

Title:

PASIFIKA TRANS-TASMAN MIGRATION, MOBILITY AND WELL-BEING

Abstract:

The research findings presented in this paper are drawn from recent and current research conducted in Australia and New Zealand, looking at the trans-Tasman migration, mobility, and well-being of Pasifika. The holistic understandings of Pasifika, in relation to what constitutes meaningful progress and betterment for us, will be discussed. Several misconceptions about Pasifika activities involving progress, agency, mobility, and remittance will be considered in this paper. Pasifika notions of holistic well-being, holistic development, shared mobility, and collective reciprocity will be defined.

Introduction

The trans-Tasman migration of people from their Pacific homelands, through New Zealand to Australia is an important process of collective mobility. Migration and employment within diaspora is only part of a series of inter-linked processes that promote collective well-being and holistic progress - *fakalalakalaka fakalukufua*.

The findings presented in this paper are drawn from research that was carried out in Auckland and Brisbane during 2015-2019, as well as more recent observations, *talanoa* and *e-talanoa* that was conducted in Auckland, Brisbane, Sydney, and Perth during 2020-2021. This paper will present five key ideas relating to the trans-Tasman migration, mobility, and well-being of Pasifika:

- 1) Pasifika well-being is holistic
- 2) *Fakalalakalaka fakalukufua* - progress or development as defined by Pasifika
- 3) Pasifika collective agency
- 4) 'Economic mobility' as defined by Pasifika trans-Tasman migrants
- 5) 'Remittance' vs. Reciprocity

Important Pasifika concepts

The concept of 'Pasifika collective agency' in this paper refers to the shared efforts of Pasifika familial members, working either in conjunction with or without external groups (including church organisations, government agencies, etc.) to assist, support, nurture the collective's progress (*fakalalakalaka fakalukufua*). 'Familial collectives' are families that are connected through blood and marriage, as well as other strong affiliations such as village and church. These familial collectives span several locations. Although this paper focuses its discussion on the trans-Tasman migration flows and links, it is important to keep in mind that most familial collectives, if not all, will include links to members in America, Asia, Europe and the Pacific homelands, not just Australia and New Zealand. It is noted here that such expansive, global familial networks are not unique to Pacific peoples, however, these Pasifika familial collectives are unique in how they are nurtured and utilised by the collective in their shared mobility within and in-between Australia and New Zealand.

Fakalalakalaka fakalukufua is a Tongan term that was first introduced to the discussion of Pasifika progress and development in 2012, as a part of my research into educational betterment for Tongan women in New Zealand and Tonga. More recently, this concept has been discussed as part of the holistic progress of Pasifika in Australia and New Zealand in relation to their trans-Tasman migration. In this current discussion, *fakalalakalaka fakalukufua* this concept, although an expansive topic of discussion on its own, can be summed up as the holistic progress of all areas of life. More specifically, it is the holistic progress of all eight well-being spheres (Figure 1) for all members within a collective. Pasifika usually identify themselves within a familial collective that is also connected to other collectives. The progress of an individual is not seen as the progress of one, but of many - almost always, the *fakalalakalaka*

fakalukufua of any Pasifika individual includes their significant others; their spouse/partner, children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, grandparents; and often extends to their people, whether that is their fellow Pasifika within a given context, or their village/s or communities that they will often attribute their successes back to.

This brings us to the concept of reciprocity. Although it is often discussed by Pacific researchers as a ‘giving back’ it is not always properly understood in all its fullness by readers who do not share the understandings and values beneath the giving or gift. Reciprocity is not a simple repayment of something. In Pasifika familial collectives, there are roles and responsibilities that define the sociocultural relationships of members and their gifting. Western literature has often captured and recorded these giftings as remittances which suggests that it is a one-way monetary transaction. However, to properly understand what may seem to outsiders as just a monetary or economic exchange, we will need to understand the social and cultural significances of reciprocity, within the familial collective structures and how this contributes to *fakalakalaka fakalukufua*. This will be unpacked further in the discussion below.

Pasifika well-being is holistic

Pasifika notions of ‘a good life’ or well-being can be better understood when seen from a point of solidarity as the collective aspect of a Pasifika worldview anchors Pasifika well-being behaviours. What emerges in my study of Pasifika trans-Tasman migrants (2015-2019) is that we define our well-being holistically. Several other Pasifika studies support these findings (Ihara & Vakalahi 2011; Seiuli 2013). Mafi (2018) and Pope (2017) present findings of Tongan holistic well-being based on two separate studies of Tongan people living in NZ. Both the Tongan women in Auckland of Pope’s (2017) study, and the Tongan elderly in Wellington of Mafi’s (2018) study, have highlighted similar holistic components of well-being. The ‘well-being triangle: ‘mind, body and spirituality’ (Pope 2017:154) and ‘mo‘ui lōtolu’ comprising of ‘the ‘three pillars of sino (physical), ‘atamai (mental) and laumālie (spiritual life)’ advocated by Mafi (2018:42) are Tongan concepts that reveal holistic perceptions of well-being.

Pasifika notions of well-being are holistic (Faleolo 2019); there are eight well-being spheres that work together to create holistic well-being for Pasifika trans-Tasman migrants. The significance of the eight spheres presented in this model is that they are interlinked and present a complexity about the well-being of Pasifika that is often overlooked by other well-being studies mentioned.

Fakalakalaka fakalukufua

When Pasifika have negative well-being experiences and come to expect that their well-being aims are not going to be fulfilled in a location, this negative well-being change perception gives impetus for trans-Tasman migration to occur. These links between well-being experiences, well-being perceptions and location fulfilment are better understood when we consider how Pasifika view migration as a progressive and holistic development that is influenced by their pursuit of well-being fulfilment. Pasifika concepts of progress and development relate to the anticipated well-being aims and hopes Pasifika have for the future (Faleolo 2012; Ka‘ili 2017; Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009). Progressive change and holistic development are embraced by Samoan and Tongan people. *Fakalakalaka* is a Tongan term that means progressive change or development in well-being. A similar phrase used by Samoan informants is *fa‘amanuiaiaina*, sometimes referred to as *su‘uga ‘alūa ‘īa* that means progressive change.

Fakalakalaka fakalukufua is the holistic progress of all well-being spheres of familial members that includes the holistic progress of significant others (nuclear, extended and often wider collectives, including community or village, etc.). Pasifika usually identify themselves within a familial collective

that is also connected to other collectives. The progress of an individual is not seen as the progress of one, but many - almost always includes spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.

Pasifika collective agency

The agency of Pasifika as migrants does not easily fit into the development or migration theories presented in mainstream literature. There is no one theory that can explain all of the processes involved in Pasifika trans-Tasman migration. There are several theories that illuminate aspects of the Pasifika people's movements, namely the mobility transition, modernisation, and dependency theories. Unfortunately, as King (2012) points out, these concepts on their own are not always holistic in their consideration of people, places, migration, and settlement. For instance, the circular movements of Pasifika between Auckland, Brisbane, California, Apia or Nuku'alofa are not designed by the dependency of Samoa or Tonga on Australia, NZ and US. Rather it is just an extension of sociocultural connections, as Lilomaiava-Doktor (2009: 22) advocates.

Pasifika conceptualisations of work and economic opportunities are embedded in their sociocultural values of maintaining good relationships and sharing success and resources (both material and immaterial) with the collective units to which they belong (nuclear family, extended family, community, including church). This is a form of collective agency that I have observed Pasifika embrace in both Australia and New Zealand. With the improved economic status that Australian-based Pasifika experience in comparison to New Zealand's economy, they tend to give freely to their extended families and are keen to stay 'connected' to their families 'back home' in NZ and the Pacific homelands.

'Economic mobility' defined by Pasifika

Anga faka-Tonga is better known as the 'Tongan way of life.' According to Faleolo (2012:8), anga faka-Tonga is 'the combined output or living out of two concepts; Tongan ethnic identity and Tongan cultural identity.' These identities are both subjectively defined although always embracing all values, beliefs and practices that are deemed 'Tongan culture.' Similarly, Fa'a-Sāmoa, the Samoan way of life, is an all-embracing set of cultural ways of knowing, thinking, and living, that Samoan people embrace in their daily lives and decision-making processes.

Lilomaiava-Doktor (2009:16) highlights the existing links between cultural frameworks and mobility, explaining that the significance of this knowledge set is comprised of 'symbolic capital' and 'nonmaterial investments' made people migrating further abroad. Lilomaiava-Doktor (2009:16-17) argues that this symbolic capital is often more important than economic capital; that allows them to live within a Western system of development and individual gross domestic product, and that is purposefully fed back into a collective; a collective migration and well-being driven by a moral economy.

'Remittance' vs. Reciprocity

The concepts of tauhi vā (Tongan) or teu le vā (Samoan) means to nurture social relations (Anae 2016:120-121; Ka'ili 2017:30-33). The importance of these processes is that people and their relational sociocultural spaces are maintained and nurtured. Reciprocity is focused on maintaining these sociocultural spaces - The importance of reciprocity in Pasifika protocol is that it is not only about receiving a gift, but the returning of a gift, in exchange. This is visually evident in celebrations (weddings, birthdays, and anniversaries) as well as at funerals. Pasifika peoples view reciprocal relationships as significant to their way of being Pasifika, remaining true to core values passed on through generations of collectives.

On the other hand, remittance has been defined as 'a sum of money sent in payment or as a gift', a 'non-commercial transfer of money by a foreign worker, a member of diaspora community or citizen with familial ties abroad, for household income in their home country or homeland.' Remittance is written

about by several researchers, noting that it is a part of a uni-directional flow of funds from diaspora to Pacific homelands; 'the action of sending money in payment or as a gift.' To remit means to send back - this is true, but in Pasifika contexts, the gifting is not only one-way, nor uni-directional in familial collectives spanning trans-Pacific locales. In fact, gifting occurs in multi-directions between Pacific homelands and the diaspora. Reciprocity more accurately captures what is occurring within familial collectives whereby members both give and receive gifts.

Concluding Thoughts

To understand Pacific peoples' movements, we must consider Pacific peoples' perceptions about space and meaningful places, like Australia and New Zealand. The process of Pacific migration can be seen as an act of fulfilling hopes for their collectives. *Fakalalakala fakalukufua* - the holistic progress of all well-being spheres for Pasifika families - occurs in concurrence with their trans-Tasman movements, as they thrive across multi-sited collectives.

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