rooted in the concept of relationship-building which is central to the culture of several Pacific nations including Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Hawaii, Solomon Islands and Tokelau (Fua, 2014; Prescott, 2008; West et al., 2012). *Kakala*, on the other hand, whilst also prioritising the collective social fabric, literally refers to the specifically Tongan (but broader Pacific Island) tradition of garland selection, design, making and gifting. Both terms have been used to develop Pacific-worldview focused research frameworks and methods. These draw from a language that is deeply layered in metaphor and at times sits uneasily within existing Western research frameworks which are often more prescriptive, reductive and outcomes driven (Blodgett et al., 2011; Enari, 2021).

An understanding of these research paradigms was particularly important in guiding the co-design conduct, sensitivities and processes of the non-Pacific researchers, especially during the interview and evaluation stages of the research. Drawing on the PAR, *Kakala* and *Talanoa* models, the Australian research team aimed to gain richer and more nuanced insights about the program outcomes. As Fa'avae et al. (2016) argue, when two people from different cultures come together, and authentic (or *mo'oni*) dialogue ensues, then *both* are inevitably transformed by this interaction. This dynamic process of evolution is beautifully encapsulated in Triandis' (1993) analogy, where he compares the collectivist/individualist continuum to the phenomenon of water mixing with ice (or vice versa). He explains; '*Think of collectivism as water and individualism as molecules of ice. As the temperature changes, the ice crystals expand. At all times you have some water and some ice. Thus cultures have both collectivist and individualist elements all the time and are changing all the time. At any one point of time, we take a picture of the culture when we really should be taking a movie of constantly changing elements*'. (Triandis, 1993).

## Kakala and the Art of Collaboration

*Kakala* has the potential to unsettle the dominance of the researcher over community and to challenge the modernity of research by valuing Tongan relationality, time honoured practices and values (Sanga & Reynolds, 2017, p. 199). This concept of relationality is one that is prioritised in the *Kakala* research framework. *Kakala*, or garland-making, in matriarchal Tonga is a deceptively simple, but culturally rich, communal practice which involves older women sitting on a mat under a tree with family around whilst meticulously selected flowers are carefully threaded together to craft a *kakala* or garland. To be received and worn on special occasions, each *kakala* is designed with a specific person in mind. *Kakala* is considered an organic ‘teaching and learning’ practice, however unlike more western didactic notions of this practice, in Tonga, *kakala* celebrates an elaborate collaborative process of sharing skills which are then passed onto the next generation; a worldview which prioritises ‘a holistic approach to life that encompasses physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing’ (Fua, 2014, p. 59).

The *Kakala* research framework was first proposed by Tongan academic Thaman (1997) and has since been extended to its current form (Fua, 2014). This updated model was collaboratively designed to, ‘capture the authenticity of Pacific traditional knowledge system in its intended form structure and processes’ (Fua, 2014, p. 52). In Tongan culture, the *kakala* process of garland-crafting provides a powerful visual metaphor for the different phases of the research process. Like *Talanoa*, inherent in *kakala* are a number of underlying structures, or Pacific principles, which form the backbone of its research framework; *Teu*, *Toli*, *Tui*, *Luva*, *Malie* and *Mafana*.

- (1) *Teu* is the early preparation or *conceptualisation* phase of the *Kakala* model and deals with research design, as well as the *purpose* of the research and who will benefit.
- (2) *Toli* literally refers to the selection of flowers to form the *kakala* and symbolises the data collection phase. *Toli* stresses the importance of *selecting the appropriate research approach/design* and methods for acquiring authentic and meaningful data.
- (3) *Tui* is the time where the flowers are carefully arranged in a pattern which is appropriate for the specific occasion the *kakala* is to be worn. This is a collective process and is the *analysis phase* used to identify patterns and draw connections, and ask the question, does the information make sense?
- (4) *Luva* refers to the giving of a gift that has taken much time and sacrifice to create. The reporting

and *dissemination of information* and insights discovered through the research is central to *Kakala*. Returning the information to the participants, for their benefit, is of particular significance.

- (5) *Malie* is an expression of *appreciation and gratitude* in Tongan culture. In the context of the *Kakala* framework *Malie* refers to the *evaluation* of the value of the research. It involves asking questions such as, ‘*Was this research useful?*’ and ‘*Who does it benefit?*’ This evaluation is conducted continuously throughout the research process in order that the project may be redirected if necessary.
- (6) *Mafana* refers to the moment of *transformation*, where the spectator of a performance steps forward to participate in the show. In the research process this is the phase where the participants *take ownership* of the research findings and make use of them; ‘where the researcher and the knowledge giver are transformed and in that transformation they have created a new solution or new understanding to the existing problem (Fua, 2014, p. 55). *Mafana* recognises and empowers the participants’ ability to resolve their own problems (Fua, 2014, p. 55). The PLP helped build relationships and project ownership, over the many years of collaboration with Australian researchers, co-researchers, mentors and fellows. This is key to the PAR and *Kakala* principles and contributed to the development of this methodology.

## *Talanoa and the Art of Mo’oni (or Authentic) Dialogue*

Pacific cultures are rich in protocols. As relationships form the most fundamental social fabric, behaving appropriately is most critical in gaining access to a place and gaining the trust of people. The language of *talanoa* should therefore be the language of the participant, not the researcher (Fua, 2014). *Talanoa* can be used to describe a chat amongst friends in a *Fale* (traditional dwelling). Traditionally, it has been used as a loose decision-making forum where a number of families might come together to discuss an issue, share ideas, resolve problems and gather information, often through informal conversations and storytelling, but the primary aim is to build a relationship between listener and storyteller. This relationship may then provide the foundation for collective solutions to problems to be reached if, and when, required (Conn et al., 2016). As a form of oral communication, *talanoa* is allowed to unfold naturally without a predetermined agenda, a point represented through the term’s etymology, which can be divided into two Tongan phrases; *tala* meaning to talk, speak or tell and, *noa* meaning ordinary, or of no particular kind (Vaioleti, 2006).

*Talanoa's* epistemological origins are based in a 'Pacific worldview' which is often described as collective, oriented towards defining and acknowledging Pacific aspirations whilst developing and implementing Pacific theoretical and methodological preferences in research (Conn et al., 2016; Vaioleti, 2006). *Talanoa* can take place anywhere, amongst any group of people and is particularly suited to this program because for many of the participants it is a culturally familiar way of engaging with one another. Additionally, it enables an informal personal narrative or storytelling space to emerge where the members of the group can share thoughts and feelings and '*talk from the heart*' (Halapua, 2007) and develop a 'community of practice' around leadership. This loose informal network of people provides a vital foundation or culturally secure space where, '*I can be me*' (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014). The use of visual and expressive methods are also popular within a *Talanoa* context (as well as PAR) because they allow for enjoyment for researcher and co-researcher and greater freedom of communication which can sometimes go beyond words (Conn et al., 2016, p. 51).

One example of how this cultural space was fostered during the PLP from the beginning of research development was through the 'prayer/reflection' acknowledgement during the program. This is where fellows came together every morning during the program to 'speak from the heart' (Rumsey et al., 2017b) about what they had learnt the previous day, the challenges they faced in their workplaces in their home countries, or their responses to the previous day's presentations. Although this particular aspect of the PLP took place at the UTS in Australia, it was 'owned' by Pacific participants and considered a culturally safe space, adorned with flowers, where familiar food was shared. Each morning, a different country's fellows would lead the 'prayer/reflection' ritual and the UTS staff (conducting the workshops) were present but only contributed if asked. This created a dynamic that was two-fold. On the one hand, the fellows could begin to establish *Ofa Fe'unga* – or build relationship of mutual trust through sharing information about oneself and, on the other hand, it provided an opportunity to gain confidence in discussing and critiquing what they were learning about leadership, and to decide which aspects would be useful for them upon their return to their own countries. This was translated during the research process, with SPCNMOA co-researchers leading the 'prayer/reflection' and highlighting any current leadership challenges during research, creating cultural safety. This corresponds also to the reflexivity learning that is part of *kakala* and contributes towards transformative approaches.

The formation of *Talanoa* as a research methodology is jointly credited to two Tongan academics; Timote

Vaioleti (Vaioleti, 2006, 2013) and Sitiveni Halapua (Halapua, 2007). *Talanoa* has been written about extensively in the literature over the past decade (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Tunufa'i, 2016; Vaioleti, 2013; Vaka et al., 2016) and at various times has been described as both a methodology and a method for conducting research (Vaioleti, 2013). A research methodology is that which acts as an overarching approach, or philosophy, to guide the research process, whereas methods are the specific data collection tools which are used, for example interviews, and surveys. Debate on whether *Talanoa* be considered a methodology is ongoing (Tecun et al., 2018).

Both Fua and Tunufa'i, in separate articles, argue against describing *Talanoa* as methodology or framework because it lacks a 'philosophical' rationale and clear process and is best regarded and used within research as a tool or method rather than as a research methodology (Tunufa'i, 2016, p. 238). David Fa'avae has suggested, thinking of *Talanoa* as an interview tool or method for data collection is too reductive because a tool, in the English-language context, usually implies a fixed purpose; the concept of open engagement with no predetermined agenda of *Talanoa* runs counter to the demands of most contemporary western research protocols (Fa'avae et al., 2016). He explains further: '*it is necessarily grounded in so much more than that: in mutual and ongoing development and maintenance of relationships of care and trust between the participants and researcher, characterised by the researcher (listener) feeling the malie (upliftedness) and mafana (inward warmth) of the story. An interview invites researchers to prioritise the research questions and collect data within a specific time frame, above actually getting to know and forming a relationship – or actively empathising - with the people involved*' (Fa'avae et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Fa'avae questions to what extent *talanoa* is possible, given the limitations of modern research protocols, and argues, following Prescott (2008), that attempting to follow a strict definition of *talanoa* 'as an open-ended conversation with no predetermined agenda' is impractical (Fa'avae et al., 2016). A compromise must be reached which demands that the researcher invest far more time over several sessions, than in other data collection contexts, and when digressions occur, they should be respectfully permitted to happen because that is part and parcel of the 'rhythm and flow' of *talanoa*. This temporal aspect of *talanoa*, characterised by the Tongan term, *Anga lelei*, was perhaps one of the most challenging issues at first for the Australian research team doing work in the Pacific. The complexities of *Anga lelei* have been teased out below, along with how the Australian researchers engaged with other Pacific cultural protocols.

Whilst interviews in the western qualitative research sense are usually systematic, semi-structured and require

particular outcomes or information which is being sought, those in line with *Talanoa* methodology demand a more fluid interview style. This is a problematic aspect of *talanoa* because, as Fa'avae argues, every researcher needs to guide the conversation to some extent (Fa'avae et al., 2016). Tongan academic, Linita Manu'atu attempts to articulate the sheer complexity and structure inherent in *talanoa* when she discusses its different manifestations – for instance *fakatalanoa* relates to the *talanoa* between two people who have just first met – acquaintances – and a sense of *maheni* (or familiarity) can be created through the process of *fe'ilongaki* (discovering each other's identity and origins) which concerns relationship-building. Unless this takes place, the *talanoa* can only remain at the *fakatalanoa*, or superficial level (Fa'avae et al., 2016). An example in this study was researchers and participants taking time to discuss, home lands, families and travel.

The next level is called, *Po talanoa*, the kind of *talanoa* that occurs between two or more people who know each other well and discuss daily matters after building a long-standing relationship of trust, whereas *talatalanoa*, takes place amongst Tongan elders and teachers and ministers and involves topics that are more profound in nature (Fa'avae et al., 2016). This was evident during the study where researchers and participants would take time at the beginning of the meeting to acquaint themselves with previous fellows, health contacts, relevant organisations policies and leaders. *Fokotu'u talanoa* is that which takes place in a formal setting and concerns more official matters (Fa'avae et al., 2016).

A kind of self-reflexivity is also inherent in the Tongan term *talanoa'i* which means 'to talk about', and, as Fa'avae argues, quoting Vaoleti (2013, p. 203), "in *talanoa'i*, the researcher is not a distant observer but is active in the *talanoa* process and in defining and re-defining meanings in order to achieve the aim of what is being *talanoa'i*" and "to *talano'i* is to engage in critical discussions about the difficulties of gathering the 'stories'" (Fa'avae et al., 2016). This self-reflexivity and flexible structure also constitutes a vital aspect of PAR that speaks to the necessity of both social change and the need to assimilate participants' expertise, focus and input with the research process.

### The PLP

The ability to effectively assess the value of the PLP into identifying key aspects, including inhibitors and enablers, for developing leadership capacity in the Pacific provided the catalyst for development of the PARcific research methodology. Each of the leadership participants (fellows) were chosen by their own respective countries, in collaboration with the SPCNMOA's in-country chief nursing and midwifery officers or equivalent, to

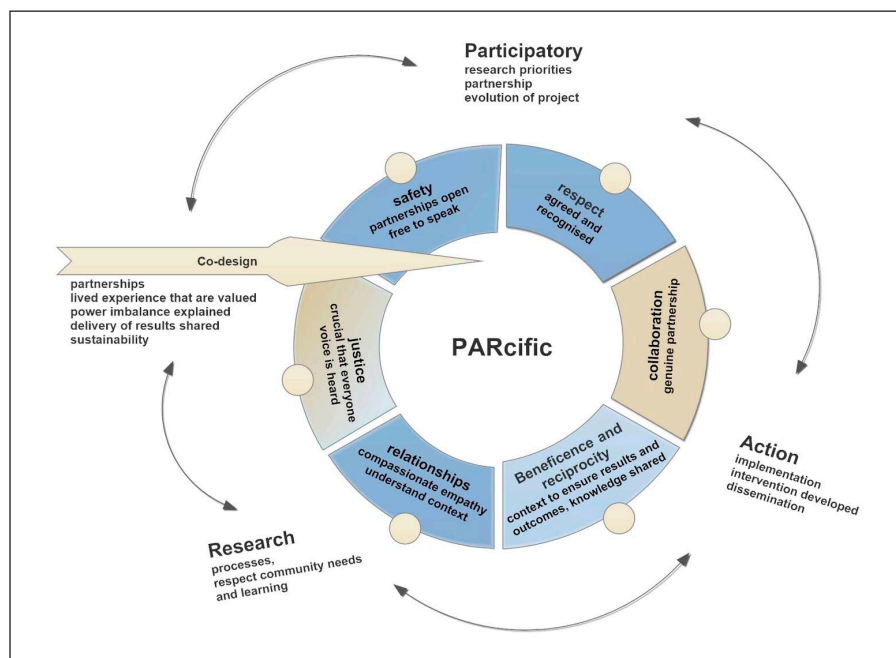
participate in the 18-month long PLP. The fellows were either leaders or mid-career professionals in nursing and midwifery who were considered to have the potential to assume leadership roles, influence policy reform and drive health outcomes. By the end of 2017, 119 fellows and 57 mentors from 14 nations had been supported through the program.

In the PLP, the SPCNMOA Pacific co-researchers were involved in all aspects of the design. In line with the PAR tradition, the Australian researchers acknowledged that these indigenous people are the experts on their own issues, and involving them as co-researchers for the exploration and development of this research methodology enhanced the reliability and honesty of this work.

Before the fellows arrived in Sydney for the 12-day workshop, the country mentors set general regional priority learning areas for the program, including leadership skills, data literacy, regulation and policy development. Each country team consisted of two fellows, and in partnership with their in-country mentors, firstly delineated the major leadership/health issue to be addressed in their specific context (through workbooks and online communication). They then used technical expertise from the region and AUTHORS CENTRE University of Technology Sydney (UTS) during the workshop to build their knowledge, capacity and networking skills to carry out and further refine the projects. They reviewed the projects with other regional fellows and mentors for joint learning and relevance, before returning to their home countries to implement them. The program evaluation was carried in their respective home countries.

The projects developed by the PLP fellows were varied and needs-focused, ranging from strengthening palliative care services in the Cook Islands; triaging patients in Niue; developing code of ethics for Tongan Nurses and Midwives; addressing severe malnutrition in infants in Samoa; reducing diabetes in Kiribati; increasing supervised childbirth deliveries in PNG; succession planning in Fiji to increasing immunisation cover in Vanuatu (Rumsey et al., 2022a). In line with PAR and its aim to research 'with' research participants partly setting the agenda, the fellows and mentors set the agenda for their projects, with the Australian team providing the technical expertise and relevant resources. In accordance with the PAR process, this had dual advantages of being relevant to local contexts and therefore local leaders felt empowered to 'own' their project and readily effect the outcomes. Opportunities for project ownership and achievement, and learning from collective knowledge and wisdom were promoted throughout the program.

As well as defining their own individual country-specific projects, an important part of the PLP was to draw on the collective wisdom and, in the process, create a 'community of practice' amongst these Pacific nursing



**Figure 1.** Co-design research marrying PAR with *Kakala* and *Talanoa*.

and midwifery leaders, which would then hopefully be sustained beyond the PLP.

## Methodology Design

### *Marrying PAR with Kakala and Talanoa*

In order to study whether the PLP genuinely engaged with the local contexts, it became evident as the research collaboration progressed that some Pacific methodologies needed to be adapted and co-designed (Hearne et al., 2019) with direction from local Pacific experts. Rather than a top-down ‘Western’ appropriation of existing local methodologies like those described by Kovach, these organically emerged from the PAR process and meant that the research parameters were in a constant state of review and evolution. Tuipulotu (2012) highlights this further in her Study on Standards for Nursing Practice in Tonga as she explores challenges, enablers and some of the local, cultural values and beliefs for nurses. One of the values common in the Pacific is strict obedience to authority with limited or no feedback on their decisions, thus, discouraging critical reasoning by subordinates to those in authority (Tuipulotu, 2012, p. 7). She explores how this value would impact a nurse’s decision-making and the way they deliver health care, within an ‘Healthy Islands’ approach that has strong notion of leaving no one behind, and providing health services for all (WHO, 2017).

One of the most rewarding and challenging aspects of this explorative research with participants from the PLP,

and one which at times provoked considerable ‘squirm’ or discomfort, was the day-to-day cross-cultural negotiations and adjustments required between researchers and participants alike when in the participant’s home country environment. These covered issues such as negotiating complex cultural protocols, communication protocols, temporal perspectives, and understanding the nuanced nature and process of building relationships. As Rhodes and Antoine (2013, p. 3) claim, ‘[m]any a project or capacity development interaction has failed because cross-cultural dynamics have not been properly addressed’. Whilst it is debatable that cross-cultural dynamics can ever be adequately addressed because culture is a dynamic concept and incredibly difficult to define, generalisations about differences may often be too simplistic and value-laden. It is therefore important to acknowledge and attempt to contextualize some of the complex cultural dynamics at play in this capability building study (Hearne et al., 2019).

Figure 1 outlines the marrying of PAR with *Kakala* and *Talanoa*, when designing the PARcific methodology against the cultural development research principles using co-design.

The PARcific methodology can therefore be described as a co-designed process built upon true partnerships in which all participants share their lived experiences, thus, adding value to the process. Other crucial aspect of the PARcific methodology are the need for identifying and addressing power imbalances to ensure the participants are able to contribute equally. The participants work



**BOX 1.** The following box outlines the PARcific research principles.

**Co-designed** – is where researchers and participants *work in partnership to plan, design, deliver or evaluate the problem and solution*. During the process, participants and researchers use their lived experience to work collaboratively and add value to the research, whilst recognizing and redressing power imbalances (Daya, 2020). In co-designed research participants may or may not be involved in the delivery of the final product (Daya, 2020)

**Safety** – Collection of data in partnerships with stakeholders is conducted using appropriate methods to the Pacific context. All stakeholders of the project should feel free to speak up if they have any concerns

**Respect** – The continuing partnerships, listening and acknowledging non-verbal approaches set the groundwork for the research

**Collaboration** – All stages of a research must be planned, designed, implemented and evaluated in partnership with local research team to ensure ownership, sustainability and dissemination of results is successful. Participants' knowledge is valued and respected and resources and information shared were appropriate

**Beneficence and reciprocity** – Relationships that have been developed over time enable generous, helpful reciprocity throughout research/project process. Genuine co-design, reciprocity and sharing of knowledge will enable mutual learning and ownership of the results and outcomes

**Justice** – Crucial that everyone's voice can be heard. That local research team are involved in design and voice valued. Publications are produced jointly to ensure results are ethical, build evidence, sustainability, relevant to local and national needs

**Relationship based** – Compassion, empathy, and showing appreciation for the context in which research is carried out is foundational to relationships and genuine honest response to research process and questions

towards attaining results that can lead sustainable improvement and the delivery of the final product can be shared. The PARcific methodology must always follow the main principles of: safety, respect, collaboration, beneficence and reciprocity, relationships and justice (see Figure 1 and Box 1).

## Practical Application of PARcific Methodology

The SPCNMOA and Australian research team used the PARcific methodology to conduct over 100 in-depth, in-country interviews with fellows, mentors and key stakeholders to identify key aspects, including inhibitors and enablers, for developing nursing and midwifery leadership capacity in the Pacific. The research data collection took place in eight different Pacific Island countries. To address the power imbalance during data collection the Australian researchers always comprised of a SPCNMOA co-researcher. The 136 participants that took part represented four key groups; (1) country and regional partners, (2) senior health country representatives, (3) PLP mentors and (4) PLP fellows. The study received ethics approval from the UTS (HREC 2013000257) Ethics Committee and engaged participants through an informed consent process, providing them with a hard-copy of an information sheet designed for the Pacific and consent form prior to commencing data collection. All participants were required to sign a consent form prior to the commencement of data collection. Like in other regional qualitative research, data collectors obtained written and oral informed consent for participation from each participant due cultural considerations about the acceptability of signing consent forms (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). The

concept of obtaining consent through the signing of consent form documentation is one example of a western approach that is not fully suited to the Pacific context. Such issues may be a deterrent for Western researchers to adopt or utilise approaches such as the methodology described in this article. Utilising the PARcific methodology, the SPCNMOA co-design researchers were able to ensure participants understood consent concerns, were physically, emotionally safe and their cultures respected throughout the research process. Galuvao (2018) explains that the research participants can only be included if they have the knowledge of the topic being researched and therefore the authority to speak about it. The results of the leadership study have been published elsewhere, and it is beyond the scope of this paper (WHO, 2020).

## Reflections on the PARcific Methodology

A transcription of interviews with Australian and SPCNMOA co-researchers about their experiences using PARcific methodology in this study has been used to inform this discussion.

Using a PARcific methodology and given that *talanoa* has an inherently complex system of protocols, to achieve *mo oni*, or 'authentic dialogue', the main principles which align with Pacific values (safety, respect, collaboration, beneficence and reciprocity, relationship-based and justice) have been selected to be discussed below for coherence and simplicity (Vaiolleti, 2006). *Mateuteu* bears similarities to the first stage of *kakala (tui)* and refers to the preparation stage where researchers should have 'done their homework' prior to engaging with participants – so that participants' time and contribution are honoured and

not wasted. Traditionally, this includes having an understanding of family, ancestral, religious and social duties as well as the social status of individuals that was familiar to the Pacific. Co-researchers were able to assist the Australian research team to conduct meaningful research by providing this background information and context. However, the principles of both *Mateuteu* and *Toli* address the broader need to maintain the cultural *safety* of the participants, researchers and the wider community. The lead Australian researcher from WHO CC UTS, stated that even after spending 20 years working in the Pacific, and having a 15-year long relationship with the SPCNMOA research team, the Centre still needs to liaise with senior community members, within the Ministry of Health, WHO and regulation authorities, prior to entering country and they heavily depended on SPCNMOA co-researchers to act as cultural translators and facilitate their reception, raise local awareness of their purpose and relevance to the health system. Additionally, the Australian researchers undertook intensive cross-cultural capacity development training facilitated by Deborah Rhodes and Ernest Antoine (Rhodes & Antoine, 2013) which acted as a solid foundation for their interactions in-country.

The individualist/collectivist paradigms with competing 'interests' or 'goals' were evident when the Australian research team had to put aside their personal preferences and comfort to conform to the local protocols which they did not entirely understand. However part of the process of doing research in the collectivist cultures of the Pacific demands that the researchers adhere to these local customs, as outlined in more detail below.

*Faka'apa'apa* is cited as a core value of Tongan tightly woven society, and is an understanding of the paramount importance for maintaining good *va* (relationships) and for 'social cohesion, harmony and maintaining collective peace' (Fua, 2007) where almost everyone is closely related. *Faka'apa'apa* can be translated with caution as 'respect' in the English language, although its meaning and significance within the Tongan context differs considerably to that in many other context *Faka'apa'apa* demands researchers to be humble, cautious, *respectful* and engage in deep observation so that they can behave accordingly; this includes knowledge of appropriate dress code, relevant body language and behaviour around individuals of a certain social status. Whilst in-country, the researchers approached every scenario with an attitude of caution and conservatism. They spent time reflecting and deeply observing their Pacific colleagues and modelling their behaviour accordingly. Whenever they were unsure about appropriate behaviour or dress code, they explicitly deferred to SPCNMOA colleagues to avoid offence and potential damage to relationships. For example this can mean 'dressing down' or 'dressing up' depending on the situation and,

... "we would always have our shoulders covered, and our knees covered. If you're meeting a senior person you would dress appropriately, versus if you're in another area of the health sector or with other individuals . . . sometimes you would actually dress down to make certain individuals feel comfortable, and other times you would dress up." (UTS2.1).

"In adhering to acceptable/appropriate dress codes for different settings in local context assuring acceptance and putting participants at ease, indicated team acknowledgement and tolerance of local customs. This positive attitude helps in building trust, assuring and facilitating open interactions and discussions." (UTSSa2.1).

*Poto He Anga* – Researchers must acknowledge participants as equal partners and embrace reciprocity which is achieved by inviting participants to be involved in all phases of the research process, including study design, and by offering participants something of value in return for their time and knowledge. This process was facilitated by an SPCNMOA co-researcher. Both groups of researchers, Australians and SPCNMOA co-researchers, must acknowledge that they are committing to an ongoing *relationship* which requires *collaboration* and continued engagement. The researchers demonstrate that they value research participants as equal partners by ensuring that the information, data and insights gathered from research is shared with them in a way that is of value and utility to them. One of the things that many Pacific countries lack is stable internet access and so it was useful for the research participants to have access to regional resources.

"We always give [the participants] a memory stick (USB) with a variety of important resources and talk through what's on it . . . we've gone back six or seven years later and that memory stick is still precious and they tell us what they've done with that knowledge . . . You can't underestimate that sharing of knowledge and information." (UTS2.1)

"The local participants having actively participated as equal partners in the research may/can claim equal ownership and share of the information collected. The memory sticks with information from research, is a positive gesture confirming respect and reciprocity, returning benefits to the local context. Using the information from the research to help in improving and strengthening their work in their own context indicates leadership skills being applied to contextualize research outcomes." (UTS2.2).

"Facilitating meetings with senior health professionals like Ministers for Health and Secretaries for Health providing information sharing not normally obtainable, was useful to share current health strategies and concerns." (UTSSa3.1)

*Poto He Anga* is also concerned with protecting the participants' interests before, during and after the research, which involves ensuring confidentiality, and

preventing embarrassment and harm (*beneficence*). The relatively small and intimate nature of many of the Pacific Island states poses unique challenges when it comes to the appropriate management of personal or sensitive information. As with all research, the Australian researchers and co-researchers were conscious to protect the interests of the participants by always conducting themselves with discretion and embedding confidentiality into their research process.

*“The concept of confidentiality in the Pacific, in small island states, is extremely hard to maintain. If you start talking about someone on the island you can bet your bottom dollar they know who it is. We have a pre briefing saying, ‘we do understand that you live on a small island . . . and that everyone talks to each other and we just want to assure you that we won’t tell anyone about any of these things, and we will be anonymous and confidential in our reporting . . .”*(UTS 2.1)

*“The second you get on a plane, you don’t say a word, you do not know who is behind you, who is in front of you . . . in the Pacific Islands everyone knows [each other].”*(UTS2.2)

*“The team [is] anonymous in their reporting, and that would be the extent and parameters of confidentiality in the research which participants must trust the team to keep. Confidentiality is both an issue and a challenge in the literal meaning of Talanoa in the Pacific context.”* (UTSSa3.1)

*Anga Lelei* – Researchers must be helpful, generous, positive, warm and kind. This involves being flexible and open to engaging in the duties of the participants beyond what might be considered relevant to the research project by the researchers. It is the researchers’ duty to ensure participants feel like, and know, that their contribution is meaningful and worthwhile. In addition to generosity of spirit, being open to share of themselves and their time was practised by the Australian and co-researchers. Whilst in country, the researchers acknowledged that it is the participants who are honouring them by giving them their time, and they do so on their own terms, for however long it might be.

*“The thing with time . . . often people need more time to respond, so you need to be respectful and . . . [wait] . . . and give them the time and space to respond.”* (UTS 2.1).

*“The time lapse can be huge, and all they’re trying to do is formulate their response and if you jump in too soon participants can get confused, you’ve not respected them and you don’t get the response they were formulating . . . in our [Western] time frames it feels kind of uncomfortable [squirm factor] to sit there in the quiet . . . you’ve got to put that behind you.”*(UTS 2.2)

*“If they’ve taken two days to get to you from an outer island, it isn’t a half hour interview, you leave lots and lots of time, and time is as long as they want it to be. It’s not your time, it’s their time, they’re giving it to you, and so you respect that.”* (UTS 2.1).

During the interview process, the SPCNMOA members, not only conducted interviews but also acted as cultural translators by providing interpretation of cultural nuances. If local languages were required they could also translate meaning and context. They ensured that all participants’ voices were valued, understood and acknowledged.

*“The team’s generous and flexible approach allowed sufficient time and space for participants to study and understand questions in their language before formulating responses in English (English is a second language to most Pacific Islanders). Local participants do need time and space to translate and interpret questions from English to their local or native language, and back to English to validate appropriateness of response for the research. This process can be time consuming to the team of researchers but a necessity for participants to avoid misinterpretation.”* (UTS Sa2.1)

*Ofa Fe’unga* – Researchers should be generous of spirit and forthcoming with information about themselves in order to develop a relationship of mutual trust and respect with participants. In Pacific culture, good relationships are the foundation upon which everything else is built. The led research and team attempted to acknowledge the value of their own professional backgrounds and expertise in contributing to their ability to interact with compassion and empathy.

*“I’ve studied psychology and counselling and you’re a nurse and we’ve got those empathic, open, professions and background, so we’re equipped with those skills too, which lets us come to this sort of scenario in the appropriate way . . . So that’s given us the right mindset to facilitate this sort of work.”* (UTS 2.2)

*“The teams’ in-depth backgrounds ensured preparedness and readiness for facilitating respectful and reciprocating interaction appropriate for effective Pacific research.”* (UTSSa2.1)

The strength of this research methodology, is due to the collaborative aspect of co-design, long-standing relationships with Pacific colleagues and flexibly of the approach, which is not constrained by the specific aims of the research. Consequently, SPCNMOA and Australian researchers could lend their expertise, knowledge and resources whenever requested and wherever possible.

“One of the things that happens while in country is a whole variety of issues will come up, professional challenges . . . there is knowledge that is shared with you outside of the research and the participants ask you if you can assist with those issues and for reciprocity, respect and relationships you always assist where you can.” (UTS 2.2)

“That’s actually why, next time you go back into country they’re so grateful to see you because, not only did you have an interview and spend professional time with them and share knowledge, but you actually helped assist them in something [they considered of value].” (UTS 2.1)

The real impact of PLP can only ever be revealed and judged in the long-term if an appropriate methodology is used. Whilst the short-term, outcomes-driven impact including sustained behaviour change and has been discussed elsewhere (Rhodes & Rumsey, 2016; Rumsey, 2009a; Rumsey, 2009b; WHO, 2020; Rumsey et al., 2022b), the inherent value of this work and whether it has been, as Passells (2010) argues, ‘trusted by Pacific communities’ can only be determined by those leaders and locals on the ground who have the ‘power to implement its findings and recommendations’. Whether the PARcific as a methodology can be used to study long-lasting and transformative impact continues to unfold and be judged by those communities. Recording these impacts through research can only be achieved if the integrity of the research is trusted, like the PARcific methodology, and co-designed by the communities being researched, (Hearne et al., 2019), in this case, the Pacific communities (Passells, 2010). Therefore, an intrinsic part of this article was to describe the development of a research methodology that includes a combination of ‘insider’, belonging to the group being studied, and ‘outsider’ or more external, viewpoints.

## Discussion

Tongan academic, David Fa’avae’s article on using *talanoa* as a research methodology outlines the complexities and at times impracticalities of putting *talanoa* into practice, particularly as an ‘insider’ but he stresses that what is important is openly exploring these difficulties and voicing its shortcomings when writing up research rather than ignoring the failures, because otherwise it is not a genuine engagement and does not enable *talanoa* to evolve as a research practice (Fa’avae et al., 2016). It is worth underscoring similarity between *Talanoa* and *Kakala* and that they are sometimes discussed as complementary models that should be used in combination when conducting research in the Pacific region (Vaiolleti, 2013). As demonstrated in Table 1, PARcific, as a synthesis of the PAR, *Talanoa* and *Kakala* models, fulfils the culturally appropriate research principles outlined by the

Australian Council for International Development with the Research for Development Impact Network (2017). The research methodology incorporated *Talanoa* and *Kakala* frameworks, with researchers and participants working from within their own collectivist/individualist paradigms. Its application however brought with it some practical challenges as researchers endeavoured to adapt their Western ideologies into the developing country context, necessitating negotiation of cultural differences.

Table 1 outlines the relationships between main principles of *Talanoa*, *Kakala* and PAR in the development of PARcific methodology. The principles outlined in the guidelines for conducting culturally appropriate research in the region by the ACFID (ACFID & RDI Network, 2017) and the University of Otago (2011) have been synthesised using categories of *safety*, *respect*, *collaboration*, *beneficence and reciprocity*, *relationship-based* and *justice* for evaluating the research frameworks examined in this article. While the table does not do justice to the rich ways in which these research paradigms can be applied and examined, for the sake of clarity, and, in order for the reader to gain a quick overview, the similarities and differences are discussed. They further emphasize the deficits of applying western models to Pacific research contexts and provide six new principles to be adhered to under PARcific.

One area of particular importance under the *justice* principle is to ensure everyone’s voice can be heard; this will lead to ethical, sustainable research, relevant to local and national health needs. It is vital that participants feel safe to discuss and share sensitive information. Equally, participants should feel valued and free to speak-up if they have any concerns. Participants’ knowledge must be valued and respected and resources and information shared where appropriate. Whilst research teams set the groundwork for mutually identifying the parameters of the research, all stages of research must be planned, designed, implemented and evaluated in partnership with the local research team to ensure ownership, sustainability and dissemination of results is successful.

The relationships that have been developed over time enable generous, helpful reciprocity throughout the research/project process. Genuine co-design, reciprocity and sharing of knowledge will enable mutual learning and ownership of the results and outcomes. Compassion, empathy and showing appreciation for the context in which research is carried out is foundational to relationships and an honest response to research processes and questions.

The PARcific methodology not only provides a culturally appropriate research methodology for the Pacific, but will also address the gap in Pacific evidence as research will be undertaken jointly. This will ensure that results and publications are jointly produced and are relevant to local and national needs and research is conducted in an ethical, sustainable manner.

**Table 1.** The following table outlines the relationships between main principles of *Talanoa*, *Kakala* and *PAR* approaches in *PARcific*.

		General Research principles				
Qualitative Methodology Principles	Safety	Respect	Collaboration	Beneficence and Reciprocity	Relationship-based	Justice
Talanoa (Vaiotei, 2013)	(1) <i>Mateuteu</i> – be prepared and knowledgeable of subject and cultural particulars	(2) <i>Faka'apa'apa</i> – be cautious, respectful, humble, deeply listen and observe	(3) <i>Poto He Anga</i> – consider research participants equal partners and embrace reciprocity by offering participants something of value in return for their time and knowledge, protect participants' interests before, during and after project	(4) <i>Anga Lelei</i> – be helpful, generous, positive, warm and kind	(5) <i>'Ofa Fe'unga</i> – be compassionate, demonstrate empathy, and show appreciation for the context in order to build strong relationships	<i>This principle is not explicitly addressed in Talanoa methodology but is inherent in other principles including Poto He Anga</i>
Kakala (Fua, 2014)	<i>Toli</i> – collect and gather 'data' using appropriate methods to the Pacific context	<i>Tui</i> – analyse the data; uncover meaning, be flexible to unexpected findings	<i>Teu</i> – prepare; consider, plan and design the research in partnership with participants	<i>Luva</i> – honour that the gift of knowledge has been given, be humble and sincere <i>Malie/Mafana</i> are also inherent here	<i>This principle is not explicitly addressed in Kakala methodology, but is inherent in other principles</i>	<i>Malie/Mafana</i> – evaluate the meaningfulness of the research with the participants, find mutual appreciation [respect], apply the research in a meaningful way
PAR (participatory action Research)	<i>Reflexivity</i> – cognisance of the researchers' impact upon the research, the researcher cannot 'disconnect' or remain unbiased	<i>Evolution and emergence</i> – the project is in a constant state of evolution and emergence as its parameters are constantly negotiated	<i>Collaboration is central to the PAR method. It involves collective knowledge production through cycles of reflection and iteration from the ground up</i>	<i>Democratisation of knowledge</i> <i>PARs central conceit is the democratisation of knowledge through not only sharing the findings of the research but also respecting community needs and learning</i>	In order for the research to progress, relationships are foundational to the PAR process	<i>Social justice and social change remains core to the PAR approach</i>
PARcific	Collection of data in partnerships with stakeholders is conducted using appropriate communication methods for the Pacific context. All stakeholders of the research should feel valued and free to speak-up if they have any concerns	Continuing partnerships, listening and acknowledging non- verbal approaches have set the groundwork for the research..	All stages of a research must be planned, designed, implemented and evaluated in partnership with local research team to ensure ownership, sustainability and dissemination of results is successful Participants' knowledge is valued and respected and resources and information shared were appropriate	The relationships that have been developed over time enable generous, helpful reciprocity throughout research/project process. Genuine co- design, reciprocity and sharing of knowledge will enable mutual learning and ownership of the results and outcomes	Compassion, empathy, and showing appreciation for the context in which research is carried out is foundational to relationships and genuine honest response to research process and questions	Crucial that everyone's voice can be heard. That local research teams are involved in design and voice valued. Publications are produced jointly to ensure results are ethical, build evidence, sustainability, relevant to local and national needs

## Limitations of PARcific Methodology

*Talanoa* as a methodology is useful in nations where *talanoa* as a cultural concept exists, for example Samoa, Fiji, Tonga and Tokelau. In conducting research in the Pacific, it is important not to generalize or treat the region as a homogenous group by presuming that *Talanoa* or *Kakala* frameworks are appropriate approaches for research carried out in all nations. However, the PARcific methodology is broad and flexible enough to incorporate different frameworks as researchers and participants see fit. Logistically, implementation of the PARcific research methodology, as with those of *Talanoa* and *Kakala*, also has limitations, for example time required initially to build trust between researchers and participants, travel to and within the target country, and finding appropriate confidential and safe spaces in which to converse. Time and communications challenges, with limited internet to produce joint publications must be considered.

PARcific methodology is the kind of research that can be carried out in the Pacific Islands in partnership with Pacific and non-Pacific collaborators. Its methodological framework, through incorporation of local research paradigms, could have application across most Pacific cultures.

Considering the success of the use of *Talanoa* in relevant Pacific nations, perhaps further research and development of indigenous methodologies is needed for those nations where *Talanoa* is inappropriate. Development of such methodologies should, of course, be led by researchers indigenous to those nations to ensure that they are genuinely founded on cultural mores and not simply Western models reinterpreted. Indigenous methodologies ‘must be localized grounded in the specific meanings, traditions, customs, and community relations that operate in each [unique] indigenous setting’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Krusz et al., also highlights unconscious assumptions of Western researchers and promotes the ‘*prioritization of researchers decolonizing themselves*’ (Krusz et al., 2020). PARcific methodology could be used for this evolution in researchers but again requires resources and time. Additionally, it is worth considering the appropriateness of applying indigenous methodology where cross-cultural research, or research is being conducted by a person or group who originates from somewhere other than the nation where the research is undertaken, is taking place. Western researchers must be mindful not to reinterpret indigenous methodologies, rooted in sacred and traditional indigenous knowledge, to ‘fit’ their own research needs. For this reason, the involvement of local researchers and participants as partners in ‘transformational collaboration’ rather than in a ‘transactional relationship’ (Winterford, 2017), is critical wherever possible.

## Conclusion

This article examines the ways in which PAR and local Pacific methods can be synthesised to produce PARcific – a methodological framework for cross-cultural research in the collectivist cultures. The PARcific methodology, combines PAR, *Talanoa* and *Kakala*, to provide researchers with a framework for guiding their behaviour and interactions with research participants in the Pacific region, with potential application for the wider community. PARcific methodology is still in its infancy and it is hoped, will be further co-developed as more research is conducted in the region. As such it is important to underscore that it is not a prescriptive methodology but rather an approach which highlights the importance of social change. Long-term collaboration and establishing mutual trust may produce better co-designed research. This in turn could assist the Pacific regional evidence gap and build capabilities of Pacific health researchers. It is vital that the longitudinal collaborative nature of this research, relationships built and impacts from the PLP are not squandered through lack of funding for future programs. This methodology therefore provides a solid base upon which to conduct further research and deliver development programs in the region.

There is a clear need for the decolonisation of research, particularly where cross-cultural research is taking place. As indicated previously, the PARcific methodology has so far been deemed acceptable to both groups of researchers as well as, and more importantly, local research participants involved with its development and use to date. Utilising co-designed research methodologies such as PARcific will enable researchers to build mutual respect, uncover more meaningful findings and, in turn, build local knowledge and evidence for the participants own use. At a time when collaboration, co-creation and collaborative consumption have become buzzwords in describing the way in which economies are being transformed, the concepts that are discussed in this article also have considerable relevance in future research.

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Medical Services (Nauru); Ms Joni Nashion, Deputy Chief Nurse, Majuro Hospital at Ministry of Health, (Marshall Islands); Ms Louisa Helgenberger, Program Manager at FSM Department of Health & Social Affairs (Federated States of Micronesia); Dr. Julie Kep, Educational Standards, Ministry of Health (Papua New Guinea); Ms Pauline Kalate, Senior Nurse Educator, Lae School of Nursing (Papua New Guinea); Ms Antonnette Merur, Chief Nurse, Ministry of Health, (Palau); Ms Baaua Teibiraa, Deputy Director of Nursing, Kiribati Nursing Council (Kiribati); Mr Kavekin Neidiri, Chief Nurse Ministry of Health Fiji (Fiji); Ms Bertha Tarileo, Principal Nursing Officer, Ministry of Health (Vanuatu); Ms Alisi Vudiniaboa, Fiji National University Educator, Ministry of Health (Fiji); Ms Marquita Detabene, Assistant Director of Nursing, Ministry of Health and Medical Services (Nauru); Ms Moralene Capelle, Chief Nursing Officer, Ministry of Health and Medical Services (Nauru); Ms Helen Murdoch, Deputy Director of Nursing Services, Ministry of Health and Medical Services (Kiribati); Ms Fiona Stoker, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) (Australia); Dr. Nina Joseph, Registrar, PNG Nursing Council (PNG); Ms Mary McManus, Cook Islands School of Nursing (Cook Islands); Dr. Amelia Latu Afuha'amango Tu'ipulotu, Chief Nursing Officer, Ministry of Health (Tonga); Ms Maaka Rui, Regulator (Kiribati); Mrs Tareti Ioane Ruaia, Kiribati School of Nursing (Kiribati); Mr George Pego, Human Resource Manager, Ministry of Health and Medical Services (Solomon Islands); Ms Puasina Tatui, Chief Nursing Officer, Niue Foou Hospital (Niue); Ms Tilema Cama, Queen Shallot School of Nursing (Tonga); Ms Mary Kililo, Nurse Advisor, HR Training, National Department of Health (Papua New Guinea); Mrs Thelma Ali Medical Standards NDOH, (Papua New Guinea); Ms Tousei Bethel Lesteour Educator (Vanuatu); Mr John Tasserei, Vanuatu Nursing Council (Vanuatu); Mrs Alaita Taulima, Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, Ministry of Health (Tuvalu); Silina Waqa, Registrar, Fiji Nursing Council (Fiji); Mrs Filoiala Sakaio, Matron, Princess Margaret Hospital, (Tuvalu); Mrs Margaret Leong, Acting Chief Nursing Officer, Ministry of Health (Fiji);

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### ORCID iD

Michele Rumsey  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6899-1486>

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