



Rethinking methods of data collection for Pacific people in post-Covid times: Insights from Auckland

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Research Project

- **‘The expression, experience and transcendence of low skills in Aotearoa, New Zealand’** – Professor Gail Pacheco (NZWRI/AUT)
- MBIE Endeavour funded programme
- 5 years – 2019 to 2024
- Mixed methods research project (Qual & Quant)
- Advisory group of policy makers and practitioners
- Empirical base for improved public policy delivery, interventions and wellbeing outcomes for kiwis living with limited literacy and/or numeracy skills in NZ



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Pacific component of the research:

- Qualitative, Pasifika methodologies and methods
- Team of Researchers of Pasifika descent
- Auckland, Wgtn, CCH & Dunedin
- Data collection methods: Talanoa Focus Groups and interviews*
- Overarching framework of the Pan-Pacific concept of **va**
- **Pacific Peoples are positioned as central to the study**



Background

Qualitative researchers navigate significant challenges:

- Political turmoil and instability
- Environmental: climate change, global warming
- Societal: poverty, inequality
- Economy: recessions and recovery
- COVID-19 pandemic
 - Significant changes to our daily living and lives
 - World faces uncertainty
 - Academia – qualitative research, more challenges

Qualitative data collection methods

- **Focus groups**
 - Participatory discussion with participants
 - One place, one time, facilitator or researcher
 - 5 – 8 participants
- Predetermined script of questions
- Useful for depth and insight
- Useful for generating a rich understanding of experiences and beliefs



Interviews

- Perceived to provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena
- Appropriate where little is known about the phenomena
- Good questions should be open-ended rather than yes/no answer
- Length of interview varies 20 – 60+ minutes
- COVID19: how do we conduct interviews in a safe way?

Talanoa Focus Groups

- Similar to Focus Group setting and individual interviews
- Participants are knowledge holders
- Convenient venue or space (home, church)
- Stories told in their own way, language, style
- Facilitator / Participant share power – participants central to research
- Analysis via Pacific epistemology
- Dissemination via Pacific communities



Insight 1: Logistics

- **Epidemics, Outbreaks, Pandemic changed the way Pacific people meet and communicate**
 - Traditional methods of contact and venues no longer safe
 - Traditional style of eating, large communal settings deemed as unsafe
 - Avoid gatherings of Pacific people

Insight: Smaller groups, individual preferred

Cultural insight: Break from traditional, cultural and collectivist norms. *Va* modified but maintained

Research response: Offered online and individual interviews



Insight 2: Enhanced Digital skilling



- **Covid-19 enhanced digital skills for Pacific people**

- Lockdown offered communities time to educate themselves
- Social isolation, border closures – increased use of media apps, emails, texts, videos, ‘selfies’, photos

Insight: Increased participation of digital interviews

Cultural insight: Talanoa modified but maintained (albeit with digital limitations)

Research response: Offered online and multi-media interviews

Insight 3: Gatekeepers

- 'Closed' Pacific communities
- Gatekeepers, exclusive networks
- 'Matai' Snowballing
- Cultural Hierarchy



Insight 4: Older demographic and methods

- Mature Pacific people participation and methods:
 - Keen, interested
 - Quieter setting and interview style
 - Cultural-specific

Insight: Include other forms of communication

Cultural insight: Talanoa, Face-to-face and oral communication still preferred

Research response: Offered telephone calls, letter writing, home visits, cups of teas and emailing questions



Summary & Contribution

- Logistics
 - Enhanced Digital skilling
 - 'Gatekeepers' Exclusive networks
 - Older demographic and methods
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- To do:
 - Wellington (pickups)
 - Christchurch
 - Dunedin

