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# Interrogating concepts of resilience and vulnerability as applied to Pacific diasporic communities in relation to disaster response and recovery.

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## Abstract

The objective of this research is to interrogate the concepts of resilience and vulnerability among Pacific diasporic communities in the context of disaster recovery and response; the purpose is to explore Pacific indigenous resilience and redefine the vulnerability of Pacific communities – a narrative so often perpetuated by government and international policy. A reflexive thematic analysis was conducted on three transcripts from disaster-focused community forums which used *talanoa* – a Pacific qualitative methodology. Three overarching themes emerged from the data: 1) A history and a future of resilience; 2) Don't tell us we're vulnerable – listen and let us lead; *and* 3) A Pacific community is a strong community with solutions. These themes displayed an overwhelming level of resilience amongst Pacific communities and thus confirmed that Pacific communities are not inherently vulnerable. According to the results Pacific indigenous resilience can be defined as: 1) Learning from past generations to adapt and build forward better, 2) Supporting and serving communities for quick and immediate response *and* 3) Leading and partnering to activate solutions. Pacific indigenous resilience is action-oriented and activated, therefore it is already happening within communities today, though often overlooked. The findings of this study reflect the need for vulnerability and resilience to be reimagined through a cultural and indigenous lens, and for the resilience of indigenous groups to not be measured by an ambiguous, universal scale. Pacific indigenous resilience must inform policy if disaster response and recovery strategy is to be relevant, effective, and inclusive of Pacific communities.

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*who exemplifies resilience, and reminds me to ask myself, "Will it matter in 100 years?"*

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*This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named in this document is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.*

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# Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter outlines my evolving worldview growing up in a predominantly Palagi (Pakeha) part of Auckland, to traveling and living in Samoa, Pohnpei, and Hawaii – where experiences influenced my worldview and challenged the concept of vulnerability and resilience, emphasizing the significance of indigenous knowledge. The lack of indigenous input in policy is highlighted, the chapter concludes with research objectives.

## Evolving worldview as a child of the Pacific diaspora

Growing up I believed I was unquestionably Samoan. Despite the fact that my parents did not speak Samoan (My father is New Zealand-born Samoan, and my mother is Palagi), I always felt very brown, and very Samoan. This may have been because my Samoan family in Auckland who I saw frequently, only spoke English, or maybe it was because living in Titirangi – a predominantly Palagi area in West Auckland - there were no other Samoans to compare myself to and interact with. I was commonly asked "what are you?" by my Palagi classmates - emphasizing that I did not look like them. I was not proud to be Samoan - even at a young age I knew that Samoans were overrepresented in negative statistics surrounding health, crime, education, unemployment, and poverty, and because of my lack of exposure to Samoans, I had limited experiences to prove otherwise.

I went to Samoa for the first time in 2003 when I was 15 years old, where I stayed for over a month in my grandmother's village. My eyes were opened to the Samoan way of life in Samoa. I was impressed and confused by what I saw. The Samoans I interacted with in Samoa were healthy, intelligent, resourceful, and hardworking. Dissonance formed between

what I had been taught by New Zealand society regarding Samoans, and what I was experiencing in Samoa.

During my visit to Samoa, I remember sitting outside when I heard someone say, *o ai le teine Palagi?* I understood enough Samoan to know that this meant: Who is the white girl? I looked around to see who they were talking about only to realize they were talking about me. I still remember how confused I was. I knew that Palagi people did not view me as Palagi, but I had never considered that Samoans did not view me as Samoan. I was physically shocked, I felt winded. I had always been the brownest student in my classes at school. I had never viewed myself as Palagi, and I had never been mistaken for one. Immediately my deficits in Samoan language and culture took on a different meaning - I was not Samoan. This was a major identity crisis for me. I returned to New Zealand extremely proud to be Samoan, while extremely aware of how un-Samoan I was.

What used to be my everyday reality in New Zealand was now contrasted with everything I had experienced during my time in Samoa. My worldview had shifted and expanded, influencing my perspective on New Zealand society. This shift was evident when noticing for the first time the fences on the drive from the Auckland airport to our home in Titirangi. Every house had a fence clearly defining its border, a clear sign of an individualistic society which I had never noticed in the past. This was hugely different to where I had been staying in Samoa - where as a collective village there were no fences, and everyone knew each other and shared resources.

After this pivotal experience it was clear to me why Samoans in Samoa viewed themselves differently to how Samoans were perceived in a Palagi-dominated New Zealand. I learnt that where and how one lives, contributes to lived experience which informs one's worldview, this in turn influences which lens we use to view the world. Just as in New

Zealand I was perceived to be Samoan, or non-White, but in Samoa I was perceived to be Palagi.

## Who is defining vulnerability?

I have returned to Samoa several times since I was 15, each trip continuing to shape my worldview. One of these trips was right after the fatal 2009 Tsunami in Samoa. The day after I arrived, there was a loud tsunami warning siren. As soon as I heard the siren I started to panic. My cousin and I ran outside to get my uncle and intended to drive further inland. My uncle was calmly sitting outside and had not reacted at all to the siren. When we asked him to come with us, my uncle nonchalantly refused questioning how the wave would possibly reach us when we were not right by the ocean. “When I was young, they called me ‘Tsunami boy’ because when tsunamis came, I would run out and play in them,” he stated matter-of-factly. Needless to say, ‘Tsunami boy’ did not evacuate and the warning turned out to be only a warning.

Looking back, I understand my uncle’s attitude and actions. A warning siren may have been effective in another community, but it had no effect on him as he did not perceive himself as vulnerable to a tsunami. Though I doubt my uncle played in tsunamis, I do not doubt that he, his forebears, and their communities had their own strategies in place, to decrease their vulnerability in the face of a disaster. Despite living on a small island, in a community which many outsiders would have deemed vulnerable, my uncle viewed himself as resilient. I have found this perception to be common in the islands I have lived on.

When I was 22 I lived in Pohnpei, an island which is part of the Federated States of Micronesia. When I first moved to Pohnpei, I assumed I would find a struggling society due to isolation and poverty. These assumptions came from my own worldview shaped from my lived experience growing up in New Zealand. Upon arriving there, at first it seemed my

assumptions were confirmed as I had never seen such poverty. Pohnpei was extremely underdeveloped and isolated. However, soon I found that how I viewed Pohnpeians as an outsider differed greatly to how Pohnpeians viewed themselves. My perception of the island was not held by Pohnpeians themselves - because what I viewed as vulnerability through the lens of New Zealand living standards and lifestyle was completely inaccurate.

For example, in Pohnpei, families often lived high up in the mountains, their homes were multiple small structures often made from aluminium sheets with a concrete floor. I viewed these living conditions as impoverished and rudimentary. However, they had been carefully and strategically built. The houses were built suitably to house their extended family, to be cooler, protected from the elements, and to be close to rivers for food and water. It was common to find that families had often not been in that specific location long but had moved either further up or down the mountain, depending on the needs of each generation - a display of great adaptability.

These experiences in Samoa and Pohnpei highlighted the differing views of the concept of vulnerability and resilience held by the indigenous people, versus an outsider like me - particularly in regard to disaster preparedness and livelihood. It became clear to me that indigenous input is an imperative part of any research, strategies or programs which involve indigenous people, in order to be culturally appropriate, accurate and relevant.

## The need for indigenous input in research

In 2013 I was part of a research project conducted by my undergraduate university in Hawaii, which focused on the issue of abnormally high suicide rates of Samoan soldiers in the US military. This project was led by two White American psychologists, and consisted of administering intelligence tests to Samoans, with the purpose of establishing a baseline that could be used to understand Samoan intelligence and identify suicidal tendencies more

accurately. The test that the military usually used to determine if a soldier was fit to return to duty was not detecting suicidal tendencies in Samoan soldiers as it did for White and African Americans. Due to differing cultures and worldviews, Samoans would tend to interpret questions differently and be less likely to understand questions which had no relevance to their lived experiences and worldview.

While the intent of this research was well-intended, it was heavily flawed. Ironically the main flaw was the lack of consideration for the cultural differences, lived experience and worldviews among Samoans themselves. I was the only Samoan involved in this research – which is why I was chosen - those heading this research project believed me being involved qualified the project as being Samoan-run and that I would have more cultural understanding of those I was testing, despite not growing up in Hawaii, American Samoa, or the mainland USA (where most Samoans in the US military are from). I was also testing Samoans from New Zealand, Samoa, and Australia. This research was supposed to be gathering more accurate and specific data about Samoans, but I knew the test results would be inaccurate and inconsistent due to this lack of consideration of the different worldviews which exist within an ethnic group and lack of input from those inside the group being researched.

These concerns were echoed when the university ran the research in Samoa despite my protests (concerns included that the tests were in English, and as previously mentioned most Samoans in the US military were American Samoans or Americans). Professionals from the national university and hospital tried to stop the research due to insufficient ethical approval and cultural sensitivity, but these claims were disregarded and dismissed. This project was driven by unethical and inequitable practices – and by dismissing indigenous guidance and contributions - cultural safety was lost. Without indigenous input to research it becomes irrelevant, inaccurate, and can be harmful to those being researched. This experience taught me first-hand how important indigenous input is to research, and how

crucial it is to consider and make space for those being researched to express and include their cultural values and worldviews.

## The lack of indigenous input in policy

The importance of indigenous input is not often reflected or considered in policy, strategy and aid. The United Nations (UN) documentation surrounding their Sustainable development goals is an example of this. These are 17 goals described by the UN as “a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future” (The 17 Goals, 2015). Though these global goals are significant there is little to no mention of indigenous groups, or consideration of cultural perspective and worldviews within them. A similar lack of indigenous consideration and contribution is found in the Sendai Framework (SFDRR) – a UN framework focusing specifically on disaster risk reduction (Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, 2015).

The UN has also created a group called: Small Island Developing States (SIDS), reasoning that this is because these islands share many of the same factors which contribute to their limitations and vulnerabilities, despite their differing cultural perspectives and differing concepts of vulnerability and resilience. There is also documentation around how the 17 sustainable development goals can be achieved specifically by SIDS, which also lacks indigenous input.

The categorizing of these islands clearly shows how vulnerable the UN perceives and believes these islands to be. It is problematic to see that the UN is identifying issues and presenting solutions without input from local indigenous communities. Knowing from my own lived experience that perceptions of vulnerability and resilience vary greatly between those living in the islands and those not, this seems highly ineffective.

## Research objectives

The purpose of this research is to redefine the vulnerability of Pacific diasporic communities, by examining and defining Pacific indigenous resilience. This objective will be achieved by interrogating the concepts of vulnerability and resilience in the context of disaster response and recovery as applied to Pacific diasporic communities. This interrogation will be done by firstly challenging the perception of vulnerability so commonly applied to Pacific islands and in turn Pacific communities, through examining the history of resilience and vulnerability in the Pacific islands and how the narrative of vulnerability came to exist. Also, by highlighting the differing perceptions of vulnerability held by the indigenous inhabitants versus outsiders. Secondly by examining the definition of resilience in a disaster context and exploring how Pacific diasporic communities view themselves, whether as vulnerable or resilient. This exploration will inform what Pacific indigenous resilience is and what it looks like today.

Through redefining the vulnerability of Pacific communities and exploring Pacific indigenous resilience - this research will prove the need for indigenous input in disaster response and recovery strategy and can be used to inform strategies for Pacific communities before, during and after disasters.

# Chapter Two Literature Review

## Introduction

This review of literature explores the research and scholarship encompassing the perception of vulnerability surrounding islands - in particular the Pacific Islands. It examines literature around traditional practices of disaster risk reduction in the Pacific Islands and the state of these practices today. Global frameworks - including the United Nation's reports and policies surrounding sustainable development goals - are examined with a focus on how these documents define resilience and vulnerability, and regard indigenous input. The literature around the concept of both vulnerability and resilience in the context of disaster is explored, with an aim to challenge and interrogate these terms while highlighting their ambiguity. Finally, this chapter underlines the needs for indigenous input in defining concepts such as resilience, vulnerability, and disaster risk reduction in the Pacific Islands and throughout the Pacific diaspora.

## A narrative of vulnerability

Islands throughout the world are commonly viewed as vulnerable places that are "powerless" and "fragile" (Royle, 2001, p. 39). This is reflected in geographical research as well as other research areas (Ratter, 2018), and in popular literature commonly depicting islands as isolated, and hostile places of despair and struggle (Campbell, 2009). "Pressures" and other factors that islands face are similar to continental places, yet islands are still repeatedly perceived as "particularly vulnerable" (Ratter, 2018, p. 174).

The remoteness and isolation of an island contributes to this perception of vulnerability, as these factors indicate fewer resources, restricted space, and a smaller population. Islands are considered "resource restricted environments" due to restrictions in

size, and land area (Carson & Nunn, 2015 as cited in Ratter, 2018). Limited resources and population can mean a limited economy (Campbell, 2009 & Pelling & Uitto, 2001), and economic vulnerability is more likely. These restrictions and limited resources contribute to an island being less likely to have the ability to increase their economy, and compete within a global market (Encontre, 1999, p. 261). Remoteness means that help is further away when needed, and political power on a global scale is weak (Royle, 2001 as cited by Campbell, 2009). All these factors add to the perceived state of powerlessness, weakening the ties between islands and other countries (Campbell, 2009).

Climate change is another major issue that contributes to islands' perceived state of vulnerability. Although climate change is a worldwide issue, islands are "identified as hotspots of global climate change" (Ratter, 2018, 173). Ratter explains how islands are often used as examples for the rest of the world: "Apart from the lonely polar bear, the narrative of sinking islands is the most popular representation of risks associated with global warming." Climate change does pose a real threat to islands - the projection of sea levels rising, air and sea temperatures increasing, and fresh water supplies decreasing, illustrate the severity of how climate change affects islands. In particular, the inhabitants living closest to the ocean in coastal communities are "particularly vulnerable to future climate change" as these communities depend on coastal resources for both food and livelihood, and there are often no alternative places to live (Janif et al., 2016, p. 2). However, these factors do not mean that islands are helpless - Pacific Island communities have been "long marginalised, are denied their own agency in the climate change crisis. They are fictionalised into victim populations fleeing inundation, desperate for dry land, even drowned" (Farbotko, 2010, p. 58).

Farbotko (2010) states the Pacific Islands of Tuvalu are often highlighted to display the effects of climate change. Though Tuvalu is highly affected by sea levels rising and faces "flooding, storm surges, coastal erosion and salt-water infiltration into (root crop) pits" (p.

48), being used as an example of the dangers of climate change is controversial. Globally many dispute that climate change is an urgent issue, or even an issue at all. Due to these disputes Farbotko (2010) explains that "in narratives of some international environmental organisations, Tuvalu is recruited to prompt non-islanders to act on climate change issues" (p. 55). Farbotko further explains how Tuvalu is often used as the 'canary' of climate change – like the canary which is sent into a coal-mine to detect danger (if the canary dies it is not safe for the miners to enter the coal-mine), the sinking islands of Tuvalu are used as a message to the rest of the world, "the disappearing islands thus embody not a located tragedy of importance in itself but a mere sign of the destiny of the planet as a whole" (p. 54). The use of Tuvalu in this context reflects how "expendable" islands are viewed globally, as like "the canary – the Tuvalu islands – is not valuable in and of itself but rather is in service to a larger (global) environmental purpose" (Farbotko, 2010, p. 54).

Though there are threats to islands due to climate change, and there are limiting factors which stem from restricted resources, space and population, islands are not the only places facing these issues. Ratter (2018) states that island communities "are actually well equipped for dealing with risks" (p. 174) and explains how damaging focusing on the challenge of issues such as climate change and sustainable development for islands is: "...such perspectives are…flawed and often simplistic if not outright dangerous for island communities. The resilience of island communities may be underestimated…" (p. 173-174). The Pacific Islands are an example of this narrative, where communities have been underestimated and the perspective of vulnerable communities has been perpetuated.

## The Pacific Islands

Though there are around twenty-five thousand Pacific Islands, "more than those of the rest of the world's oceans combined" (Kiste, 1994, p. 4). Among these islands are only

thirteen countries: The Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, The Marshall Islands Nauru, Aotearoa New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, The Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. There are many other Pacific islands which are territories or states of other nations including: the Northern Mariana Islands (a territory of the USA), French Polynesia (Over one hundred islands under France including Tahiti), Easter Island (a Chilean territory), Hawaii (a state of the USA), New Caledonia (a French territory), and the Cook Islands and Niue (self-governing nations in free association with New Zealand; World Health Organization, 2013).

The Pacific Ocean was divided into three cultural areas used to categorize the thousands of islands spread vastly across it. These three areas: Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia originally served only as "convenient points of reference for Europeans" and were "no more than abstractions with boundaries that (were) arbitrary at best," however these divisions are still used today and are culturally, and politically significant (Kiste, 1994, p.4).

Anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa (1993) describes the Pacific Islands as once existing as a vast network in a "boundless world" (p. 10), a world where the island inhabitants thrived, and were "at home with the sea. They played in it as soon as they could walk steadily, they worked in it, they fought on it. They developed great skills for navigating…" (p.9). However, the network and fluidity of the Pacific was affected by colonization when boundaries and divisions were put in place restricting and isolating the inhabitants - "this is the historical basis of the view that our countries are small poor and isolated. It is true only in so far as people are still fenced in and quarantined" (p. 11).

As a result, the Pacific today is thought of as "an invention of the West" (Kiste, 1994, p.3) and since has been divided further with many different nations within the Pacific: "...it was continental men, Europeans and Americans, who drew imaginary lines across the sea, making the colonial boundaries that, for the first time, confined ocean peoples to tiny spaces"

(Hau'ofa, 1993, p. 7). Today these boundaries still exist and serve as borders defining the countries, states, nations, and territories that make up the Pacific Islands.

Like other islands, the Pacific Islands face the perception that they are exceedingly vulnerable, a view often held by larger and more developed countries. For example, the East-West Center was established in the USA and is funded by the US government; in an analysis from the East-West Center written by Ellen Shea (2003) Pacific Islands are described as:

> Vulnerable by definition. By their very nature, Pacific Islands are highly vulnerable to climate change and climate variability…Surrounded by the world's largest body of water, these land masses are often fragile…the physical isolation of the Pacific Islands dictates that they have a limited resource base…When disaster strikes an island, a domino effect can take hold, causing one vulnerable sector to negatively influence another time and again. (p.4)

Shea (2003) also states: "Pacific Island communities have an opportunity to shape the future. To do so, they must move past being victims" (p. 2), the labelling of Pacific people as "victims" and Pacific islands as "vulnerable" – particularly by those who live outside of the islands - is disputable. Hau'ofa (1993) explains how these labels are limiting: "when they see a Polynesian or Micronesian island they naturally pronounce it small or tiny. Their calculation is based entirely on the extent of the land surfaces that they see" (Hau'ofa, 1993, p.6). The defining and labelling of the Pacific Islands is shown through their classification by the UN as Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

## *Small Island Developing States (SIDS)*

The UN perceives islands to be extremely vulnerable, so much so that in 1992 a group called: Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was created. While this literature review focuses only on the Pacific islands, SIDS also consists of islands from the Caribbean,

Atlantic, Mediterranean, Indian, and South China Seas. There are 57 SIDS, including 13 Pacific Islands within Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia**.** These are: Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia (Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap), Palau, Timor-Leste (classified under the Pacific by the UN) and Nauru (Small Island Developing States, n.d.). Many other islands such as Niue, Cook Islands or Guam are associate members - as they are not independent nations.

SIDS are their own group among other, non-island developing countries, and are described as having unique, peculiar, and particular vulnerabilities (Small Island Developing States, n.d.). Due to their specific needs, the UN has programmes in place to assist SIDS in sustainable development (About the small island developing states, 2017). Though the factors which contribute to island vulnerability has been previously mentioned it is worth highlighting specifically how the UN views SIDS.

The UN states that SIDS are "ecologically fragile and vulnerable. Their small size, limited resources, geographic dispersion and isolation from markets, place them at a disadvantage…" (Scandurra et al., p. 382). Their small populations, and their isolation, means everything is more costly, and they must rely majorly on external resources. Other vulnerabilities as listed by the UN include "exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks" and the potential for more "frequent and intense natural disasters" (Small Island Developing States, n.d.).

The UN's description of SIDS, and the initial categorizing of these islands as SIDS clearly illustrate how vulnerable the UN perceives and believes islands to be.

## Challenging the concept of vulnerability

Interrogating and understanding the concept of vulnerability is crucial as it is not only used to commonly label the Pacific Islands, but it also determines the way in which disasters

are prepared for and responded to. The amount of risk an island is exposed to is often what is used to determine vulnerability, yet “it must be remembered that risk is a scientific and political construction attributed to small islands, often from outside” (Ratter p. 182). By stating that risk is scientifically and politically constructed - this statement raises the issue that vulnerability could similarly be constructed to meet certain needs of those outside the Pacific Islands.

The concept of vulnerability is evident in development policy such as the UN’s classification of SIDS which emphasizes that islands are highly vulnerable and at risk. The idea of vulnerable islands is perpetuated through the media who release particular images and news to fit a narrative of helplessness, while ignoring or downplaying events and factors which display resilience. For example, an article in the UN News (2019) is titled “Paradise islands of Pacific increasingly vulnerable to climate change, as UN boosts resilience” – from the title alone the narrative is that resilience comes from an outside source (the UN) and the islands are becoming more vulnerable. Ratter (2018) discusses the danger of these false narratives often seen in the media: “Island societies might not be as vulnerable and helpless as the media and other publications suggest. Such a perspective could be even counterproductive” (p. 182).

The narrative of vulnerable, weak, and at-risk islands is not new - a common view is that “the small island states and territories of the Pacific...are much too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated from the centres of economic growth” (Hau’ofa, 1993, p.4). This narrative stems from the “long history within Western discourse of rendering parts of the world unsafe” (Pam & Henry, 2012, p. 33), which “pre-dates the nineteenth century” (Bankoff, 2001, p. 20). This history is linked to “tropical environments in terms of Western medicine” and “the political concept of development” (Pam & Henry, 2012, p.43). Places viewed as “developing” are often viewed as being more vulnerable to natural

disaster; and less access to western medicine is often equated to mean more dangerous. A motive for perpetuating this concept is that "it…serves as justification for Western interference and intervention in the affairs of those regions" – as with the concept of 'vulnerability' it allowed for "western intervention…known as 'relief'" (Bankoff, 2001, p.27). Not all agree this narrative is deliberate and motive-driven - Hau'ofa (1993) states that though this perception of vulnerability is a "belittling" view of the Pacific Islands, it is "unwittingly propagated" often by those with "sincere concern for the welfare of Pacific peoples" (p. 4). Whichever the intention, this perspective of vulnerability seems to be shaped mostly by the worldview of those administering aid and support to the Pacific Islands rather than by the indigenous groups inhabiting them.

The question remains can *vulnerability* as defined by these outside nations and organisations really be applied to the Pacific Islands in a way which is accurate and relevant? For example, it is notable that despite the constant use of the term *vulnerable* in regard to the Pacific Islands, it is a term which is not easily translated into Pacific Island languages (Campbell, 2009, p.86). For example, in *lokaiahn Pohnpei* (The language of Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia) 'vulnerable' cannot officially be translated (Sohl & Rehg, 1983). Unofficially 'vulnerable' could be roughly translated as: *Saledek* (unrestrained; free) or *luwetheng (weak)*. The difficulty in translating the word "vulnerable" or concept of vulnerability could also indicate that this concept was unimportant (Campbell, 2009, p.86) or non-existent to Pacific people in the past. This translation difficulty could also be attributed to the lack of consistency in defining vulnerability which will be further discussed in the section 'Defining vulnerability.'

## *Pacific worldview*

When examining the concept of vulnerability particularly in the context of disaster, a significant factor to consider is how indigenous traditional views differ greatly to those who colonized the Pacific Islands. These views are so important as to understand what vulnerability means to a specific group, one must understand what they value and how they see themselves and the world.

An example is in the iTaukei (Fijian) worldview where the concept of 'time' differs to the linear western concept. The words that capture this concept in the iTaukei language are *liu* (in front or ahead) and *muri* (at the back, later or afterward). If somebody is walking along a road and wants another to go ahead, they would say "liu" (go ahead, take the lead). If somebody is late or slower, they would say "au na muri" (I will be late or I will come later). However, regarding 'time', the two concepts are reversed - what is ahead becomes the past, and what is coming later (the past) is put ahead. In Western worldviews the future is ahead, and time is seen to be moving forward, whereas within the iTaukei worldview, the future is behind in the past, and what is ahead becomes the past. This is the basis of the iTaukei worldview which stems from centuries of the forefathers of Fiji learning and transmitting deep truths and lessons to pivot and guide current, and in turn future generations (Ravuvu, 1995). This means that for a good future, there are precedents, values in the past one needs to respect, and if this is done, the future will care for itself. Understanding this worldview helps to understand the value of past generations and the knowledge and traditions passed down from ancestors.

Another example of differing Pacific worldviews is from the Samoan worldview and is how one views themself. Like other Pacific cultures Samoans exist in a collective society, and therefore view themselves as part of a larger group. In Samoan worldview, Samoans view themselves as "relational being(s)" meaning that one exists and has meaning in relation to other people but not as an individual. "This self could not be separated from the 'va' or

relational space that occurs between an individual and parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and other extended family and community members" (Tamasese et al., 2005, p. 303). When labelling communities as vulnerable, this is an extremely significant concept to understand as it links directly to the values and interactions of Samoan families and communities. This concept is further articulated by former Samoa Head of State Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi:

> I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a tofi (inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging. (Tamasese et al., 1997)

Family, village, and nation are inseparable from the individual and each other in the Samoan worldview, a concept vastly different to the individualistic societies of the West. This quote also reflects that the Samoan worldview extends to how nature and the world are perceived. These are just two concepts from two Pacific worldviews which convey how unique and important Pacific worldviews are and how crucial of a role they play in understanding Pacific people and their vulnerabilities.

### *Spirituality and nature*

Traditionally Pacific Island communities were very spiritual and "exhibited spiritual beliefs regarding the natural environment that governed the ways people interacted with it" (Crosby, 1994 as cited by Nunn et al., 2016, p. 485). Research by Nunn et al. (2016) involved 1226 Pacific participants who were surveyed about "spiritual beliefs, attitudes towards nature and climate-change concern" (p. 479). Almost 90% of these participants felt connected to,

and a part of nature. Respondents reported “having a personal connection with the natural environment, and thought their welfare was linked to nature” (p. 482). A feeling of being connected to nature is “rooted in Pacific Island cultures” (p. 482). Nunn et al. (2016) explained respondents viewed “Pacific Island environments as more pristine, often God-given, in contrast to a world where a loss of spiritual connections with the land have led to…deterioration in environmental quality” (p. 487). This relationship with and view of nature is so important as it reflects the attitudes of Pacific Islanders towards nature including disaster and climate change and how it clashes with the concept of vulnerability.

A deep spirituality pre- and post-European contact resides throughout all Pacific cultures which creates a connection to land and nature. The deeply spiritual, holistic ways of the Pacific is found within families, villages and nations and contributes greatly to the attitude which is often held towards disaster and climate change today. Christianity has thoroughly spread throughout the Pacific Islands and “most Pacific Island communities consider themselves to have a strong Christian tradition even, though the religion was introduced by missionaries after western contact” (Campbell, 2009, p. 86). For example, 92% of the population in the Solomon Islands is Christian, and other Pacific Islands have similar rates of Christianity (Haluza-Delay, 2014). In some cases, “traditional spiritual practices” may still be practiced within Christianity (Haluza-Delay, 2014, p. 270). An example of the significance of religion in the Pacific Islands is that “religious messaging in the Pacific is arguably as equally powerful as secular messaging (Haluza-DeLay, 2014 & Nunn et al, 2016). It is common to find that disasters are viewed as part of God’s plan and therefore sent from God. This means being affected by disaster (including death) or being protected from disaster and climate change can be accepted as God’s will (Bryant-Tokalau, 2018, p.76). An example comes from research conducted in Tuvalu where participants “believed that climate change was not an issue of concern due to the special relationship Tuvalu shares with God

and due to the promises God made to Noah in the bible [e.g., not to flood the land again]" (Haluza-DeLay, 2014, p. 271). In this example we see that Tuvaluans did not perceive themselves to be vulnerable but viewed themselves as protected and strong because of their faith and God's promises.

The elements contributing to the narrative and construct of vulnerability, and the aspects of Pacific cultures such as worldview, language, spirituality, and nature need to be considered when labelling an island and its communities vulnerable.

## Traditionally sites of Resilience

Notwithstanding the perceptions of vulnerability, Pacific Islands have demonstrated extreme strength and resilience in the face of disaster and hazards which have threatened their communities. More notable and significant than the vulnerabilities Pacific islands face, is the resilience shown by the inhabitants (McMillen et al., 2014, p.2). Campbell (2009) highlighted this resilience, "Pacific islands, and their inhabitants, are not essentially or inherently vulnerable. They were traditionally sites of resilience" (Campbell, 2009, p.85).

Campbell (2009) explains that disaster risk resilience has long existed in the Pacific islands, and many of the traditional methods of preparing for and surviving disaster, if implemented today, would counter the need for external relief. This is evident as for hundreds, or even thousands of years Pacific people not only survived, - but seemingly thrived on their islands before Europeans intruded into their "realm" (p.85).

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Pacific people were not seeking out aid or in need of education or assistance from other nations, in fact they considered their islands to be a "complete universe of sea and lands, contained by the dome of the sky" (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1997 p. 33). Hau'ofa (1994) describes what is known from myths and oral history of Pacific people in ancient times:

> Their universe comprised not only land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny. They thought big and recounted their deed in epic proportions. (p.6)

The history of Pacific people being strong, resilient, and knowledgeable is very important, as islands and their inhabitants are more commonly viewed as vulnerable, weak, isolated, and helpless. Hau'ofa describes Pacific people as unrestrained by the limitations of the islands, stating "smallness is a state of mind" (p. 6). He goes on to give a distinct example of how differing worldviews greatly impact our perception of vulnerability by describing the massive difference between two statements about the Pacific Islands: "islands in a far sea" and "a sea of islands." Hau'ofa explains, "The first emphasises dry surfaces in a vast ocean far from the centres of power. When you focus this way you stress the smallness and remoteness of the islands. The second is a more holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships" (p. 6). Viewing the Pacific as "a sea of islands" accentuates the fluidity, unity, and collectiveness of the Pacific Islands, and minimizes the isolation and limitations so often associated with them.

## *Knowledge Systems*

The resilience of Pacific people not only referred to their worldview and attitude about their islands, but their traditional knowledge systems. These knowledge systems reflect strength, resilience, and resourcefulness. To enable Pacific people to thrive for so long on Pacific Islands it is evident that traditional strategies to prepare for and withstand disasters were used. For millennia Pacific people developed strategies, methods and customs which

were passed down orally through generations (Janif et al., 2016). McMillen et al. (2014) describes these strategies, methods, and customs as “knowledge systems.” Knowledge systems were developed pertaining to all ways of life “the knowledge systems of Pacific Islanders are deeply rooted and complex,” (McMillen et al, 2014, p. 3) they included ocean wayfinding, food security, production, preservation and consumption, seasonal cycles, ecological processes, settlement security and migrations (Campbell, 2009 & McMillen et al., 2014).

These knowledge systems were what enabled Pacific people to continually inhabit their islands throughout climatic and geographical changes (McMillen et al., 2014), and were integral to the sustainability achieved in the islands for the extensive period in which they survived before European contact (Alefaio-Tugia et al., 2019). In 2016 Janif et al. interviewed and observed 27 rural Fijian communities looking at oral traditions in the context of climate-change resilience in which all respondents “rated their oral traditions, especially those containing practical advice for coping with environmental risk, as “extremely important” and key to their community’s cultural identity” (p. 4). One respondent describes knowledge systems he was taught from past generations through oral tradition and passed on in the same manner: “I used to be like a shadow, following my grandfather everywhere. He used to tell me the names of the [different types of] fish and the best time to catch them…I did the same with my grandsons” (p. 4).

Traditional knowledge systems varied throughout the Pacific islands as indigenous knowledge, customs, and environmental factors differ between islands. Food security was an integral part of emergency preparedness, and therefore several traditional knowledge systems existed to ensure successful and effective food security (Campbell, 2009). An example of food security included the careful planning and strategy when planting crops. For each variety of crop, the environmental factors which the crop was susceptible to, or could

withstand was carefully considered. For example, Pacific people knew that bananas were especially vulnerable in tropical cyclones due to strong winds, and yams were good to grow during droughts as they do not need a lot of water. These practices ensured that crops would grow successfully and there would be not only enough food to eat, but a surplus which could be preserved and stored (Campbell, 2009).

Food would often be stored underground, so it would be unaffected by the weather and climate, some crops like yams could be left to ferment (Campbell, 2009). In Fiji communities on Vatulele Island buried *vudi* (plantain) underground for food storage, to protect and to ensure food was readily available after disasters (Janif et al., 2016, p. 5). Pacific people did not only rely on crops for food, but they also depended greatly on the ocean to provide sustenance. Complex systems surrounding marine resources ensured fish populations could replenish, and communities would not face food depletion (McMillen et al, 2014). These strategies meant if all crops were destroyed by a disaster, there would still be enough food to survive (Alefaio-Tugia et al., 2019).

"Long distance noninstrumental navigation" has been practiced for over a thousand years throughout Polynesia and Micronesia (Hutchins, 1983, p.191), it is one of the oldest knowledge systems of Pacific people. Pacific navigation originally was disbelieved by Westerners who could not understand "that people who could neither read nor write, nor used any navigational artifact, should be capable of precise orientation" (Richey, 1974, p. 114). This led to the "theory of the accidental drift" (p.114), an alternative explanation to the exploration and population of the Pacific Islands prior to European contact. "Indigenous Pacific navigation is a system of dead reckoning based on observation rather than measurement" (Richey, 1974, p. 115), the "ingenious system of noninstrument wayfinding" was used to not only navigate paths throughout the ocean, but to predict incoming storms (McMillen et al., 2014, p.7). The knowledge system of navigation included wayfinding using

the stars, identifying changes in reefs based on water colour, predicting weather and vicinity of land based on swell patterns and the behaviour of seabirds (Hutchins, 1983).

Settlement security is another integral part of emergency management, and therefore knowledge systems surrounding settlement security included the ability to select the most efficient and protected areas to settle. Prior to European contact Pacific people often settled on the coast, however "in numerous places people eschewed occupying exposed locations (such as coastal fringes) or, if they did, adapted their livelihoods to absorb periodic environmental shocks" (Nunn & Campbell, 2020, p. 2). It was common to relocate as needed for example coastal dwellings were often "abandoned in favour of ones in defensible locations, typically on hilltops or in caves or on smaller (previously uninhabited) offshore islands" (p.3). Traditionally Pacific people built their houses as resistant structures which were strong, but flexible enough to withstand strong wind, for example by using sennit instead of nails (Campbell, 2009).

These traditional knowledge systems sustained Pacific Island communities through thousands of years of extreme events such as tsunami, tropical cyclones and storms, flooding, drought, and climate change. Preparation and knowing the warning signs of these events, as well as being able to survive them is how these traditional knowledge systems contributed greatly to the resilience of the Pacific Islands (Campbell, 2009; Janif et al., 2016).

## "The erosion of resilience"

Unfortunately, despite having incredible knowledge systems which helped Pacific people thrive for so many years, many of them were lost after European contact. The weakening of these knowledge systems post-colonialism increased vulnerability of the Pacific Islands to disaster, "colonialism, development and globalisation have set in place

processes by which the resilience has been reduced and exposure increased." (Campbell, 2009, p.85).

Janif et al. (2016) reveals that one of the reasons that some of these knowledge systems were lost was that "literacy began comparatively recently" (p. 3), and with European contact came the introduction of literacy which led to the loss of many oral traditions throughout the Pacific. The introduction of literacy followed by modern technology meant the opportunities to share and pass down these traditions diminished, "…the traditional contexts in which storytelling once routinely took place had changed as communities became less self-sufficient…and connected through radio, television, and internet" (p. 4). This phenomenon highlights the severe impact literacy had on oral traditions which passed down knowledge systems intergenerationally: "so rapid has been the marginalization and loss of oral traditions that they were never written down in many societies and now survive only in fragments" (p.3).

European contact with the Pacific Islands, and colonization led to a weakening of these systems, as the European style of living was adopted. In current times a lot of these practices, knowledge systems and ways of living are no longer in place Some practices are not utilized as they have been replaced with more modern practices having changed due to social and economic influences (Campbell 2009). In other cases, these knowledge systems have been lost "through colonialism, development and globalisation" (Alefaio-Tugia et al., 2019, p. 73). Janif et al. (2016) states that the oral traditions which existed in Fiji have "eroded within the 150 years since European settlement" and now only older Fijians in "more marginal locations" hold this knowledge, "often in fragmented form" (p. 3).

Examples of these changes and lost systems include the practice of building houses, and food storage: Traditional knowledge and practices of where and how to build houses was replaced with the European way which created far more vulnerabilities to disaster. Early

Europeans described the houses as “an eyesore” and built houses in rows which looked tidier and more organized but created “useful corridors for hurricane force winds to blow through and wreak havoc” (Campbell, 2009, p. 91 & Alefaio-Tugia et al., 2019, p. 73). Food storage was affected when rice and cabin biscuits among other imported foods such as corned beef were introduced, and this food was used as storage replacing traditional food storage methods previously mentioned (Campbell, 2009, p. 92). The increasing consumption of imported food such as corned beef “is indicative of past neglect of indigenous agricultural production” and a “consequence of the infusion of Pacific societies with Western life-styles and consumption preferences” (Britton, 1980, p. 399). Campbell (2009) refers to these kinds of changes as “the erosion of resilience in the Pacific” (p. 85).

## The effect of aid

It is important to address the effect of aid in the Pacific Islands and the global perspective surrounding it - disaster relief in the Pacific comes from aid, and therefore is key to understanding vulnerability and resilience in these islands. Aid includes resources such as physical goods, skills, and financial grants and loans. Aid came about after the Second World War – as the UN aimed to get more “economically advanced countries to provide a flow of economic assistance towards underdeveloped countries” (Funaki, 2016, p. 40). The traditional knowledge systems which empowered Pacific people to live sustainably in their communities for so long had already started to decline; but after aid became more commonplace there was a further decline and weakening of these systems.

As European contact and colonisation advanced throughout the islands, so did outside support in the form of aid and relief assistance. When Pacific communities were hit with disaster, they no longer had to solely rely on their own resources, and strategies to withstand and prepare for disaster. Campbell (2010) explains the role relief played in the shift of

sustainable living within the Pacific post colonisation: "Prior to colonisation, communities were at least…relatively self sufficient, they now had come to expect external assistance" (The role of relief, para. 1). There were various reasons why aid was problematic for example, though aid was well-intended it was often "inappropriate and arrived long after the communities had recovered" from disaster; another major issue with aid was that it was "rarely given in an equitable manner" as international attention varies depending on the type of disaster, and which island it affects (The role of relief, para. 3). Funaki (2016) discusses ulterior motives for aid including aid being a "political tool to trap recipients into aid dependency" with "powerful nations," a "way for donor nations to access the markets of developing countries cheaply" (p. 41). Funaki goes on to describe aid as "self-serving," as the country donating the aid requires goods and services to be purchased from them - "donors have a tendency to create both the questions and the answers in ways that suit them the best" (p. 42). However, Campbell (2010) describes the biggest issue with aid as the "effect upon the resilience of the communities that are assisted" as it "destroy(s) local coping mechanisms" (The role of relief, para 4).

Criticism of international aid for the Pacific Islands has existed for decades, including the claim that it does not acknowledge local response and capacity (The role of relief, para 4). Speaking specifically about aid for climate change in Niue, Barnett (2008) echoes the importance of acknowledging local needs and responses and carefully considering how aid is administered or it could "benefit some people and places while disadvantaging others," and that "unless aid is delivered with care and purpose it may do little to reduce vulnerability to climate change" (p. 33).

Campbell further discusses the current effects of aid, and future possibilities for change: "Disaster relief has created perhaps a perpetual process in which resilience is reduced demanding even further provision of assistance" (The role of relief, para. 4). The complexity

of giving aid means communities continue to rely on it, needing it more and more therefore reducing their own resilience. However, the answer is not to simply stop providing outside relief, “resolving this problem is not easy as depriving assistance to those communities that have had their resilience weakened may have serious implications” (The role of relief, para. 4). Funaki (2016) confirms the complexity of this issue explaining that if aid were to stop in places where it “has turned into a need, the big question of “What if aid halts?” would result in a tragedy” (p. 40). The complications increase when considering the views commonly held by those administering the aid – that the Pacific Islands lack size and resources means they are not “able to rise above their present condition of dependence on the largesse of wealthy nations” (Hau’ofa, 1993, p. 4). Today many Pacific Island communities rely heavily on government relief and aid when hit with disaster, as well as aid from other organisations such as churches, and remittances from the Pacific diaspora.

## Relief today – Global frameworks impacting disaster resilience

To understand what outside aid and relief look like today it is important to examine the UN’s policies and strategies surrounding the Pacific Islands. The following three documents: SAMOA (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of ACTION), UNSDG framework (Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) and SFDRR (The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction) are global frameworks which are utilised through the Pacific region. Though not all countries follow these frameworks, and they consist of geopolitics, they do highlight points around how resilience is understood and then enacted through global frameworks. Further discussion of these frameworks looks into the consideration of indigenous knowledge and communities throughout, and how the concepts of resilience and vulnerability are used to measure the ability of a community to prepare, respond and recover in disasters.

### *SAMOA (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of ACTION)*

The SAMOA pathway document is an outcome document from the third international conference for SIDS. This conference was held in Apia, Samoa in 2014. The SAMOA pathway document (2014) focuses specifically on SIDS, and their progress in increasing sustainable development (para. 5). It recognizes that disasters, and climate change are a major factor which can interrupt the progress of the SIDS goals towards sustainable development. The SAMOA pathway document identifies many disaster risk management and reduction policies, programmes, and plans in place. Some of these include: Financing early warning systems and disaster preparedness and recovery education programs, promoting disaster risk management plans in public and private sectors, supporting future planning for 'emergency relief and population evacuation,' and placing 'disaster risk management and building resilience at the centre of policies and strategies" (para. 52). These are only a few of the commitments the SAMOA pathway has made to help build resilience, support SIDS, and strengthen disaster risk resilience and management areas.

As briefly explained, this document relies heavily on the importance of building resilience however there is a lack of clarity surrounding this term. Paragraph 98 states the urgent need for partnership to build resilience: "We recognize that given the vulnerabilities and the need to build resilience of SIDS…there is an urgent need to strengthen international cooperation and ensure genuine and durable partnerships." In paragraph 51 it states: "there is a critical need to build resilience, strengthen monitoring and prevention, reduce vulnerability, raise awareness and increase preparedness to respond to and recover from disasters." This statement illustrates the unclear definition of resilience, by not only addressing disaster recovery, but also preparing, and raising awareness in order to reduce vulnerability within the SIDS. There is also a call to facilitate resilience "in the face of new and emerging challenges"

(para. 6); to “advance” sustainable development in SIDS by eradicating poverty and to "build resilience and improve the quality of life” (para. 9) and to “place…building resilience at the centre of policies and strategies where applicable” (para. 52). There is mention of the need to use data and information systems to track the “progress and development of vulnerability - resilience country profiles” (para. 115) which indicates an awareness of the need to measure vulnerability and resilience.

Under the section titled “Culture and sport” indigenous people and traditional knowledge is mentioned: “We recognize that SIDS possess a wealth of culture, which is a driver and an enabler for sustainable development. In particular, indigenous and traditional knowledge…” (para. 80). Though indigenous and traditional knowledge is acknowledged as significant, it is unclear if indigenous knowledge contributed to this framework – in the same section it supports the efforts to, “develop cultural and creative industries, including tourism, that capitalize on the rich heritage of SIDS” (para. 81 d). This implies that indigenous and traditional culture and knowledge benefits sustainable development only through capitalizing on it. Indigenous knowledge should be crucial to every goal, and plan of action. However, overall, there is little mention of indigenous peoples, or consideration of cultural differences between the islands. Traditional and cultural knowledge are mentioned briefly, but mostly only in this section specifically on culture (para. 80).

With such ambiguity and broadness surrounding the concepts of vulnerability and resilience, how can resilience really be measured? In which case can the progress of achieving Sustainable development within SIDS be measured? To achieve sustainable development within SIDS, clarity is needed, and indigenous input should be prioritized.

### *The Sendai Framework*

The UN's Sendai Framework (SFDRR) focuses specifically on disaster risk reduction. The Sendai Framework (named after the Japanese city in which it was adopted in 2015) has seven global targets which seek to achieve "the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries" (p. 12). This objective will be achieved through countries working together to implement "integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures" that will increase disaster preparedness and reduce vulnerability to disaster "and thus strengthen resilience" (p. 12).

The aim of SFDRR underlines the need to strengthen resilience and articulates that this can be achieved through reducing vulnerability and increasing "preparedness in recovery and response" (p. 12). The SFDRR specifically mentions that in order to achieve this goal there needs to be an "enhancement of the implementation capacity and capability of…small island developing states." This confirms the perception of the islands as vulnerable due to lack of "capacity and capability" listing them after "the least developed countries" (p. 12). The SFDRR mentions the vulnerability of SIDS and the need to support the SAMOA pathway: "Disasters can disproportionately affect small island developing States, owing to their unique and particular vulnerabilities…there is a critical need to build resilience and to provide particular support through the implementation of the…(SAMOA) Pathway in the area of disaster risk reduction" (p. 24).

Though there is mention of culture within a list of measures of achieving resilience (p. 12), similarly to the SAMOA pathway framework, indigenous people are mentioned only a few times within this framework: "While recognizing their leading, regulatory and coordination role, Governments should engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples…in

the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards" (p. 10). Indigenous people are listed in this section only as a point on a list of vulnerable and marginalized groups, with emphasis on the role of the government as being the leaders, regulators, and coordinators in a partnership with these groups. Indigenous, traditional, and local knowledge is mentioned to be used as "appropriate" to "complement scientific knowledge in disaster risk assessment and the development and implementation of policies, strategies, plans and programmes of specific sectors" (p. 15). Indigenous knowledge is underutilized in contributing to the SFDRR, and although it is acknowledged, it is extremely limited. Indigenous people are also restricted in the capacity which they can contribute.

Though like the SAMOA pathway framework "resilience" is used frequently throughout the document in different contexts - it is important to note that unlike the other frameworks, "resilience" is defined in the footnotes as "The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions" (p. 9). This definition comes from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). As this is a UN definition from 2009 it is interesting that this definition is not included in the SAMOA pathway framework or the UNSDGs. Though defining resilience helps to bring clarity to the many uses of resilience throughout this framework the definition is still broad and hard to know how applicable and relevant this definition would be for indigenous communities. One example of this is the wording "in a timely and efficient manner" as being unspecific, it is hard to measure, and relative to different communities.

The SFDRR outlines many initiatives and goals towards disaster risk reduction. Defining resilience is a great step toward creating measurable and clear goals within this

framework, however the definition is limited, and indigenous people and their knowledge are not considered or valued enough within this framework.

### *The UNSDG Framework: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

The UN announced 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) in 2015, to be achieved globally by 2030. These goals illustrate that the UN recognizes the significance of sustainability and equality. These goals cover "areas of critical importance of humanity and the planet." These areas consist of people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are as follows:

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (UNSDG, p. 14)

The UNSDG (United Nations Sustainable Development Group) framework (2015) entitled: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is a broad document discussing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The UN aims to achieve these goals globally, therefore each nation has different targets and obstacles. One common target however is to focus on the most vulnerable people, in the most vulnerable areas. The UNSDG framework is “based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable” (p. 2). The SDGs were developed over two years, and the UN claims that those who created them “paid particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable” (p. 3).

Resilience is often used to refer to the opposite of vulnerability in disaster literature (Barnett et al., 2006; Campbell, 2009). Therefore, if vulnerability is viewed as weakness, then resilience would be viewed as strength, but no clear definition is used throughout this framework. The UN recognises the importance of sustainable management of Earth’s natural

resources, and the SDGs aim to conserve these resources, use them sustainably and promote resilience and disaster risk reduction (p. 9). The SDGs are targeting the most vulnerable populations and focusing on building resilience through sustainability. Resilience is used throughout the sustainable development goals despite the lack of clarity around the term; in some cases, resilience is used in measurable contexts:

Goal 9: "Build resilient infrastructure" (p. 14).

Goal 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (p. 14).

Goal 14: "By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience" (p. 23).

However, resilience is also used in other contexts regarding people and communities in which resilience or how to increase it remains ambiguous. The following goals demonstrate such:

Goal 1: "By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters" (p. 15).

Goal 11: "…increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards…adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters" (p. 22).

Goal 13: "Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries" (p. 23).

These examples show that the UN aims to increase resilience to disaster, climate change hazards and exposure particularly among the poor. Though there is mention of specific actions which need to take place, it remains unclear as to how this will be measured.

It is mentioned throughout the UNSDG document that each country has "specific

challenges in its pursuit of sustainable development" (p. 7). However, cultural differences are not considered or emphasized. While this document reflects that indigenous people are known to be a group that is vulnerable, and needs support, there is no mention of utilizing indigenous or traditional knowledge. Indigenous people are listed as needing help, not being able to offer help. Only as part of the follow-up and review section, are national leaders encouraged to seek contributions from indigenous peoples (p. 33). This illustrates that although needs of indigenous groups are being identified, the solution to fulfilling these needs is coming from people outside of the specific groups. The importance of indigenous peoples identifying their own needs, and resolving their own issues is being overlooked. This brings to question how relevant, and effective goals and policies can be when they are not specifically tailored to indigenous populations.

One of the common threads between the UNSDG, SAMOA, and SFDRR frameworks is the labelling and classifying of indigenous people, and Pacific islands as vulnerable, and emphasizing a need for increased resilience. Yet vulnerability and resilience are dependent on one's worldview and perspective, and not interpreted and defined easily.

## Defining Vulnerability

"Vulnerability is an imprecise term with intuitive resonance, if no single definition" (Barnett et al., 2008, p. 103) Vulnerability includes characteristics, factors, and qualities that "create the potential for harm." (Cutter et al., 2008, p. 3). Definitions of vulnerability in general, often resemble the likes of being open or susceptible to being wounded, hurt, attacked, or assaulted (Campbell, 2009). The more resilient an individual or group is, the less vulnerable they become to disasters, and other hazards (Cutter et al., 2008). Therefore, before focusing on resilience one must understand vulnerability.

Within the realm of disaster risk management There are two forms of vulnerability - human vulnerability at an individual level and vulnerability of a community or within a social system. Literature defines human vulnerability as being “a product of physical exposure to natural hazard, and human capacity to prepare for mitigate and to recover from (cope with) any negative impacts of disaster” (Pelling & Uitto, 2001, p. 51). How much exposure does one have to the hazard, and how much capacity to recover? Pelling & Uitto (2001) identify that this definition leads to the conclusion that vulnerability extends from access to economic, political, and geographical assets - assets in which islands possess only a finite amount. Under this definition a lack of resources would decrease capacity to cope and recover and increase exposure.

Vulnerability within a social system is based on two aspects: exposure, and the sensitivity of system (Cutter et al., 2008). Exposure being how high the level of potential risk is for people and places, what and who is at risk, how many people are at risk, and who they are (demographics: elderly, children etc.). Sensitivity of system is how high the level of potential risk is for people and places and the degree to which they can be harmed (Cutter et al., 2008).

These definitions are not without critique, Encontre (1999) questions, “Can island vulnerability be measured? ...there does not seem to be a direct connection between the level of economic performance and the average number of natural disasters faced by the individual island States” (p. 263). Encontre raises the point of how flawed measuring vulnerability and resilience can be when measuring only a limited range of things such as economic performance. Though most processes of assessing vulnerability include consider exposure to risk and damage, and capacity to recover there is “no strong consensus on the best methods” (Barnett et al., 2008, p. 103).  Barnett et al. (2008) discusses the many challenges and complexities of “simplifying and conveying the complex reality of vulnerability in the form

of an index" (p. 106). Firstly, vulnerability involves defining what is normal so that the "potential for loss" and what can be categorized as "unacceptable loss" can be determined. This process is subjective and depends on "what matters to an exposed group…vulnerability is therefore about values at risk, and who holds those values" (p. 104). In defining vulnerability, it is crucial to recognise that social systems, values, culture, and worldview differ in each location and therefore cannot be defined without consideration of these factors.

## Defining Resilience

As mentioned previously, resilience is a term often paired with vulnerability, which is commonly used when discussing SIDS, and throughout the literature surrounding disaster management and climate change.

The concept of "resilience" can be controversial as there is not one "broadly accepted single definition" (Cutter et al., 2008, p. 3) within the area of disaster risk resilience and management. Definitions vary greatly, and include multiple aspects - so much so, that the concept of resilience has received much criticism. The critiques are towards its "abstract and malleable...nature" (Aldunce et al., 2015, p. 2), it is seen as an imprecise and ambiguous concept, which can be manipulated to fit specific interests. Critics of resilience highlight the "lack of substance and conceptual clarity" of the resilience theory. Despite the use of resilience throughout discourses and policies, "there is no clarity on how to apply resilience to practice" (Aldunce et al., 2015, p. 2) – this was highlighted in the global frameworks previously reviewed.

After reviewing the literature around why the term resilience proves problematic, Alexander (2013) explains this further by stating, "I believe that there is bound to be a sense of disillusionment if the term is pushed to represent more than it can deliver. "Resilience", "resiliency" and "resilient" are very good descriptors of objectives, intentions, states of mind

and body, and the behaviour of people and things. The problem lies in attempts to make resilience a full-scale paradigm or even a science" (p. 2713).

Definitions of resilience include characteristics of response, adaptation, recovery, self-learning, advancement, and preparation:

Response, advancement, and adaptation: Resilience can be defined as "a dynamic interaction between an individual, their social circumstances and their environment over time that determines their capacity to adapt or respond to risk" (Paton & Johnston, 2017, p. 139). It is also the capacity for individuals to "navigate their way" in the face of disaster to access "psychological, social, cultural and physical resources that sustain their wellbeing" and "negotiate for these resources…in culturally meaningful ways" (Ungar, 2008, p. 225 as cited by Paton & Johnston, 2017). Aldunce et al. (2014) describes how resilience has shifted "from the core idea of 'resisting and recovering' into 'adapting'; and from 'stability' to 'change.' This evolution of the concept is about…adaptability" (p. 3).

Resilience "includes not only a system's capacity to return to the state (or multiple states) that existed before the disturbance, but also advancement through learning and adaptation (Cutter et al., 2008, p. 599-600). It involves being able to absorb disturbances in a system, and adapting within that system using resources to learn, change, re-organize, and be innovative (Adger et al., 2011; Cutter et al., 2008). Therefore, a resilient group should "theoretically be stronger after a disaster, and more prepared to face another" (Alefaio et al. 2019, p. 73).

Recovery and self-learning: Disaster resilience involves recovery, and self-learning - focusing usually on larger groups such as organisations and communities (Alefaio et al., 2019; Aldunce et al., 2015). In the face of a disaster "a resilient individual or group is able to purposefully identify, access, and utilize available resources to recover and return to pre-

disaster baseline functioning" (Alefaio et al., 2019), and "...absorb, recover, cope, 'bounce back', mitigate, withstand or resist the impacts of hazards" (Aldunce et al., 2015, p. 2).

Preparation: Other definitions of resilience focus on the aspect of preparation, rather than just recovery. It is important to have a "capacity to anticipate, prepare and plan in order to recover from the negative impacts of a hazard and to mitigate, prevent and minimize losses, suffering and social disruption" (Aldunce et al., 2015, p. 2). Disaster resilience is based on the ability to prepare for disasters, thus highlighting the importance of providing education around disaster risk resilience and management to vulnerable communities.

Community resilience is an example of the lack of clarity in defining the term resilience. Resilience has been described as "a measure of how well societies can adapt" (Aldunce et al., 2015, p. 2). Despite these descriptions and definitions of resilience, and the fact that resilience has been widely studied - the inability to develop standard and consistent measurements to evaluate the disaster resilience of a community is a serious issue. For example, in community resilience - resilience has been described as "a measure of how well societies can adapt" (Aldunce et al., 2015, p. 2), yet societies differ greatly, and their ability to adapt or standard of what that means will also differ depending on cultural worldview and lived experiences. Cutter et al., (2008) states that there is uncertainty around which variables lead to resilience, and how to utilize these variables in order to measure it (p. 4). Critics argue that without knowing how resilience is determined, maintained, and measured the assumption that resilient communities are less vulnerable to risk, is not valid (Cutter et al., 2008).

In the realm of natural disasters, sustainability has been defined as the capacity to "tolerate—damage, diminished productivity, and reduced quality of life from an extreme event without significant outside assistance" (Cutter et al., 2008, p. 5). Therefore, sustainability and resilience couple in some definitions, particularly regarding the concept of how much shock a system can ingest (Aldunce et al., 2015) while being able to sustain

baseline functioning. Sustainability is "closely tied to this idea is self-reliance, which is an important part of being resilient. Self-reliance is being able to survive, while not being overly dependent on help from others" (Alefaio et al., 2019, p. 69). In order to have the capacity and ability to prepare, respond, and recover from disasters, an individual or community needs to have sufficient access to sustainable resources.

## The need for indigenous input

The need for indigenous input in the realm of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is clear – with the ambiguous definitions and the varying concepts of resilience and vulnerability - cultural and indigenous knowledge is invaluable in DRR policy, aid, strategy, and framework. In the UNSDG framework (2015) it notes that "each country faces specific challenges" (p. 7), acknowledging that sustainable development will look different in each country. If the indigenous SIDS populations played an integral role in these areas, it would contribute to achieving the SDGs and overall increasing sustainability. Indigenous groups vary depending on their culture, and therefore their way of life, values and worldviews will also vary. This knowledge can only be understood by involving indigenous populations in the creation of goals and policies.

Research on indigenous Fijian women illustrates the need to allow indigenous populations to create criteria, and definitions for themselves, in this case for health. Litea Meo-Sewabu (2015) found that what was perceived as good health for Fijian women, was not including significant cultural constructs. Meo-Sewabu found that health needed to be defined more broadly, including cultural concepts of service, spirituality, physical appearance, completion, and completeness of tasks, and maintaining harmony in relationships (p. 277). These concepts are deeply rooted in Fijian indigenous culture, and lead to total wellbeing,

despite being greatly different to Western perspectives of health. "Understanding the cultural factors that influence wellness beliefs can help...to meet the needs of cultural groups and deliver a service that is culturally appropriate. Only then can the root causes of what enhances and hinders health and wellbeing be understood and issues addressed accordingly" (p. 263). This example shows just how crucial culture is in defining health and wellbeing, which can be applied to defining resilience – it is evident how integral cultural consideration and indigenous input is.

While living in the Federated States of Micronesia, Pohnpei, I witnessed examples of how my definition of need and wellbeing differed from the indigenous people of Pohnpei. In Pohnpei the customs surrounding death are deeply rooted in the Pohnpeian culture. When someone dies it is the responsibility of the family to host a *mehla* (funeral) which lasts for several days. This involves feeding family, friends, and the community. An invitation must be sent to the *nahnmwarki* (king) of the district, and food and *sakau* (kava) must be provided. Although extended family and others may bring *sakau* and food to help with the *mehla*, the primary responsibility lies with the family of the deceased, and the *mehla is* hosted in their home. If the family does not have the space or means to provide a culturally appropriate *mehla*, this could bring shame to the family, and the inability to follow cultural protocol can be disruptive to their overall wellbeing.

Life in Pohnpei is not centred on vocational aspirations, but on family. Children are taught *doadoahk en sapw* (work of the land) from a young age, this education is what they need to thrive in society and provide for their families. Pohnpeians are active, hard-working, and productive people. Employment is generally still viewed as a foreign concept. Though many people have paid employment (particularly in and near the town) majority of the island still lives off the land. The term *doadoahk en wai* literally translates to mean "foreign work,"

a term used to describe paid work. *Doadoahk en sapw* is highly valued, as this work provides the essential food and shelter needed for one's family. The overall mentality toward education, and employment differs from westernized societies, which can only be understood through involvement with indigenous peoples of Pohnpei.

These are examples from SIDS indigenous populations of how quality of life depends on cultural values, which are unique to each indigenous group. To understand how to define resilience and vulnerability, consideration of what basic human needs look like in each culture must be taken. These examples illustrate that differing cultural views, protocol and values exist between each unique island, emphasizing why indigenous input is essential in DRR policy, aid, and defining vulnerability and resilience,

## The Pacific diaspora today

Today Pacific people are spready across the Pacific Islands and the Pacific diaspora. The Pacific diaspora are the Pacific populations which have originated from the Pacific Islands and are now living elsewhere. Included in the Pacific diaspora are the significant Pacific populations living in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the USA. (Faleolo, 2019; Hau'ofa, 1993). These populations display the fluidity of the Pacific, and how Pacific people continue to overcome the borders and boundaries imposed by European settlers. Hau'ofa (1993) describes the emergence of the Pacific diaspora:

> Islanders have broken out of their confinement, are moving around and away from their homelands, not so much because their countries are poor, but because they had been unnaturally confined and severed from much of their traditional sources of wealth, and because it is in their blood to be mobile. (p. 11).

Hau'ofa describes this fluidity further connecting the diaspora to the spiritual nature of Pacific worldview: "The world of Oceania may no longer include the heavens and the

underworld; but it certainly encompasses the great cities of Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada" (p.13).

Pacific people are now "living in significant collective proportions" in New Zealand (Faleolo, 2019, p. 1), a population which continues to grow rapidly. Currently most Pacific people in New Zealand have been born here and are not from their "traditional island homelands" (Macpherson, 2004, p. 139), changing from being mostly a "migrant group to a largely New Zealand-born population" (Statistics New Zealand, 2010, p.11). In some cases, there are more Pacific people living in New Zealand than in their island home countries such as Niue, the Cook Islands, and Tokelau. Niue specifically has a population ten times greater than in Niue. Three out of five Pacific people living in New Zealand were born in New Zealand, the majority being Samoan, followed by Cook Island Māori, then Tongan (Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

The Pacific diaspora continues to support their immediate and extended families which make up the Pacific communities still living in the Pacific Islands. A key part of this support is through "money sent home – remittances…an important source of support." (Alefaio, 2020, p.2). Remittances have been misunderstood by those outside of Pacific communities. Hau'ofa (1993) explains a common misinterpretation of remittances:

> Islanders in their homelands are not the parasites on their relatives abroad…Economists do not take account of the social centrality of the ancient practice of reciprocity, the core of all Oceanic cultures. They overlook the fact that for everything homeland relatives receive they reciprocate…by maintaining ancestral roots and lands for everyone. ... This is not dependence but interdependence. (p. 12-13)

Hau'ofa clearly explains the significance and reciprocal nature of remittances and highlights a significant difference in worldview and culture. Remittances are not simply about sending

money; and reciprocation and interdependence is not based on an exchange of cash or goods of equal monetary value. There are “complex and important social and economic dimensions” (Connell & Brown, 2005, p. 5) to remittances which are immeasurable.

Remittances are sent “home” to the Pacific Islands year-round and contribute significantly to Pacific economies, especially in the time of disaster. Due to this practice when disasters do hit, the Pacific diaspora is quick to respond, as “regular channels of remittances are already in place” meaning the Pacific diaspora’s response is commonly faster than government and international aid (Alefaio, 2020, p.2), often sustaining families beyond the timeframe of aid. This is an example of a significant practice which needs to be considered when defining and measuring vulnerability and resilience in the Pacific.

## Conclusion

This study exists to identify more of these unique practices which may be overlooked when assessing vulnerability and resilience, and to create space for indigenous input. The label of vulnerability is still applied to Pacific communities living in the islands but also living within the Pacific diaspora. Like myself, there are many children of the Pacific diaspora who view themselves as resilient and are living within Pacific communities in New Zealand today. These Pacific communities living in New Zealand represent an indigenous Pacific worldview as descendants of these Pacific nations. It is important to acknowledge and recognise the views of these communities to effectively engage in building resilience from a strengths-based Pacific lens. In doing so, Pacific communities are empowered, and the challenges of vulnerability are better understood.

# Chapter Three Method

## Pacific methodology

> In considering epistemology...there is a danger in assuming that all Western, Eastern and Pacific knowledges have the same origins and construction so that, by implication, the same instruments may be used for collecting and analysing data and constructing new knowledge. Researchers whose knowing is derived from Western origins are unlikely to have values and lived realities that allow understanding of issues pertaining to knowledge and ways of being that originated from the nga wairua (spirits) and whenua of Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Tuvalu or the other Pacific nations. (p. 22)

Notable Tongan scholar in Talanoa methodology Timote Vaioleti (2006) explains in the above paragraph how crucial it is to have worldview and culture inform one's epistemology and in turn one's research paradigm. It is imperative to acknowledge that one's own ontology - how one views the world - has been shaped by one's culture, values, lived experiences, and worldview, which may not align with the groups being researched. A significant point that Vaioleti makes within this paragraph is that the lived experiences and values of Western researchers will not "allow understanding" (p. 22) of Pacific ways and knowledge. This is key as it illustrates that despite desire, empathy, and study, one cannot simply give up their own ontology to adopt another. Therefore, indigenous input, or insider research is crucial as even with the best of intentions from Western researchers as they aim to understand, and champion culture and protocol, they cannot substitute for a researcher who holds the same ontology as "it is difficult to isolate the researcher from the research. Whatever the researcher believes or assumes about the world…will inevitably put colour and scent to his or her research…" (Klakegg, 2016, p. 57). as the groups being researched or the group that the

research most significantly concerns. Ontology is vital as it dictates the epistemology, affecting how the research is conducted, and the relationship between the researcher and what is being studied throughout all stages of research (Klakegg, 2016).

In her book Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) challenges traditional Western methodology, calling for a decolonization of methodology. Smith quotes New Zealand filmmaker Merata Mita “We have a history of people putting Māori under a microscope in the same way a scientist looks at an insect. The ones doing the looking are giving themselves the power to define” (Mita 1989 as cited in Smith, 2012, p. 117). This analogy emphasizes the loss of power and control over narrative when research is not conducted by indigenous groups.

Vaioleti (2006) points out that “Pacific peoples have endured years of disempowering research, with little social or economic improvement in their health and education” (p. 22). This has been my own experiences involved in undergraduate research mentioned in the introduction and serves as a reminder of my own responsibility as a Pacific researcher, studying Pacific communities. As an insider-outsider researcher (An insider to the community of Pacific and an outsider as a researcher), I have responsibilities both as a child of the Pacific and as a researcher. Drawing on Pacific methodology ensures research is conducted in a manner which is culturally respectful and appropriate. Further it contributes authentic voice from those who are at the core of this study. Based on my aforementioned experiences in the introduction and literature review, it was extremely important to me that I looked to what already existed within Pacific communities when considering how to collect data, and where to collect it from.

In acknowledging my own worldview, I realize that growing up in an English-speaking household and country, with only one parent of Pacific descent informs my ontological position. I cannot assume that my comparatively limited exposure to *Fa'a Samoa*

(The Samoan way – including traditional culture, protocol, and language) equates to me having the same worldview or lived experiences as someone who grew up immersed in *Fa'a Samoa* in all aspects of their life. However, this also does not make me an outsider to the Samoan community. Smith challenges the idea that indigenous cultures must be homogeneous stating that there "is a belief indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves and still claim to be indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse or contradictory. Only the West has that privilege" (Smith, 2012, p. 142). This is important to acknowledge as Pacific cultures are complex and multidimensional, and people do not have to meet criteria to be a part of them. I remain aware of these cultural differences within Pacific communities, and though I acknowledge my deficits in knowledge of *Fa'a Samoa* I am undoubtedly a Samoan researcher.

Over the years Pacific methodologies have continued to develop, and more Pacific frameworks now exist to guide Pacific researchers including: Talanoa (Halapua, 2008; Vaioleti, 2006), Faafaletui (Tamasese et al., 2005), and Vanua (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). Talanoa was used in this study as it is the most culturally responsive way to engage and understand the thoughts and views of Pacific communities; it was immediately clear that conducting interviews or using quantitative tools such as surveys and testing would not be effective or appropriate.

## *Talanoa*

Vaioleti (2006) states that Talanoa is "a personal encounter" (p. 21) and argues that it "allows more mo'oni (pure, real, authentic) information to be available for Pacific research" (p. 21). Vaioleti explains that on a superficial level Talanoa "can be referred to as conversation...whether formal or informal" (p. 23). In Tongan, *talanoa* is translated literally to mean "talking about nothing in particular, and interacting without a rigid framework" as

*tala* means “to command, tell, relate... and *noa* means common, old, of no value, without thought...” (p. 23). However, Talanoa should not be considered at only a superficial and literal level as “it is the sum of noa and tala that adds to the total concept” (p. 24). If Talanoa is done well it “holistically intermingles” the experience, knowledge and emotions of both researchers and participants (p. 24).

Vaioleti (2006) shares his understanding from locals in Samoa of Talanoa: “It is the ancient practice of multi-level and multi-layered critical discussions and free conversations. It also includes the way that community, business and agency leaders receive information from the community, which they then use to make decisions about civil, church and national matters” (p. 24). This understanding and explanation reflects how significant Talanoa is in all areas, not just research.

Using this method of Talanoa is ideal for Pacific communities, and Talanoa HUBBS (Humans United Beyond Borders Symposiums) is an example of how this method is being used in Pacific communities today.

## Talanoa HUBBS

Talanoa HUBBS (Humans United Beyond Borders Symposiums) uses the methodology of Talanoa and are hosted and organized by NIUPATCH - a research collective focused on Pacific-indigenous humanitarian psychology which operates under the School of Psychology at Massey University. The purpose of NIUPATCH includes highlighting resilient and sustainable Pacific communities. NIUPATCH created Talanoa HUBBS as a way to help fulfil their purpose by strengthening and mobilising (Alefaio-Tugia et al., 2019) Pacific communities through Talanoa. These community-led *talanoa* aim to bring together Pacific communities and also bridge the gap which often exists between research and practice.

This action of bridging the gap and promoting relationships between community groups and academics (research and practice) provides a notable example of two systems working together, which is why Talanoa HUBBS was specifically chosen for data collection. Talanoa HUBBS provide an insight into different Pacific communities; the work happening within these communities, as well as their strengths, concerns, and vulnerabilities. Talanoa HUBBS helps to diversify the perspective of those involved, as participants are not only people representing different community groups: such as churches and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), but also those from academia and government.

The first Talanoa HUBBS was held in Tonga in 2017 where my role as co-ordinator provided insider researcher knowledge and insight. Since then, there have been over ten held in Tonga, Samoa, Auckland and more recently due to Covid19 restrictions on Zoom, and Facebook. Talanoa HUBBS always focus on an issue relevant to Pacific communities, the extensive range of topics have included: Community resilience; Disaster risk resilience and humanitarian response; Justice, faith, and injustice; Faith-based initiatives for violence prevention; Samoan pastoral counselling and trauma recovery; The living wage; Covid19 recovery; Family and sexual violence; and Pacific-diasporic psychosocial recovery.

Talanoa HUBBS are always run in a similar way although the location and topic may vary. A panel of approximately four are selected, as previously mentioned this panel may consist of community leaders, academics, and experts in a field relevant to the specified topic. Talanoa HUBBS are generally limited to one hour, with time before and after to mingle and eat together. NIUPATCH provides a facilitator who guides the talanoa throughout the allotted time. Each member of the panel is given time to present their work and ideas, and answer questions from the facilitator. After each panel member has spoken all are welcome to engage in talanoa, this is not specifically a question-and-answer session, but a time for

anyone to express their thoughts, questions, and concerns with all present as well as listen to others.

As a participant and co-ordinator of Talanoa HUBBS limitations exist and are acknowledged. Due to having a time limit, and each Talanoa HUBBS being facilitated in English it means that some who wish to participate will not be able to, or not be able to the extent which they would have if the Talanoa was in their Pacific language, or if time permitted. Not all Pacific ethnic groups from within the Pacific diaspora were represented with the talanoa, and majority of participants from either Auckland or Wellington. Another limitation involves hearing directly from community leaders, which could mean a skewed view is received of how successful or unsuccessful community initiatives and programmes discussed are. It is worth considering if the feedback would be the same if the panel was composed of those not in leadership positions but receiving support from the community.

## Data Collection

Data was collected from three Talanoa HUBBS: 1) Post-Covid Recovery: Disaster resilience Zoom-Talanoa for Pacific communities. This was held on the 19th of May 2020 and consisted of a panel of three with one facilitator and 22 in attendance (refer to figure 1). 2) Community resilience for long term recovery - held in Mangere community café in Auckland, and broadcast live on Facebook on the 30th of July 2020, with a panel of three, two facilitators and 17 in attendance (refer to figure 2). 3) Salvation packages for the new working poor. Due to Covid-19 this was held on Zoom and broadcast live on Facebook on the 20th of September 2020 and had a panel of four with one facilitator and 32 in attendance (refer to figure 2).

**Figure 1.** *Talanoa 1: Poster for Talanoa HUBBS 'Post-Covid recovery: Disaster resilience Zoom-Talanoa for Pacific communities.'*

**TALANOAHUBBS**
**HUMANS UNITED BEYOND BORDERS SERIES 2020**
**PRESENTS**

# POST-COVID RECOVERY

Disaster resilience Zoom-Talanoa for Pacific communities

**HOST: DR SIAUTU ALEFAIO**
An experienced psychologist-practitioner, Siautu leads NIUPatCH a research+practice collective uniting community humanitarian response, psycho-social recovery and disaster resilience

NIUPatCH
NAVIGATE IN UNITY

**GUEST PANEL:**

**PROFESSOR DAVID JOHNSTON**
Professor of Disaster Management and Director of JCDR. David's research focuses on human responses to disasters, crisis decision-making and public education+participation in building community resilience & recovery

**EMELINE AFEAKI-MAFILE'O, MNZM**
As the first Pacific Sir Peter Blake Emerging Leader and Westpac Woman of influence for Community and Social Enterprise, Emeline is a PowerHouse entrepreneur leading cutting-edge transformation for Pacific communities

**DR JANE ROVINS**
For over 20 years through 50+ countries Dr. Rovins has developed an expertise in international disaster risk management and response; training; and policy development

**FREE POWERHOUR ZOOM-TALANOA**
**TUESDAY 19 MAY 1030AM-1130AM**
Zoom-Meeting ID: 930 2291 7045

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#TALANOAHUBBS
#BUILDBACKBETTER

**Figure 2.** *Talanoa 2 and 3: Poster for three-part series Talanoa HUBBS starting with Talanoa 2 – Community resilience for long-term recovery, and Talanoa 3 - Salvation packages for the new working poor.*

These Talanoa HUBBS were selected as they were community focused, and two of them specifically addressed the idea of resilience. They were also selected as they had been recorded in their entirety which was not the case for some of the earlier Talanoa HUBBS it was important to have access to recordings so that transcription and analysis would be

possible. All participants and panellists are informed of recording as Talanoa HUBBS are made public on NIUPATCH platforms such as Facebook live and website. The purpose being to provide Pacific-led and community-led dialogue around issues that Pacific communities are facing - highlighted by the NIUPATCH research collective. For the purposes of this research participants were informed that recording would also be for research being conducted on Pacific diasporic communities and the concepts of resilience and vulnerability in relation to disaster response and recovery. As such, a low-risk ethics application (4000023076) was submitted through Massey University to use the data from Talanoa HUBBS.

## Method of Data Analysis

The data was analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA) - one of the many tools available for analysing qualitative data. TA was specifically selected as it is "only a method of data analysis, rather than being an approach to conducting qualitative research" (Braun and Clarke 2012, p. 58), therefore it did not dictate the approach, or override the use of a Pacific approach and methodology. It is important to note that there is not one singular TA approach, and that the TA referred to in this study is reflexive TA. Braun and Clarke described reflexive TA as a particular approach of TA that "emphasises the importance of the researcher's subjectivity as analytic *resource*, and their reflexive engagement with theory, data and interpretation" (2020, p. 3). Reflexive TA is best suited to this research of exploring the perspectives and experiences of Pacific communities as reflexive TA allows flexibility in interpretation. This supports the idea that meaning stems from lived experience and allows data analysis through that lens (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

Thematic analysis is accessible and flexible which makes it a popular method for analysing qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2012), a method which is "arguably the most

influential approach" (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3353) for such purposes. More importantly it offers a systematic approach through coding and analysing qualitative data "at a level of depth that quantitative analysis lacks while allowing flexibility and interpretation" (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, p. 808). In dealing with qualitative data, it was important to have a framework to rigorously analyse the data, to avoid only summarising and organizing it (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). TA offers this framework and "should be undertaken with special care and attention to transparency of the method in order to ensure confidence in findings" (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, p. 808).

Braun and Clarke (2020) note that although there is "much value" in the six phases outlined in the step-by-step guidelines, they are "*not* intended to be followed rigidly" but can be used as a "scaffolding to learn these (qualitative analysis) skills" and as these skills are developed each phase can somewhat overlap and blend together (p. 4). The "most recent articulation" of Braun and Clarke's (2020) six phases are: 1) data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes; 2) systematic data coding; 3) generating initial themes from coded and collated data; 4) developing and reviewing themes; 5) refining, defining, and naming themes; and 6) writing the report (p. 4). These six phases were used as a guide for analysing data. A description of how data in this study was analysed drawing on the six phases is outlined in more detail below.

### *Phase one: Data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes*

In phase one it was crucial to become extremely familiar with the data - the three selected Talanoa HUBBS. This was achieved by watching and rewatching all three video recordings and beginning a manual verbatim transcription. The meticulous process of verbatim transcription involved watching the video recordings several times to create written transcripts, and then to check these transcripts for accuracy in words and punctuation. Great

care was taken to ensure that the "original nature" of the transcript was not changed (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 88). No changes were made to correct grammatical errors made by those speaking, or words which were misspoken. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) while transcribing, observational notes were taken, and sentences and sections were highlighted in a non-systematic way - showing ideas about what was in the data, and what was interesting about it.

### ***Phase two: Systematic data coding***

Phase two involved systematically coding each transcript, by identifying segments of the data which appeared interesting and "potentially relevant" to research objectives. "Potentially" is used as this was an early stage of the data analysis and too early to know what would be relevant (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 62). This phase was a crucial prerequisite to developing themes, as "themes are an 'outcome'" of the coding process. Finding codes for "pre-conceptualised themes" should be avoided, and themes should be developed "through coding" (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 5). Braun & Clarke (2012) illustrate the integral role of codes within a data analysis: "If your analysis is a brick-built house with a tile roof, your themes are the walls and roof and your codes are the individual bricks and tiles" (p. 61).

To ensure systematic coding, each transcript was read through carefully and when a potentially relevant segment was identified it was coded, this would continue until the next potentially relevant segment was found, at which point the previous code was considered if applicable or if a new code should be created (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In each segment both the semantic and latent meaning of the data was identified. It was crucial to not only examine the data at a surface level as "meaning can be explored across a spectrum from the semantic (surface, obvious, overt) to the latent (implicit, underlying, 'hidden') (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p.5).

Parts of the data had multiple codes which applied, so after doing this for the entirety of all three transcripts there were extracts of all different lengths which were coded once, uncoded, or coded multiple times. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). Each transcript was coded manually using Google Docs. Each extract to be coded was highlighted and the corresponding code(s) were listed in a comment box. This was a personal choice based on the accessibility of Google Docs, and because coding manually would ensure a higher level of familiarity with the data than with the use of software. Though there are advantages to using software for coding, particular speed, and collation of codes - there is no set way it must be done and doing it manually ensured the coding was "inclusive, thorough, and systematic" which is what is most important (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 62). As per Braun and Clarke's guidelines the codes were not limited to a certain number, or narrow range of potential themes. Identifying certain codes and then finding data to fit into those codes was avoided. Every potential theme was coded, and the surrounding data was kept ensuring the context was accurate (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). Finally, the codes were collated by creating a table (refer to figure 3) which tallied how many codes were in each transcript, as well as an overall total. Initially there were twenty-four codes.

**Figure 3.** *Table of initial codes displaying codes tallied across the three Talanoa and the total.*

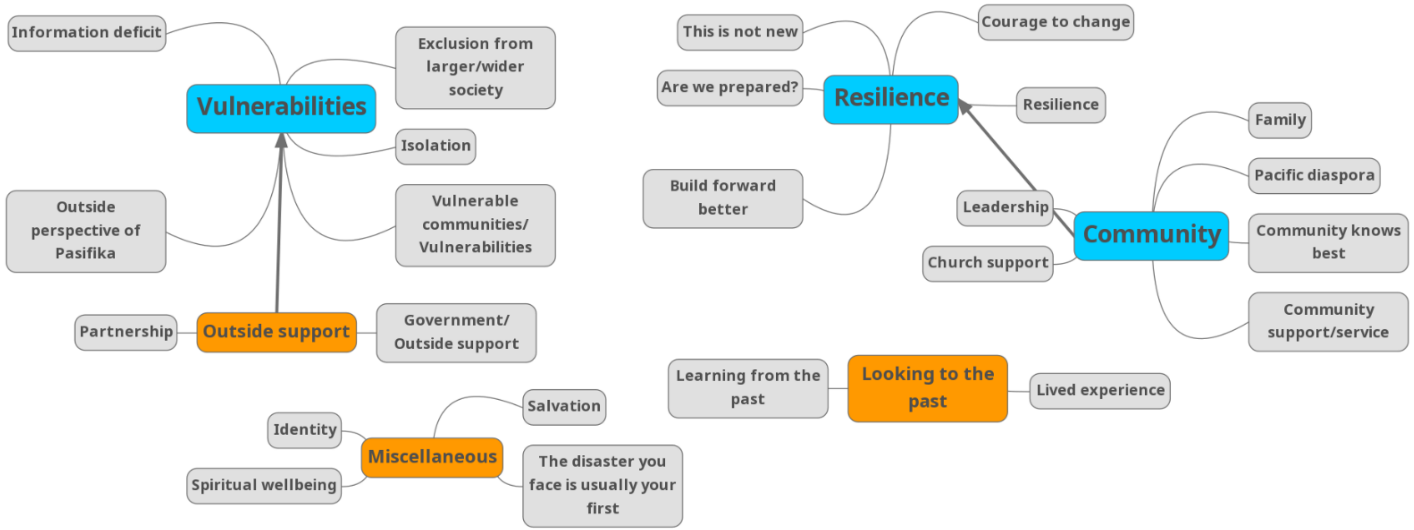
| PHASE TWO | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Codes** | **T1** | **T2** | **T3** | **Total** |
| Community Support/Service | 27 | 23 | 26 | 76 |
| Government support/outside support | 25 | 17 | 16 | 58 |
| Vulnerable communities/vulnerabilities | 16 | 26 | 13 | 55 |
| Communities know best (their needs/solutions) | 23 | 6 | 15 | 44 |
| Resilience | 0 | 14 | 10 | 24 |
| Are we prepared? | 0 | 17 | 2 | 19 |
| Looking to the past/learning from the past | 8 | 7 | 2 | 17 |
| Spiritual church support/faith | 0 | 0 | 17 | 17 |
| Build forward better | 9 | 3 | 4 | 16 |
| Leadership | 0 | 2 | 13 | 15 |
| Family | 6 | 7 | 2 | 15 |
| Lived experience | 3 | 11 | 0 | 14 |
| Exclusion from larger/wider society | 7 | 5 | 1 | 13 |
| Information deficit | 0 | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| Pacific diaspora | 4 | 4 | 3 | 11 |
| This is not new | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Courage for change | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Spiritual wellbeing | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Outside perspective of Pasifika | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Isolation | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Salvation | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Partnership | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Identity | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| The disaster you face is usually the first | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

### *Phase three: Generating initial themes from coded and collated data*

This phase was initially simply referred to as “Searching for themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89), however it has been renamed to reflect more accurately what this phase truly entails. “Searching for themes” implies that themes “lie hidden within the data” and exist before analysis, however analysts should generate the themes from the data “analysts are like sculptors, making choices about how to shape and craft their piece of stone (the “raw data”) into a work of art (the analysis) (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 63).

Phase three involved the "active process" of generating and constructing themes using the coded data (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 63). Using the table with all the codes listed, codes were examined to see how they were related to each other, clustered together, overlapped, and combined to form themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Mind maps were used, as shown in figure 4, to help visualize and identify these relationships and find themes and subthemes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). For example, "community" was initially identified as an overarching theme when considering the codes: church support, family, community knows best, community support/service, build forward better, and Pacific diaspora. These codes clustered together when considering who makes up a community (our families, church communities, and others within the Pacific diaspora) and what the purpose of a community is (to support and serve each other, and to work together to build better communities - things which the community itself knows best how to execute). The code "build forward better" overlapped with the theme "resilience" too as the ability to build forward better as a community reflects the level of resilience. 24 codes emerged grouped under three candidate themes: Vulnerabilities, resilience, and community; and three subthemes: Looking to the past, outside support and miscellaneous. Refer to figure 4 for initial thematic map.

**Figure 4.** *The initial thematic map with three themes in blue and three subthemes in orange.*



Once the initial themes were established, a spreadsheet for each Talanoa was created – three in total. Each theme had its own tab, and each subtheme had its own column under the appropriate tab. Coded data extracts were placed in the corresponding spreadsheets and columns. Each data extract was labelled with initials of the person speaking and with which of the three Talanoa HUBBS it was from (T1, T2, T3). An example of some of these data extracts under the candidate theme of 'Community' from Talanoa 2 is displayed in figure 5.

**Figure 5.** *Example of the collated data extracts.*

| Community Support/Service | communities know best (their needs/solutions) | spiritual church support/faith | build forward better |
|---|---|---|---|
| However, with the current COVID-19 experience, that **people pockets do not necessarily translate to greater resilience. In some way, having less can be a blessing in disguise.** The **community cohesiveness, for example, and some more throughout the Pacific, makes it's communities more resilient than many larger communities in developed countries. Village communities have particular function as a single unit and have a rich understanding of weather patterns, rivers and landscapes,** helpful in types of tragedies like earthquakes and cyclones, perhaps the risk factor in terms of pandemics. (AP T2) | I would throw that back to you as a question. If you're those groups, those groups are important, how would you do it? how could you do it? So it's not for me to go out and do it, it's- so I would agree with you, and maybe that's a conversation for everyone is how do we- how do you enable that to happen? And how can that be supported? Because there is support from councils and communities and other NGOs in the research community and globally, there's ways to support them, but I think those questions have to be asked within the community and we can help that, but we can't answer that, and it shouldn't be us to answer (DJ T2) | | |
| it's really nice to actually give this a community in a community base, a physical space, but also a community of people around it. (DJ T2) | I think for me it's actually about hearing this right? Because then we go to conferences and then we get told what resilience is but I keep thinking about your voices now right? So my thing is if we can capture these, then we can hopefully reflect them back (S T2) | | |
| where all things being equal, **community recovery is best when it is community based and involves community,** now- **outcomes are better,** so some of these are obvious and it's the essence of community development, it's essentially all your work, the community who know their community are best placed to deal with the needs of that community, often simple things but often our policy and practice doesn't align to that and it's really a challenge, **especially for rare events where that community may not have had a lived experience with the event they're dealing with, but as I said we draw on other strengths, knowledge, so really around community based**. (DJ T2) | so what we're trying to do is in this Talanoa HUBBS, capture all your voices, capture all your concerns, and we're actually going to turn it into a paper right, so that we can actually say from Talanoa HUBBS instead of the council coming to tell you what emergency management is, we are telling the council this is how Pacific communities respond, they have their managers, they have their systems in place and this is actually what they're thinking, and this is what they're concerned about. Because as you know systems like David described, leadership systems, can sometimes be slow to the party and they continue to dictate to us what they think it is, (S T2) | | |
| | we need to share and share and share, because if we don't share our truths about how we control disaster and crises in our own communities, the policies that | | |

\+ ≣ T2 Community ▾ | T2 Resilience ▾ | T2 Vulnerabilities ▾ | T2 Outside support ▾ | T2 Look to past ▾

## *Phase four: Developing and reviewing themes*

Phase four is an important phase which is "essentially about quality checking" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 65). This phase involved reviewing all the themes and checking them against the collated data extracts. There are two stages in this phase, stage one involves reading all

the coded data extracts for each theme and considering if they fit and form a coherent pattern (Braun & Clarke 2006; 2012). If the data does not fit then codes may need to be discarded, relocated or re-coded; themes may need to be collapsed, combined, or discarded. This was done remembering that it was important not to "force (the) analysis into coherence" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 65). Braun and Clarke (2012) provide questions to assist in this process which include: "Are there enough (meaningful) data to support this theme (is the theme thin or thick)?" And "is this a theme (it could be just a code)?" (p. 65). Other questions involve considering how useful the theme is, the boundaries of the theme, and if the themes are coherent. During this stage data extracts were examined for patterns to support the candidate themes, for any overlap, and for themes that did not have adequate support across all three transcripts; the questions provided by Braun and Clarke (2012) were also used to examine the data.

After reviewing the data extracts for "government support/outside support" it was evident that it needed to be decoded as it was more accurate to code the data extracts separately as: government support, partnership, and outside support. When comparing the data, and searching for patterns, it was clear that although the data may be about government support, or other outside support to the community - the latent meaning was the need for partnership between communities and government or communities and other organisations - initially only data which specifically mentioned partnership was coded under "partnership." Another change was that a new code emerged within many different data extracts which was labelled "ability to adapt" which fell under the theme "resilience." Re-coding was very useful as the entire data set could be coded for "ability to adapt," and ensure "government support," "outside support," and "partnership" were correctly differentiated. Re-coding increased data familiarity and enabled the performance of a more latent analysis which changed the tally of some of the codes (refer to figure 6)

**Figure 6.** *Table of codes after re-coding.*

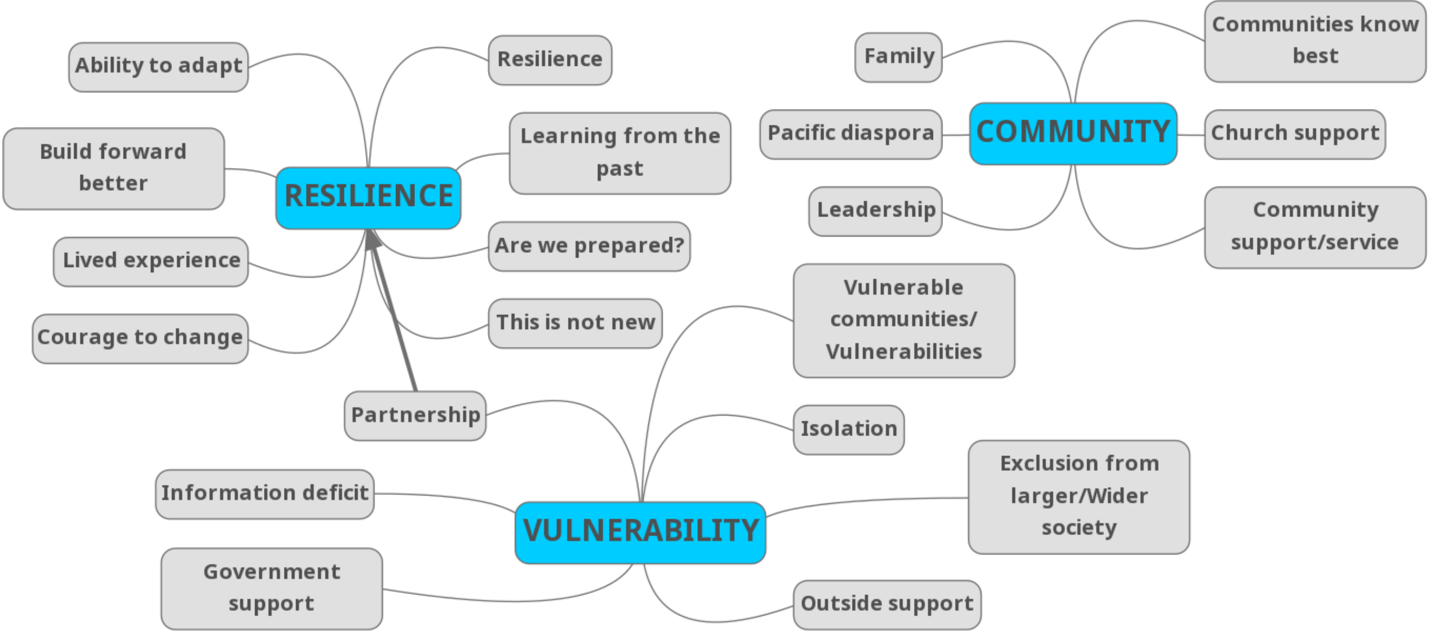
| Codes | T1 | T2 | T3 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community Support/Service | 23 | 20 | 28 | 71 |
| Vulnerable communities/vulnerabilities | 13 | 20 | 14 | 47 |
| Communities know best (their needs/solutions) | 22 | 10 | 14 | 46 |
| Government support | 17 | 8 | 10 | 35 |
| Resilience | 1 | 17 | 10 | 28 |
| Partnership | 11 | 8 | 7 | 26 |
| Church support | 1 | 2 | 22 | 25 |
| Are we prepared? | 0 | 20 | 3 | 23 |
| Build forward better | 9 | 2 | 6 | 17 |
| Leadership | 3 | 2 | 12 | 17 |
| Looking to the past/learning from the past | 8 | 7 | 1 | 16 |
| Outside support | 6 | 7 | 1 | 14 |
| Information deficit | 0 | 11 | 3 | 14 |
| Ability to adapt | 6 | 1 | 6 | 13 |
| Exclusion from larger/wider society | 7 | 5 | 1 | 13 |
| Family | 4 | 8 | 1 | 13 |
| Lived experience | 2 | 10 | 0 | 12 |
| Pacific diaspora | 4 | 3 | 3 | 10 |
| This is not new | 8 | 1 | 0 | 9 |
| Outside perspective of Pasifika | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| Courage for change | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| The disaster you face is usually the first | 1 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| Isolation | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Spiritual wellbeing | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Salvation | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Identity | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

Once re-coded the data extracts were checked again, and the themes were reviewed. The codes were accurate and under the correct themes, however the subthemes were too thin. After some reflection it was apparent that the cluster of ‘lived experience’, and ‘learning from the past’ contributed to resilience, therefore the subtheme of “looking to the past” was collapsed into the candidate theme “resilience.” “Outside support” was also collapsed into the theme “vulnerabilities” considering that the need of support from the government and other organisations was a vulnerability. The subtheme “miscellaneous” was discarded as the codes such as “identity” and “salvation” were too “wide ranging,” and irrelevant to the overall pattern and tone of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 65-66). Within the themes and

subthemes several codes were either relocated or collapsed such as the code “Spiritual wellbeing” which was relocated under “resilience,” and “the disaster you face is usually your first” was collapsed into “lived experience.”

The second stage of this phase involved rereading the entire data set and ensuring the analysis was coherent, capturing what was most relevant, important, and meaningful as well as the “overall tone of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 66), which was achieved. At the end of this phase there were twenty-one subthemes grouped under three potential themes: resilience, vulnerability, and community (refer to figure 7), and there were no new themes found, nor any reason to re-code.

**Figure 7.** *Thematic map of recoded data, grouped under three potential themes: resilience, vulnerabilities, and community*



### *Phase five: Refining, defining and naming themes*

Phase five is "the final refinement of the themes" (Maguire & Delahunt 2017 p. 33511) and involves defining and specifying each theme - making sure each theme is unique without overlap yet connected to form an overall story (Braun & Clarke, 2012). According to Braun & Clarke's (2012) suggestion, during this phase five codes were collapsed ("this is not new," "courage for change," "outside support," "are we prepared?" and "isolation") into others where there was overlap, however this did not affect the three themes. A short explanation was written about each theme to help define what the theme is and what it is not (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Then data extracts were selected "to present and analyze" searching for the most "vivid, compelling example(s)" to interpret and link to the research objectives through analytic narrative. The importance of not only paraphrasing the data was noted, and to choose extracts from across the data "to show the coverage of the theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 67). A Spreadsheet was again created, this time with only three tabs (one per theme), and the selected extracts were copied and pasted into the tab corresponding with the appropriate theme. This enabled greater clarity of each theme's narrative and function.

This phase also involves naming each theme – the names initially chosen (resilience, vulnerabilities, and community) were far from Clarke and Braun's definition of a good theme name which is "informative, concise, and catchy" (2012, p. 67-69). The themes were renamed to portray the meaning of each more adequately.

### *Phase six: Writing the report*

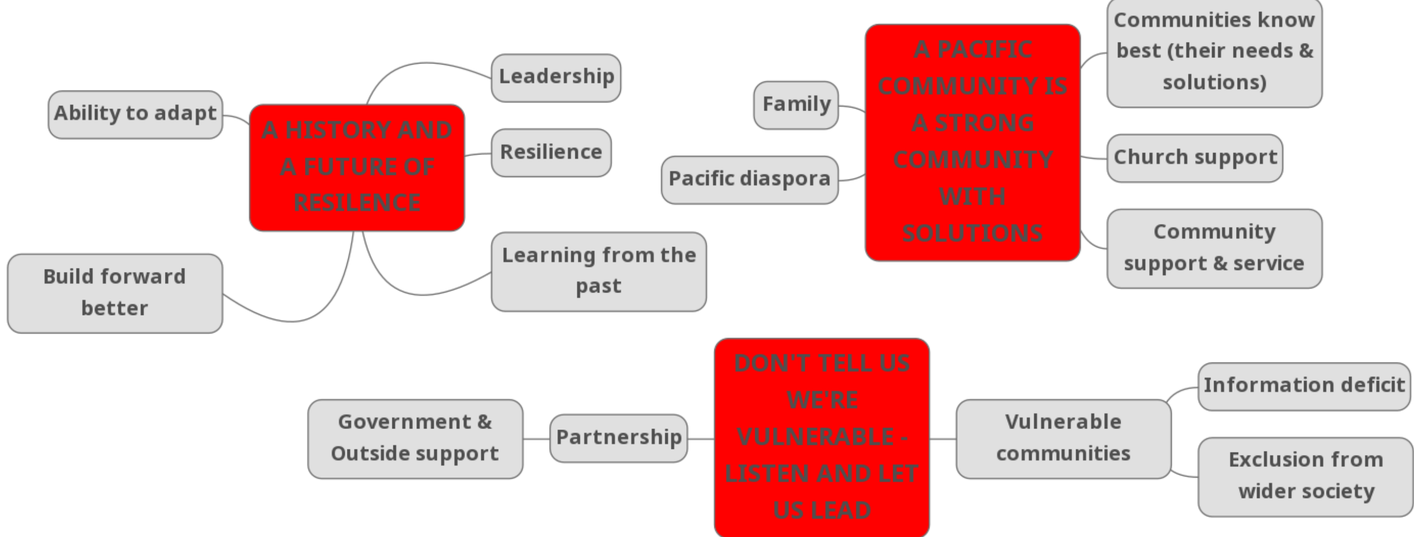
The final phase requires producing the report of the data analysis in a "compelling story" which should make a strong argument and go beyond a description of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 69). This report will be presented in the next chapter.

# Chapter Four Results

## Chapter Introduction

The three overarching themes which emerged from data were: A history and a future of resilience; A Pacific community is a strong community with solutions; and Don't tell us we're vulnerable - listen and let us lead. These are displayed in a final thematic map (see figure 8) which displays the three main themes in red, and how the subthemes link to the main themes, and in some cases to each other.

**Figure 8.** *Final thematic map displaying three overarching themes.*




## Talanoa thematic tables

The talanoa thematic tables (refer to tables 1- 3) display how these three main themes emerged, by including a data extract from each of the three talanoa and from a range of participants for each theme. These tables do not include all data extracts which support each theme, only one was selected from each talanoa and shortened for the purpose of the thematic

tables. Full versions of these quotes including more context are included in appendix A through C.

**Table 1.** *Theme One: History and Future of Resilience*

| TALANOA 1 | TALANOA 2 | TALANOA 3 |
|---|---|---|
| | **Learning from the past** | |
| So instead of returning to how it was there certainly is always an opportunity to look at what was there before…it is an opportunity to reflect (DJ T1) | …to encompass different… natural disasters and tragedies, Samoa has faced in the last 11 years so that we can get a more holistic view into community… (AP T2) | …their responsibility as leaders was behind the pulpit…are now…being a social worker, an immigration consultant…for their flock. These were traits that the earlier pioneer ministers did for their flock when they came in the 60s… (WT T3) |
| | **Resilience** | |
| How do you tap into the resilience and some of the things that are happening? (WT T1) | Our families have grown up in such a diverse resiliency that bring whatever comes, we'll survive this. So it's already inbuilt in us through experience… (U T2) | …a resilience that's born out of a long history of resilience that helped them during covid (RT T3) |
| | **Leadership** | |
| …those that stand in the gap for your communities…you're part of that community but outside of that you also have a hat as a social entrepreneur or also as a leader... (WT T1) | But leadership manifests in various ways and in different contexts…Leadership is drawn from those who are around… (DJ T2) | …if his parishioners were already starting to go out of work, then he didn't want to be another burden on them (SA T3) |
| | **Ability to Adapt** | |
| …So our factory isn't as busy and neither is our Café…So, you know, opportunities to go back to the land and farm…also repurposing jobs repurposing what the season is about for now (EM T1) | We simply often do not know what's going to come next, but a flexible approach acknowledges that we don't know… (DJ T2) | When we realized that when you can't physically go and engage face-to-face with leadership…we moved quite quickly we changed tactic creating this online platform… (WT T3) |
| | **Build forward better** | |
| …and then from there construct some new ideas or new ways…of building forward better. (SA T1) | … the ability to firmly coordinate a multi sectoral response based on science, lessons learned and new knowledge…is critical for long term recovery… (AP T2) | …look for the key messages, or key information to help coordinate and mobilize our communities but also try and empower them as we go forward (WT T3) |

**Table 2.** *Theme two: A Pacific community is a strong community with solutions*

| Talanoa 1 | Talanoa 2 | Talanoa 3 |
|---|---|---|
| **Community Support & Service** | | |
| We live in the community. We live and breathe and fellowship in the community we serve…we can better support our communities and serve them because we are close to them… (EM T1) | The community cohesiveness… throughout the Pacific, makes its communities more resilient than many larger communities… (AP T2) | …our communities always have something in the hand and…we are never poor in spirit and poor in generosity… (YT T3) |
| **Family** | | |
| …we're a family-oriented people, we feel that our family is us… It's who we are, our sense of belonging. (EM T1) | The real core principle of- based on the community, we are the community, we are family (R T2) | …we want as a people to make sure that our *Tama* and *Tina* are blessed and affected and our children are connected to those things in the future (RT T3) |
| **Pacific Diaspora** | | |
| …there are separate issues for the islands and also the diaspora, but they're also very much interconnected… (SA T1) | I often wonder…whether Pacific Islanders are here more vulnerable in the spaces that they are, compared to back home. We actually did a survey…and our people did really well (AP T2) | …when they came to NZ they came and they established church, that was their village…they were helping a lot of our new families that were coming in from overseas… (YT T3) |
| **Church support** | | |
| …the Presbytery invested in covering Zoom subscriptions for the churches, basically get them all connected up… so that they can start speaking to…their own churches… (WT T1) | …churches can then help relay that message from neighbourhood support…to get the ball rolling… (T T2) | Often our villages - it's churches…a village network… (SA T3) |
| **Communities know best (their needs & solutions)** | | |
| Recovery is almost universally community based it is communities who know themselves and know what the needs are… (DJ T1) | …the community who know their community are best placed to deal with the needs of that community… (DJ T2) | It's not like someone has to ring up and ask, actually it's known…within that community if there's a need or it's just kind of like given without being asked… (TM T3) |

**Table 3.** *Theme three: Don't tell us we're vulnerable - listen and let us lead*

| Talanoa 1 | Talanoa 2 | Talanoa 3 |
|---|---|---|
| **Vulnerable Communities** | | |
| What's going to put Pacific communities at risk is that lack of desire to go back into lockdown lose their jobs again miss their income… (JR T1) | …sometimes a response of vulnerability is also familiarity, like for example my mum, when she heard about this Covid she wanted to go home… (U T2) | …many of our pacific people…were facing real struggles before these lockdowns, before Covid and if anything they got worse during Covid… (RT T3) |
| **Information deficit** | | |
| We've asked the question of some of the government officials…do they see relevance to community groups responding? … to which we've heard a deafening silence… (WT T1) | It happened in the early hours of the morning, it shut down everything, shut down, basically Mangere, Otahuhu. And for two whole days, people didn't know what was happening. (L T2) | Churches are trying to get their heads around it…you've asked them to come and learn the language of governments, that's a total foreign thing for our leaders… (WT T3) |
| **Exclusion from wider society** | | |
| I understand how frustrating it must be for community to know that we are the solutions and to be a solution and to still not be supported to be activated in that solution. (EM T1) | …being community groups…we found we were left out from the Auckland Council emergency level and completely bypassed… (T T2) | Government is siloed and they contract in silos and it's competitive contracting procurement model and that's not the way that Pacific communities work… (RT T3) |
| **Partnership** | | |
| We need people whether it be in government or the NGOs and the communities all…be courageous and say, we don't want to do this this way anymore. It's not working for us. (JR T1) | …what we've started to do is actually, the local churches host us and then what we're doing with their training… is we've partnered with them… (S T2) | When Covid hit what it has created is an opportunity for people to…come and work together collaboratively…no matter what denomination or organisation…to partner with people… (SL T3) |
| **Government & Outside Support** | | |
| How can the government begin to acknowledge that maybe some of their funding pathways need to be broadened or widened they can't just continue down the same track... (SA T1) | …how do you enable that to happen? And how can that be supported? …there is support from councils and communities and other NGOs… (DJ T2) | Government have a role…we complement what the government are doing, they have a role, but their role goes only so far… (WT T3) |

## Theme one: A history and a future of resilience

Theme one encompasses the resilient history and future of Pacific communities. This theme includes how the lived experience, knowledge and solutions of past generations contribute to the resilience Pacific communities have today. It also outlines the idea that there is a future of resilience based on the ability of these Pacific communities to adapt, their value of leadership, and the vision and drive to build a better future.

### *Learning from the past*

The resilient history of Pacific communities includes previous generations who experienced disasters, and from that lived experience passed their knowledge and solutions on:

*Many people, older generations or neighbouring communities have experienced similar times of trouble, trauma and they have found solutions* (DJ T1).

WT speaks to the need for church leaders to take on new roles due to COVID-19, and refers to previous generations who have done this before:

*At the moment what I'm seeing is leaders that were basically their responsibility as leaders was behind the pulpit and speaking a message of faith and grace too- and hope to their congregation are now having to put back the hats of being a social worker, an immigration consultant, a key connector for employment opportunities for their flock. These were traits that the earlier pioneer ministers did for their flock when they came in the 60* (WT T3).

This excerpt is an example of resilience in church leaders displaying great capacity to serve in multiple roles far outside their usual responsibilities. This reflects current-day resilience and actions for a resilient future. The memory of earlier ministers in the 60s doing the same thing is still retained, showing a resilient past, and the significance of the earlier work and resilience of past generations.

The results show that the history of resilience also includes learning from lived experience, and lessons from previous disasters. DJ touches on the opportunity for reflection after disaster, to look back at what was working and what was not:

*So instead of returning to how it was there certainly is always an opportunity to look at what was there before. And as we know, many of the systems. Many of the practices are not the best they've come from particular pathways and so it is an opportunity to reflect* (DJ T1).

AP highlights the progress in Samoa since the 2009 tsunami, which include more awareness and better systems and emergency plans in place:

*So where are we in terms of vulnerabilities for a tsunami? For tsunami we're probably more aware of what the signs are* (AP T2).

*More than 10 years on almost every country in the Pacific has a tsunami warning system. That includes signs pointing to evacuation assembly points, with the affected tsunami areas of Samoa, escape routes to higher ground are clearly marked.* (AP T2).

Another example of learning from past disasters is illustrated in this quote from AP which shows how the community will be more prepared in the future after learning more about their location and what the area is vulnerable to:

*One of the things I think people got out of this was awareness of location vulnerability. No one knew there was a riverbed there. Everyone thought they were fine and then there was this big deluge coming from nowhere. So it's very important to know where we live and whether we're actually in a riverbed or whether we're in a flood area* (AP T2).

These excerpts illustrate that Pacific communities view their resilience as something gained from their history and lived experiences.

### *Resilience*

Resilience is a subtheme which was found throughout many other sub-themes particularly in theme one reflecting the resilient past and present of Pacific communities – however, this subtheme was important to stand alone as the data reflected resilience within Pacific communities today being discussed explicitly.

RT addresses a resilient past and present, acknowledging the "struggles" and difficulties that exist for Pacific communities specifically in regard to the impact of COVID-19, but not without highlighting the "long history of resilience" which continues to help Pacific communities.

*I think that's where we as an organisation are trying to address the fact that many of our pacific people had- were facing real struggles before these lockdowns, before Covid and if anything they got worse during Covid but at the same time there had a resilience that's born out of a long history of resilience that helped them during covid* (RT T3).

One participant recognized resilient families within Pacific communities and their strength to survive, and that resilience is "inbuilt":

*Our families have grown up in such a diverse resiliency that bring whatever comes, we'll survive this. So it's already inbuilt in us through experience* (U T2).

It is evident from these excerpts that Pacific communities are aware of their resilience, perceiving themselves to be "already resilient", even in comparison to larger countries:

*... resilience is come from home, from the families, from the local community like churches... they're the ones that's already resilient* (R T2).

*...people('s) pockets do not necessarily translate to greater resilience...having less can be a blessing in disguise...the community cohesiveness...throughout the Pacific, makes it's communities more resilient than many larger communities in developed countries* (AP T2).

## *Leadership*

Leaders are a key part of resilient communities, they *"stand in the gap"* within Pacific communities and *"wear hats and leadership roles whether it be churches or…ethnic communities"* (WT T1). DJ outlines specifically why it is important to have good leaders at all different levels, and SA emphasizes the criticalness of building the capacity for good leaders:

L*eadership manifests in various ways and in different contexts, when something happens in this room right now we have who we have, on one particular moment we might have certain skill sets, or they're not here because they're not here at the time. Leadership is drawn from those who are around so the ability to teach leadership or show leadership has to be at all levels, whether it be from a family level to a community group* (DJ T2).

*Having the right people in the right places, at the right time seems to be quite crucial, and actually the capability building of those that are at the coalface of at leading and how we do that* (SA T3).

All leaders within the community, especially church leaders are highly valued and are essential in getting information out to their communities. WT outlines this, as well as how older leaders are "empowering" younger leaders:

*There's lots of noise going on but we're trying to peel back and find out the key things that will help them, help the leaders inform their communities and get that information out* (WT T3).

*We're also seeing working with the church leaders...they're the gateways into our communities or gate keepers, whatever word you use them, but what we're seeing is that they're starting to empower their young people in their churches...so for example I just got off the phone with a text with my minister who said in this new environment thank you that we've got young leaders in the church that have been able to be mobile and agile* (WT T3).

SA gives an example of a church minister exemplifying leadership who was seeking to not burden their congregation:

*I was in another forum actually where one of the church ministers was sharing how he was actually going to go and enlist in an unemployment benefit because he didn't want his church to consume- you know like if his parishioners were already starting to go out of work, then he didn't want to be another burden on them* (SA T3).

In this excerpt SL discusses church leaders ("champions" and pastors) and how beneficial their knowledge and leadership were in helping serve vulnerable families in their communities:

*We basically knew as an agency that we needed to do something for our communities that were in need. So we put the call out to our champions, our pastors, the churches to say okay who is willing to be involved in our "love thy neighbour" response? and through that we identified the champions that were going to be involved in that and the good thing was because they're already connected to their local communities they already- a lot of them knew families that were in need, you know those vulnerable families and so that's how we took the approach of our response for vulnerable families across NZ and so yeah that's basically the approach we took in terms of providing* (SL T3).

Clearly the data reflects how instrumental leaders are in supporting and creating resilient communities. Pacific people value and cultivate resilient leaders throughout churches and the rest of the community – contributing to a resilient present and future.

### *Ability to adapt*

Pacific leaders and communities show a remarkable level of flexibility and ability to adapt which adds to their level of resilience. DJ speaks on the benefits of this ability:

*We simply often do not know what's going to come next, but a flexible approach acknowledges that we don't know or we made mistakes and it corrects itself...and all too often we've seen policies taking too long to change and not flexible enough to adapt to the situation* (DJ T2).

As DJ pointed out - being able to adapt well to the future involves having a "flexible approach" to be able to adapt to any unforeseen circumstances. The following are some examples of the flexible approach that Pacific communities took when COVID-19 hit in 2020 illustrating their ability to adapt:

*So our factory isn't as busy and neither is our Cafe, but our team are all still onboard and are farming. So, you know, opportunities to go back to the land and farm. And sow, and replant so repurposing jobs repurposing what the season is about for now* (EM T1).

*And so this Talanoa HUBBS, the first one of 2020 we normally had run them in country and on site. But obviously, given the environment that we're now in, and I thought, what a great time to pivot Talanoa HUBBS into an online format so that we can actually open it up wider* (SA T1).

*When we realized that when you can't physically go and engage face-to-face with leadership to get into your communities to start socializing the message of what's coming, we moved quite quickly we changed tactic creating this online platform to start getting some key messages out, key messages to our community within their cultural context of understanding…* (WT T3)

*…we were looking at another, different type of workshop to kind of step up from there but then Covid hit and we were like okay, now what? And the great thing is because in terms of*

*the work that I do with our national programs we have what we call the community transformation partnerships...so we all kind of help each other with different things and so when we're looking at okay, how can we maximize our resources we can say okay we can work through the local champions in our churches* (SL T3).

*You had an infrastructure or system in place and unbeknown to you actually you know while you had had that system- infrastructure that you were building, boom, Covid came and you were able to actually draw on that system that you already had, draw on those champions, they were already in place and begin to actually enact that or to just get it kick- fire it up, start it up and just use that same network that you'd been using.* (SA T3).

*We're succeeding with Affirming Works, we're trying to set it up as a worker organisation meaning that it's volatile. It's agile, it can respond well to the issues that are coming* (ASA T1).

*Churches are trying to get their heads around it so that's a capacity capability issue for leaders and those communities you've asked them to come and learn the language of government, on how you write proposals, and business- that's a total foreign thing for our leaders yet they are saying how can we get some help to help us build capacity? What we've seen in our journey, we've seen a lot of the churches and leaders have been forced through covid to learn new skill sets, so what we're doing right now around connectivity one of the things we did really quick was try and skill up all the leaders around how you connect on zoom, never before did they do computer stuff but they did that* (WT T3)

*The nation was informed that in two days, there would be a lockdown. So, you know, obviously, we will all grappling with the definition of a lockdown, these unprecedented times of what this means for a nation, or society, or community as well as the concerns we had for the virus Covid 19. And so I think in that first- in those first weeks if I'm reflective. I was just trying to grapple the- to comprehend what's what actually is just going on in our community like our sites that we had set up, our community cafes. That was to bring community together. So, avoiding isolation was now, being dangerous, being hazardous and so really having to rethink how we were delivering our humanitarian services in the season. And this time, and for what period was obviously my priority to rethink how that would look for our staffing and our staffing families and how that would look in the community that we serve* (EM T1).

These extracts demonstrate an ability to adapt quickly during stressful and unprecedented times from Pacific leaders and their communities, demonstrating resilience now, leading toward a resilient future.

## *Build forward better*

A resilient future for Pacific communities is evident in their ability to adapt, and value on leadership as well as leadership skills - but it is most evident in the desire and drive to "build forward better" - to build a better, and more resilient future. DJ explains why returning back to how things were before a disaster can be a mistake, and why building forward better is essential:

*One of the opportunities and one of maybe the mistakes of the past and disasters as we often think about recovering to things that were before. But I think there's also the opportunity to, to look at improving the environment we're in and looking at new ways of doing things. So instead of returning to how it was there certainly is always an opportunity to*

*look at what was there before. And as we know, many of the systems. Many of the practices are not the best, they've come from particular pathways and so it is an opportunity to reflect, to build a future so often they talk about build back better, but it's actually building forward better* (DJ T1).

This idea is emphasized by SA in speaking about the purpose of Talanoa HUBBS:

*And I think that's part and parcel of this Talanoa HUBBS is to see if we can bring together like minds and communities to have some real hard conversations about the realities that we live in. and then from there construct some new ideas or new ways of... building forward better. I think...exactly why we're pivoting this Talanoa HUBBS, so that we can get more people thinking about these issues, instead of just continuing to try and grapple with them in our communities ourselves* (SA T1).

WT highlights the desire of Pacific communities to build forward better by stressing the need to empower communities not just inform and mobilize them:

*So in the circles that I've been involved with and exposed to, one of the key things we try and do is listen to the information, find out the different sources that it's coming from, government, we then unpack that and look for the key messages, or key information to help coordinate and mobilize our communities but also try and empower them as we go forward* (WT T3).

The aim to build forward better is displayed by AP by bringing awareness to what contributes to long term recovery today, and how Pasifika fit into these plans:

*We understand today in that having a high level of good governance at the national level and the ability to firmly coordinate a multi sectoral response based on science, lessons learned and new knowledge coming to the floor on a daily basis is critical for long term recovery within the broader multi sectoral agenda here in NZ, how and where are Pasifika peoples placed?* (AP T2).

EM sums up well the need to think long term and build better forward resilient communities:

*It's our community and we're proud of it. We're here for the longevity, so we need to map this out and we need to navigate well* (EM T1).

## Theme two: A Pacific community is a strong community with solutions

Theme two incorporates the source of the strength and resilience of Pacific communities. This resilience comes from the support and unity of family, church groups, and the Pacific diaspora. It highlights the collective nature of Pacific communities and the role that support and service plays within them. This theme also illustrates how communities know what is best for themselves - they have the best solutions, as they know their needs.

### *Community support & service*

*We live in the community. We live and breathe and fellowship in the community we serve...we've had the choice to live here so that we can serve our community in this way and doesn't really allow us too much distinction from our clients I don't think. I think it, it gives us a…way into being able to create something, create a pathway where we can better support our communities and serve them because we are close to them in that fact* (EM T1).

A Pacific community is a strong community made up of people who are "really big on community engagement (L T2), value community and the close connection and support it offers. In the above quote EM explains the advantage of living in the community you serve - being able to understand and serve the community better. WT and SL describe Pacific communities as follows:

*There's a lot of things happening in communities, they're quick to move and do it anyway, that's community for you* (WT T3).

*Our communities are the ones that get out there even if they don't have the resources and our Pasifika and Māori people are so giving even with the little that they have* (SL T3).

Pacific communities are aware of their strength and resilience and where it comes from. In this context they are referring to a need for emergency management education:

*How are we going to promote the education point of view to our wider community? Because you mentioned the resilience is come from home, from the families, from the local community like churches...* (R T2).

YT states that Pacific communities do not view themselves as "poor" emphasizing the strength of Pacific communities and how they view themselves:

*I haven't actually heard this term of "new working poor", but having heard it for the first time I don't actually feel like it fits our narrative like when I think poor (??) [16:54] that tells me that our communities have nothing, we have nothing in our hand, but as you know our communities always have something in the hand and we never see ourselves as poor, maybe financially, economically, but as a community we are never poor in spirit and poor in generosity, so yeah I'm just trying to reconcile that term to what I see in our community (YT T3).*

### *Family*

Due to the collective nature of Pacific people, family incorporates extended family - Pacific people are often living in multigenerational households which compile communities. The significance of family within Pacific community is explained further by EM:

*We're a family-oriented people, we feel that our family is us...it's who we are, our sense of belonging* (EM T1).

This significance is seen through the focus of caring for family especially our parents - father (*tama*) and mother (*tina*), and the struggles of being separated from family during COVID-19 level four lockdown in 2020:

*We want as a people to make sure that our Tama and Tina are blessed (*RT T3).

*…it's a very un-Pacific thing to do, you know, to not be able to reach out to your own family* (SA T1)

A participant articulates the make-up of Pacific communities and how paramount family is for Pacific people:

*Community comes down to the people it consists of, and for Pacific communities that means family, The real core principle of- based on the community, we are the community, we are family* (R T2).

## *Pacific diaspora*

The Pacific diaspora subtheme encompasses the connection between the Pacific communities in the Pacific Islands and Pacific communities living elsewhere. Often Pacific families are separated between the islands and throughout the diaspora here in New Zealand, Australia, and USA but that does not mean they are not part of the community as SA explains further:

*There are separate issues for the islands and also the diaspora, but they're also very much interconnected because as diaspora, children of families who are still in island nations like Samoa and Tonga we're always very much interconnected and very much so financially as well. You know, I was just thinking of just last week when we had to contribute to a funeral in Samoa and trying to find the Western Union* (T1).

SA also touches on sending remittances directly to Samoa, an example of how the Pacific communities both in the Pacific islands and in the diaspora stay connected. Sending money to family members in the Pacific Islands is a very significant attribute of the relationship between the Pacific diaspora and the Pacific Islands, JR explains how communities in Vanuatu depend on remittances sent from those who have gone to do seasonal work in New Zealand:

*…those funds from seasonal workers made a difference in whether these families were living in tents after 18 months or whether they were living in concrete block houses* (T1).

Pacific communities are strengthened due to strong family connection and movement in and out of the Pacific islands, JR comments further on this connection:

*There is a lot of overlap, because of the diaspora's ties and familial ties to the islands and that strong connection of people going back and forth* (T1).

YT describes the early history of Pacific churches in New Zealand, displaying that this interconnection started decades ago and is part of the resilient history of Pacific communities:

*Our churches when they first established in the early 60s or so from when they came to NZ they came and they established church, that was their village and as they created these villages and church structures across Aotearoa...they were helping a lot of our new families that were coming in from overseas, and at that time the church was the village hub, the social hub for Pasifika communities* (YT T3).

This quote shows the ability of new migrants in Pacific communities to adapt to a new land and support their community. It also illustrates the early relationship between the Pacific diaspora and those back in the islands. They showed resilience and support for each other through establishing churches in Aotearoa New Zealand which became like the villages in the

Pacific Islands. The Pacific diaspora contributes greatly toward the resilience of Pacific communities.

### *Church support*

Church as an integral part of predominantly Christian Pacific communities, this includes the physical church buildings, the church leaders, and those who belong to each church congregation. Faith is a crucial part of Pacific religious and spiritual beliefs. WT explains the importance of relying on faith as a community:

*…a lot of our content is anchored in faith, it goes without saying…we've got to go back to some anchors that keep us resilient as communities and maintains our social cohesion as Pacific communities…if you don't have that message of faith then actually you're just relying on your own understanding and that's what starts to play with the mind* (T3).

Extended family, and those living in nearby areas often attend the same church which adds to the nature of Churches creating villages in New Zealand like those back in the Pacific Islands:

*We have villages in Samoan and Tonga and all our Pacific islands, but we don't have that one in there but we have churches that will be the basic of all the values of our families in the islands (R T2).*

*…there are so many churches in Mangere, buildings that is, you know we've built the villages, we've got the environment now where the villages are established (SA T3).*

These villages of churches support and strengthen communities both in the Pacific diaspora and Pacific islands:

*Often our villages - it's churches but I think in the mainstream space we- what I tend to observe is that there is a misunderstanding or misperception of churches as a religious organisation right? As opposed to a village network which is what I see the difference between understanding from a Pacific lens* (SA T3).

The following are two selected excerpts highlighting specific examples of Pacific community support from two different denominations (Presbyterian and Seventh Day Adventist), during the first COVID-19 outbreak in New Zealand:

*So the Presbytery invested in covering Zoom subscriptions for the churches, basically get them all connected up the leadership, so that they can start speaking to their own ecosystems within their own churches, and we've met pretty much every week, every twice a week to push information down but also get information from our communities, what the gaps are so that we could feed it back to government and to some of the NGOs, where some of those gaps are, for example, food parcels where do you access food parcels? Where do you access testing stations? What's the process around wage subsidies? All the sort of key information that was top of mind for community. How do we get them connected and training our leaders, so that they are comfortable using Zoom?* (WT T1).

*We actually started running what we call these "Community champion workshops" and so we started that sort of mid to late 2018, and we ran those across NZ where we invited our church members that were passionate about community because… it's really those that really have a passion for service and community that are the ones that are going to be really engaged and so that was who we realized we needed to identify, and then through identifying those key people we could then begin to build that network and empower our champions to be*

*able to maximize their reach out to the communities so that's what we did… we had a lot of feedback from champions that were just saying they were really blessed to be a part of that response and it was good for us too because it actually engaged other people in our churches that hadn't actually already been engaged in community so it provided the opportunity for that as well, and then we had…feedback from recipients saying that they were just really blessed by what they received but also the support from those community champions as well (*SL T3).

Due to the significance of churches, church leaders stand in prominent positions in Pacific communities and have great knowledge of, and influence in their communities:

*"…they're the gateways into our communities or gate keepers, whatever word you use…they're starting to empower their young people in their churches…we've got young leaders in the church that have been able to be mobile and agile* (WT T3)

These examples showcase churches as indispensable parts of Pacific communities, the church leaders and members know their communities well, and how to serve them,

## *Communities know best (their needs & solutions)*

The results show that Pacific communities have the best solutions for any issues within the community, as they know their own community and are aware of their needs:

*Ultimately where we come from, the thinking is the communities will find their solutions for themselves* (WT T3).

The advantages and benefits of communities supporting and serving each other is outlined by TM, who speaks about how knowing each other means knowing each other's needs:

*Especially in a place like down here we're smaller, you know people know each other, all of the Tuvalu community know each other, all of the Fiji community know each other. It's*

*not like someone has to ring up and ask, actually it's known…within that community if there's a need or it's just kind of like given without being asked and it's not from a stranger or from this powerful outside system but it's happening within the community* (TM T3).

T recommends that after "*another pandemic or another civil emergency to go straight to the community groups, build it up this way"* (T2)

After a disaster, recovery is most effective when it is community led, and based on the needs of the communities, this is explained further by DJ:

*Community recovery is best when it is community based and involves community, now- outcomes are better...and it's the essence of community development... the community who know their community are best placed to deal with the needs of that community* (DJ T2).

SL gives a specific example of how being in the community means knowing specific needs of the people in it:

*The reason we went with the gift cards and the top ups one was, when we talked to our community champions some of them said yeah food parcels are great but sometimes what families get in a food parcel is not necessarily what they need, and it's not necessarily the kind of food that they would eat so then it kind of goes to waste* (SL T3).

Unfortunately, although Pacific communities believe they have the best solutions, there is not always support or the ability to act on these solutions. WT discusses this, and how irreplaceable communities are in the process of finding solutions:

*There's a distrust of communities being able to find their own solutions so we have to go through providers who will speak on behalf of communities. They have a role to play, the agencies or the contracted providers on behalf of government but they are not community, they've been set up to contract, to fund that and they're doing the best job they can do, but they're not community* (WT T3).

## Theme three: Don't tell us we're vulnerable - listen and let us lead

Theme three includes the vulnerabilities of Pacific communities which stems from a lack of information, and exclusion from mainstream society. This theme outlines the need for partnership with government and outside organisations to support Pacific communities as a partner, while allowing for community-led action and solutions.

### *Vulnerable communities*

Just as Pacific people know the solutions and the needs of their communities, they are also aware of their vulnerabilities. JR and EM highlight some of these vulnerabilities:

*What's going to put Pacific communities at risk is that lack of desire to go back into lockdown lose their jobs again miss their income. The kids will be back home. The increases and potential increases in domestic violence because everybody is locked into an apartment or house and there's multi-generational and a lot of people and I think that that's something we have to be mindful of* (JR T1).

*I kind of see that in a societal manner in our suburbs of South Auckland and our suburbs of the poorer communities…we already started behind. You know, and then with the lockdown. I was sharing with some family members that people (have) their own homes, their own mortgages. They can go in and mortgage holiday, but those that are renting, they don't get a holiday and most of those families that are struggling are renting and most of those families that are struggling are in the jobs that weren't paying over the lockdown* (EM T1).

Pacific communities are not without vulnerabilities, and members of these communities are highly aware of them. The data reflects those vulnerabilities often stem from a lack of information and from being excluded from mainstream society which is often what contributed to the lack of information.

**Information deficit**

When there is a lack of information given to the community to be able to be able to prepare for and respond to disasters, vulnerability increases greatly. Emphasizing this point very clearly, one participant states:

*…when we're unknowing we're weak but when we know the vulnerability, we can be strong and resilient* (U T2).

In the following segment a participant describes a fire which happened in South Auckland and shows how a lack of information increased the vulnerability of the community during this situation:

*It happened in the early hours of the morning, it shut down everything…and for two whole days, people didn't know what was happening. So we were getting calls of all sorts to say what is happening? How can you get my kids to school? How can I get to work? What is actually happening? ... some of our residents actually had health complications, which the smoke- which was caused by the fire… that affected their families, the early childhood education facilities around the perimeter of that factory some ...didn't know what was happening so had to activate your own health and safety practices, ring up the parents come and get your kids which actually can't get through the road cause it was blocked* (L T2).

The deficit of information at times comes from the lack of communication between the government and Pacific communities:

*We've asked the question of some of the government officials - do they see relevance to community groups responding? - to which we've heard a deafening silence* (LW T1).

This lack of communication shows how Pacific communities are marginalized in the context of New Zealand society.

**Exclusion from wider society**

This subtheme showed that being and feeling excluded and marginalized as Pacific communities contributed to their vulnerability. Vulnerability increased as Pacific communities were not able to activate their solutions or participate fully in society. T shares the experience of being excluded when New Zealand went into their first lockdown from COVID-19 in 2020:

*…with Covid, being community groups…we found we were left out from the Auckland Council emergency level and completely bypassed, even though we had things in place, our churches had things ready, and all our NGOs because we have the database to connect to our community. We were literally- we were forgotten about until later* (T T2).

Exclusion from society is also reflected in policy:

*We need to share and share and share, because if we don't share our truths about how we control disaster and crises in our own communities, the policies that end up being formed will never represent us…and we keep going, but what about us?* (SA T2).

The exclusion of Pacific communities often resulted from a poor working relationship with the government, which was evident in the data:

*…what happens when government in this recovery phase isn't actually connecting well with communities and then funding goes awry, or other avenues is missing the new things?* (SA T1).

*…government is siloed and they contract in silos…and that's not the way that Pacific communities work* (RT T3)

Pacific communities need and want to be heard, and not have concepts like "resilience" defined by those outside the community:

*…we go to conferences and then we get told what resilience is but I keep thinking about your voices now right?* (S T2).

If Pacific communities were integrated more fully into New Zealand society than there would be a better understanding of these communities, as their needs and voices would be heard. It is clear why partnership with Pacific communities is essential in increasing resilience moving forward.

## Partnership

Having vulnerabilities does not mean that Pacific communities are not able to lead, or that they do not have solutions, knowledge, and ideas to contribute. The data displayed repeatedly the need for partnership within the community and with government and organisations outside the community to achieve solutions, rather than the need to have the outside support find solutions for them.

*Recovery is almost universally community based it is communities who know themselves and know what the needs are and really needs to be community centred, so much of the social economic recovery in- from disasters is driven from the base, the Community upwards and then supported or not by agencies and organisations. So it's really that interface, but it needs to be community led* (DJ T1).

In this quote DJ explains how fundamental it is that a community leads a recovery after a disaster. It is crucial that any outside support partners with the community for a community-based approach. EM explains the importance of partnership further:

*…there's actually a lot of funding pools, which do include philanthropic, your own income generating approach which could be a social enterprise, as well as government funding, but I always bring to the table partnership, you know, like government only pay a subsidy of what the need is for those families and communities. We have to bring the other half…I mean, we set up the social enterprise in 2010 a small cafe in Otahuhu that my husband was the cook for, and we mentored 316 young people with zero government funding.*

*We wrote all the reports we sent all the reports…and as a result they funded the following years* (EM T1).

In this excerpt TM discusses the need for stronger partnerships between government and community:

*… I think there's a need for us to work more collaboratively, more connected in new ways that are effective, throwing out some of the old divisions* (TM T3).

Pacific communities are ready to offer solutions, and form partnerships which allow them to lead in initiating solutions, but this is frequently not happening:

*I understand how frustrating it must be for community to know that we are the solutions and to be a solution and to still not be supported to be activated in that solution* (EM T1).

### ***Government & Outside support***

Pacific communities recognize that at times they do need government and outside support - such as support from non-governmental organisations - to help support them in resolving community issues that arise from certain vulnerabilities. When government and outside support was mentioned throughout the data, it reflected the need for a partnership that empowers the community and allows them to lead with solutions. The following extracts illustrate the desire for effective partnerships:

*We're saying communities are not there to compete with government, we're actually there to complement some of the work you're doing but resource us so that we can do the bottom up and give you the strategic insights of what's actually happening on the ground, while they're pushing messages down and information…we can ground some of that, and*

*we're part of that community we're in that community and we're the heart for that community* (WT T1).

*if we can kind of get the people on the ground identifying the ways that they want to go rather than being dictated…* (TM T3).

*…look at how quick we respond to the needs out there and I think the current model perpetuates inequities in our communities…where does the power sit?* (WT T3).

*We need people whether it be in government or the NGOs and the communities all to take- be courageous and say, we don't want to do this this way anymore. It's not working for us. Let's take that courage. Let's approach- we have friends in the ministries, we have friends in these organisations and say let's do something courageous and do it differently* (JR T1).

*Yes, the government has a role to play. Yes, NGOs and providers have a role to play but ultimately, how do you look at a bottom-up approach, where they are starting to find their own solutions* (LW T1).

Pacific communities recognized a disconnect between the government and communities due to the lack of collaboration and partnerships:

*How can the government begin to acknowledge that maybe some of their funding pathways need to be broadened or widened they can't just continue down the same track... If we're continuing the same funding tracks down the same way pre-Covid obviously it wasn't working then* (SA T1).

*…we have government agencies trying to really catch up with what's happening with the reality of what's happening on the ground* (SA T3).

The government's trust of Pacific communities was raised as a contributing factor to the lack of successful partnerships:

*…there just seems like there's a distrust of communities being able to find their own solutions so we have to go through providers who will speak on behalf of communities…so this goes back to question around the actual work, perception of what's being done, and what's actually being done and between that there's a massive disconnect…*(WT T3).

*Why doesn't our national headquarters in Wellington devolve power back out…to us out here in South Auckland, a lot of that I think has to do with trust and it's not that they don't trust each other… they don't have as strong the trust in community as what they should have* (ASA T1).

Clearly Pacific communities are dissatisfied with the lack of equality and communication in current partnerships; and can identify a need to form stronger and more equal and effective partnerships with government and outside support to build resilience.

## Conclusion

Overall, the data displayed three strong interconnected themes which were evident throughout and contributed to the narrative that Pacific communities are resilient. This resilience is built within the communities, coming from a resilient history passed down from

earlier generations, and lived experience. Pacific communities today are resilient despite vulnerabilities due to the strong family relationships, church groups, and a vision and desire to build a resilient future. A need for partnership is expressed with government and other outside agencies to allow Pacific communities to lead and be heard.

# Chapter Five: Discussion

The current study revealed three overarching themes 1) A history and a future of resilience; 2) Don't tell us we're vulnerable, listen and let us lead; 3) A Pacific community is a strong community with solutions. Altogether these illustrate that Pacific communities are strong and resilient and are ready to lead and partner with government and other organisations for critical and innovative solutions. The concepts of vulnerability and resilience are not easily defined in a disaster context and become even more broad and irrelevant when applying to Pacific people; this is because these concepts do not allow for factors such as: culture, tradition, collectiveness, and differing worldviews – rather the focus is primarily on resources and capacity (Pelling & Uitto, 2001). The narrative that Pacific people and communities are vulnerable should be used carefully and sparingly as it is too often interpreted as only meaning weakness and perpetuates a stereotype of helplessness.

## Vulnerability through a Pacific lens

Vulnerability through a Pacific lens is not weakness due to lack of resources and capacity, it is not so simply defined or measured. This study showed that vulnerability stemmed from being excluded from the wider society; lacking information due to lack of communication from government, language barriers and from being marginalized. Though the term "vulnerability" is frequently associated with Pacific communities, this label does nothing to benefit them. Speaking specifically about Pacific communities being categorized as "the new working poor" one talanoa participant commented: "I don't actually feel like it fits our narrative… that tells me that our communities have nothing… but as you know our communities always have something in the hand and we never see ourselves as poor, maybe financially, economically, but as a community we are never poor in spirit and poor in

generosity, so yeah I'm just trying to reconcile that term to what I see in our community" (YT T3). This quote sums up the disconnect between labelling communities as vulnerable, and how Pacific communities perceive themselves.

It is disempowering when labels perpetuate approaches that underestimate the work being done within and for these communities, failing to consider a Pacific worldview. Hence the importance for governments and international frameworks to consider Pacific worldview. It is important to consider what or whose measure of vulnerability is being used when Pacific communities are being labelled as vulnerable. Vulnerability and resilience are often paired, as antonyms particularly in disaster - if there is a lack of vulnerability then there must be resilience and vice versa. Therefore, the lack of vulnerability found in Pacific communities demonstrates resilience – the results also illustrated what this resilience looks like and how it can be defined through a Pacific lens.

## Pacific indigenous resilience

"Resilience" is not a term as commonly associated with Pacific communities as "vulnerability" - except when discussing the need to improve it. However, this study showed that 'resilience' is commonly used within Pacific communities as describing themselves and their own communities.

The results showed a recurring pattern of resilience which emphasized the need to define resilience through a Pacific lens. Whenever vulnerabilities were identified and acknowledged in the community, it was followed by a comment on resilience and strength. For example, this quote shows the recognition of low resilience but then acknowledges that the response was quick and community strengths exist: "…our resilience I put down it was low. But we were able to present- to respond quite quickly. So of course, from the community strengths, you had those, and those are really, really, really important" (AP T2).

This exemplifies how 'resilience' as defined in a non-Pacific way was unable to incorporate aspects of Pacific resilience which include community strengths.

Another example highlights again that vulnerability is acknowledged - in this case lacking information - but identifying Pacific communities as strong and resilient when they have the needed information: "I just really want to show just about the vulnerability part that when we're unknowing we're weak but when we know the vulnerability, we can be strong and resilient" (U T2). This pattern of recognizing and acknowledging resilience despite vulnerabilities emphasizes how resilient Pacific communities are and is reflected again in the following quote - speaking about how more money does not always mean more resilience one participant states, "…with the current COVID-19 experience, that people pockets do not necessarily translate to greater resilience. In some way, having less can be a blessing in disguise" (AP T2).

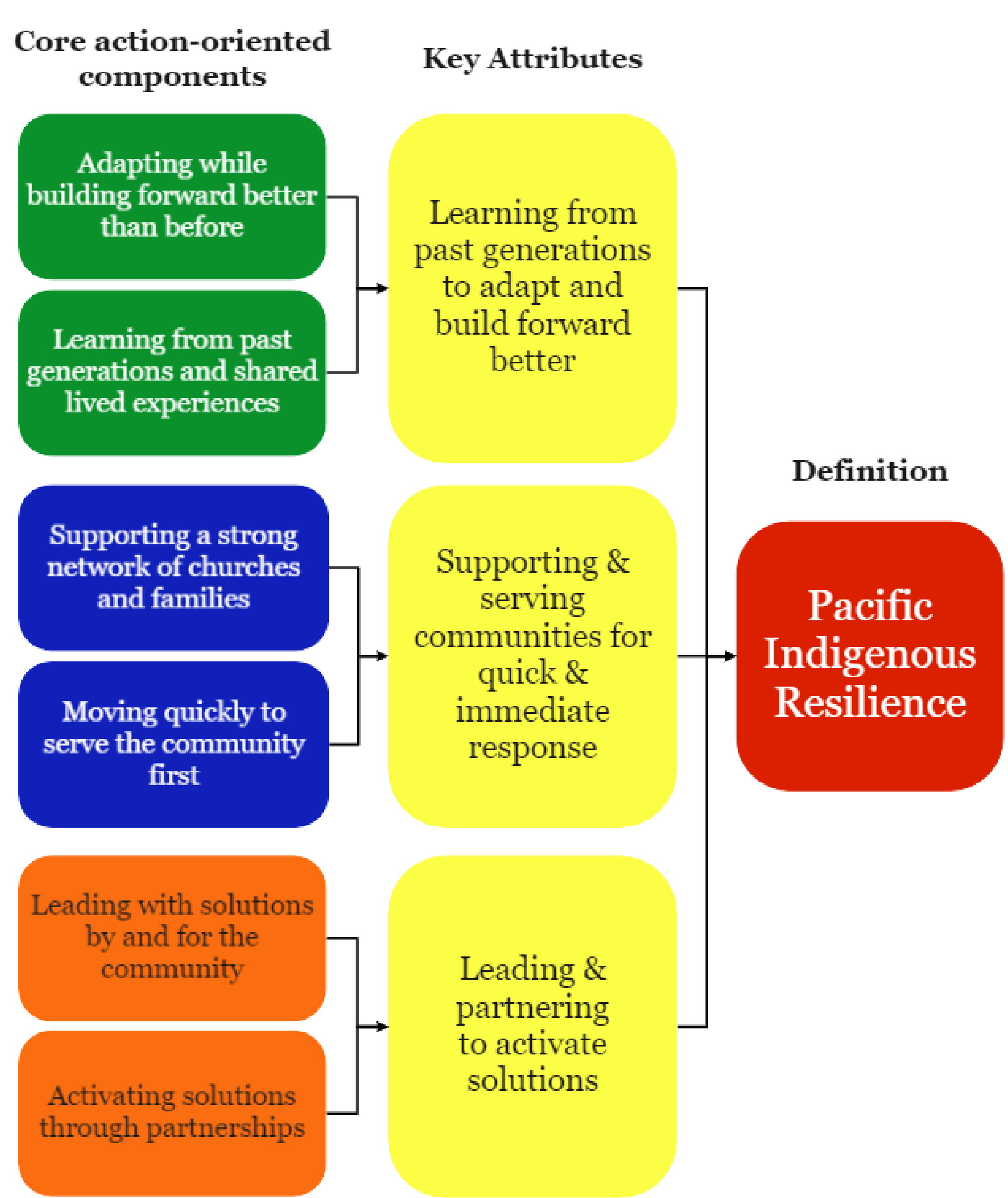
Pacific communities are aware of both their vulnerabilities and their needs, despite these vulnerabilities they are resilient, and there is an acknowledgment of strength and having a resilient mentality. Therefore, there is a need to understand resilience through a Pacific lens, and articulate what Pacific indigenous resilience is, to reflect and incorporate the attitudes and worldviews of Pacific communities.

### *What is Pacific indigenous resilience?*

When exploring and interpreting the data through a Pacific lens to discover an understanding and definition of Pacific indigenous resilience, it became clear as reflected by the data, that it would be multidimensional and action-focused. Words and phrases such as: *agile, stand in the gap, mobilize our communities, respond well, empower, go forward, move, fire it up, and respond quickly* demonstrated that Pacific indigenous resilience has multiple dimensions focused on action. Pacific indigenous resilience is an action, it is movement more

than words and strategy. From here it was clear that verbs must be used to define Pacific indigenous resilience. From the three overarching themes, as well as the other themes throughout the data, several actions became clear as central to Pacific indigenous resilience: *Adapting, building, learning, supporting, moving, leading, serving, partnering, and activating*. Figure 9 illustrates how six key action-oriented components formed the foundation of three key attributes that altogether contribute to defining Pacific indigenous resilience.

**Figure 9.** *Six core action-oreinted components contributing to Pacific indigenous resilience.*



## Six core action-oriented components

An outline of the six-core action-oriented components of Pacific communities as illustrated in figure 9 are described and solidified through findings of the study.

***1. Pacific indigenous resilience is adapting while building forward better than before.*** Pacific communities are focused on building better communities from within: "It's our community and we're proud of it. We're here for the longevity, so we need to map this out and we need to navigate well" (EM T1). In order to build forward better communities must be able to adapt to whatever may come: "We're succeeding…it's agile, it can respond well to the issues that are coming" (ASA T1), despite issues which arise, Pacific communities continue to adapt to their circumstances and build more resilient communities for a better future.

***2. Pacific indigenous resilience is learning from past generations and shared lived experiences.*** It is highly significant in Pacific culture to acknowledge past generations and their wisdom, knowledge, and sacrifice for their descendants – from parents and grandparents back to distant ancestors. Learning from past generations and the knowledge passed down is key to the resilience which exists in Pacific communities today. Intergenerational transmission of knowledge is profound for Pacific communities who look to the past for examples given their "long history of resilience" (RT T3). This resilience and knowledge of past generations includes their lived experiences, which combined with the lived experience of communities today is a fundamental part of Pacific indigenous resilience. "Our families have grown up in such a diverse resiliency that bring whatever comes, we'll survive this. So it's already inbuilt in us through experience" (U T2).

***3. Pacific indigenous resilience is supporting a strong network of churches and families.*** "Community comes down to the people it consists of, and for Pacific communities that means family, The real core principle of- based on the community, we are the

community, we are family" (R T2). A Pacific community is closely interconnected, and tightknit. This is because communities are made up of extended families and church congregations. Family is an integral part of Pacific communities – due to the collective nature of Pacific society, family is not viewed as only the nuclear family but all relatives, and extended family. The collective nature of Pacific society means that extended family is usually considered close family, and often close friends and family of friends are viewed in the same light - "we're a family-oriented people, we feel that our family is us...it's who we are, our sense of belonging" (EM T1).

Churches serve as villages within Pacific communities "…there are so many churches in Mangere, buildings that is, you know we've built the villages, we've got the environment now where the villages are established" (SA T3). Churches play a key role in serving the community and are part of the social structure of Pacific communities, this quote shows the range of responsibility churches hold: "I think we are also called as churches to not just kind of respond to individuals but to be mindful and to act at that system level as well" (TM T3). Community and church leaders live within the communities they serve, adding to its strength: "We live in the community. We live and breathe and fellowship in the community we serve...we've had the choice to live here so that we can serve our community" (EM T1). These close relationships among families and churches are the essence of why Pacific communities maintain such strong networks – and why these networks are the foundation of Pacific indigenous resilience.

***4. Pacific indigenous resilience is moving quickly to serve the community first.***

Throughout the data it was clear that Pacific communities were quick to move – quick to act and engage in serving their community and find solutions. "There's a lot of things happening in communities, they're quick to move and do it anyway, that's community for you" (WT T3), this rapid action in serving communities is part of the foundation of Pacific indigenous

resilience. Pacific communities are quick to act even without the support they may need: “Our communities are the ones that get out there even if they don’t have the resources” (SL T3), and quick to show initiative: “It’s not like someone has to ring up and ask, actually it’s known…within that community if there’s a need or it’s just kind of like given without being asked” (TM T3). Pacific communities are incredibly resilient because they act swiftly with or without outside support and resources, “…we have government agencies trying to really catch up…with the reality of what’s happening on the ground” (SA T3).

***5. Pacific indigenous resilience is leading with solutions by and for the community.*** One of the strongest themes from this research was that communities know what is best for their community – they know their needs, they know each other, and they have solutions. This example discusses the power of community-led solutions in disaster recovery: "Recovery is almost universally community based, it is communities who know themselves and know what the needs are and really needs to be community centred" (DJ T1). This community knowledge and lived experience means Pacific communities are in the best position to lead - “the best community solutions come from within the community” (SL T3). People living within a community are more aware than any outsider of all factors including cultural values and beliefs, available resources, and capacity, and what is already happening and working. Therefore, they are best suited to leading with solutions for the community: “those that stand in the gap for your communities…that wear hats and leadership roles…you're part of that community” (LW T1).

Pacific communities have many leaders within them including church, family, school, and community leaders. Community leadership is not about having an assigned leader to advocate for the community but for the community to act with leadership: “…leadership manifests in various ways and in different contexts. Leadership is drawn from those who are around…” (DJ T2). Pacific indigenous resilience is leading with the solutions which Pacific

communities need - something that is already happening where possible in Pacific communities.

***6. Pacific indigenous resilience is activating solutions through partnerships.*** There are situations where solutions may be unachievable without outside resources and support. This is where Pacific communities seek to activate these solutions through partnering with the government and other organisations to support them. Pacific communities have the solutions which can be achieved through equal partnerships where Pacific leaders can lead. Unfortunately, it is common to find that outside organisations dictate strategy and policy: "…community recovery is best when it is community based and involves community…it's the essence of community development, it's essentially…the community who know their community are best placed to deal with the needs of that community…often our policy and practice doesn't align to that and it's really a challenge" (DJ T2). It is crucial that Pacific communities are allowed to be equal partners with government and outside organisations, so policy is relevant. There is a great need for: "real strong strategy planning that has to involve Pacific people, (and) isn't done for us but is done with us" (RT T3).

Pacific communities are also proactive in partnering within their own communities to activate solutions, highlighted in this example:

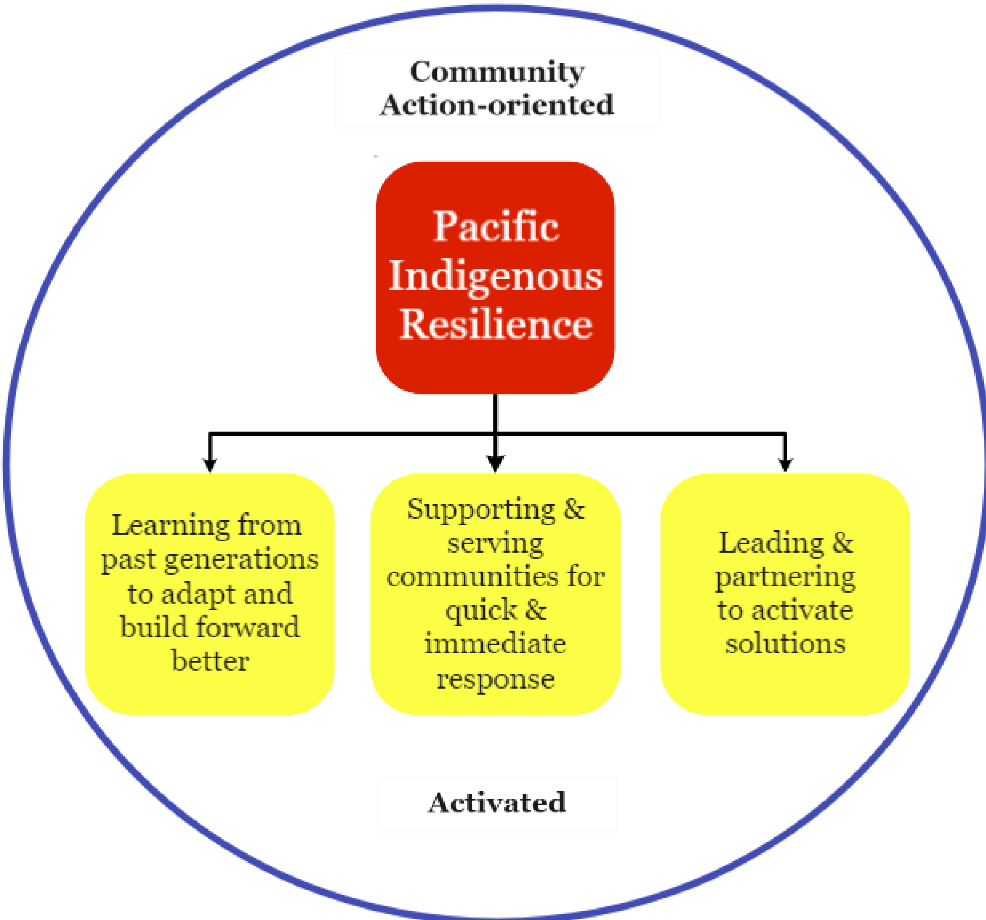
> When Covid hit what it has created is an opportunity for people to be creative but also to come and work together collaboratively… no matter what denomination or organisation, but looking for- to partner with people who you can either tag into something that they're doing and fill a gap somewhere in what they're doing in the service that they're providing rather than trying to reinvent the wheel…I think that's something that is great in terms of what we've seen across the community and people come together to work collaboratively. (SL T3)

This example shows the resourcefulness of Pacific communities in partnering with other groups to achieve and serve more.

## Three Key attributes of Pacific Indigenous Resilience

After further analysis it was evident that though these six, core action-oriented components focused on: *learning, building, supporting, serving, leading, and partnering,* more concise expressions captured the 'key attributes' of Pacific indigenous resilience. The three key attributes that were uncovered are: 1) Learning from past generations to adapt and build forward better, 2) Supporting and serving communities for quick and immediate response and 3) Leading and partnering to activate solutions. Ultimately these three key attributes encapsulate Pacific indigenous resilience – which is action-oriented and embedded within community. Every part is community-focused and includes acting and engaging in community (refer to figure 10).

**Figure 10.** Key attributes of Pacific indigenous resilience.




Pacific indigenous resilience is understood further through three key attributes (in yellow), encompassed in a circle conveying that all aspects are community action-oriented and activated. These are further explicated below.

### *Learning from past generations to adapt and build forward better*

'Learning from past generations' is an acknowledgement of the respect and significance Pacific cultures place on the wisdom of elders, and past generations. The history of resilience of the past generations of Pacific communities is well known and acknowledged. Lived experience is invaluable especially as it is shared within the community and is crucial knowledge when similar events happen in the future.

Pacific communities are incredibly adaptable and flexible to whatever issues arise, this is based in faith, and the spiritual nature of Pacific culture and communities. There is a general belief in God – God's will and timing within Pacific communities – however, this belief does not limit hope and ambition. Pacific communities aim to improve in the future and build better communities.

The adaptability and drive to build better communities going forward paired with the willingness and ability to learn from past generations and lived experiences is what creates such resilient communities as collectively sharing hope, knowledge, skills, and tools increases capacity, resources, and capabilities.

### *Supporting and serving communities for quick and immediate response*

Pacific indigenous resilience stems from strength in numbers, in unity and in the collective nature of Pacific society. Pacific communities are intertwined and strengthened through their families and churches which serve much like the villages in the Pacific Islands. Within these church communities are extended families who are interconnected through blood, marriage, faith, and culture. This creates a strong network of support, and the opportunity to serve and assist each other, as communities are aware of who is in need. Within this strong network, service, and support for each other is already happening. In the face of crisis and disaster Pacific communities are the first to respond to their own communities, and are on the ground being proactive in aiding, assisting, and finding solutions. This proactivity and support among the strong interwoven communities of Pacific people is an integral part of their resilience.

### *Leading and partnering to activate solutions*

Pacific communities are filled with local leaders who know their communities and therefore have the best solutions for solving any issues they face. The advantage of leaders being part of the community they serve contributes greatly to resilient communities. This is because when community leaders live within the community itself, they are aware of the needs, capacity, and strengths of the community as well as what has and has not worked in the past.

Resilience is not doing everything alone, and self-sufficiency can include the ability to seek out help when needed. Groups and organisations including churches within Pacific communities are accustomed to collaborating and partnering together when needed, to better meet the needs of the community. There are situations where Pacific communities do need support and assistance from the government or other outside organisations, but this is a need of support from within a partnership still led by the communities themselves. To increase resilience, partnerships must be created where support can be given to activate and execute solutions, with communities still being free to lead with strategies which serve them best. Overall, this study has displayed that Pacific indigenous resilience is already happening and exists in Pacific communities today.

## Pacific indigenous resilience in an international context

In the context of international frameworks such as the: SAMOA pathway, Sendai and UNSDG's, it is important to reflect on how Pacific indigenous resilience fits in, and how localised solutions evident in Pacific indigenous resilience such as community activation and action-oriented work is or is not recognized and taken into consideration.

Viewing the UNSDG through the lens of Pacific indigenous resilience highlights the importance of needing to allow communities to create their own definitions for the concept of vulnerability and resilience. For example, in Goal 1 as mentioned previously it includes: "By

2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations…" (p. 15). This research has found that words such as "poor" and "vulnerable" are limiting and inaccurate as they are defined from a worldview outside the communities on which the label has been placed. The same applies for the phrase "build the resilience" which is broad and cannot be measured accurately without taking into consideration the unique factors which contribute to Pacific indigenous resilience. Aiming to build resilience through a Pacific indigenous lens would focus on creating and strengthening partnerships, strengthening community ties, and making space for community-led solutions – a contrast from building economic capacity and capability.

Within the Sendai Framework the goal for 2015-2030 is to:

> Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience. (p. 12)

This goal if achieved will certainly strengthen resilience, but in order to achieve this goal indigenous voices need to be included and heard to help define what vulnerabilities exist, what is the current level of resilience as defined by the community themselves, and which measures should be championed to strengthen resilience. There is potential within the SFDRR to allow for indigenous input, three of the 13 guiding principles include: "Engagement from all of society; Decision-making to be inclusive…; Empowerment of local authorities and communities through resources, incentives and decision-making responsibilities as appropriate" (p. 35). This displays a small desire to involve local communities and indigenous knowledge, however for sustainable resilience this needs to increase, and frameworks must be always inclusive not just "as appropriate." Once

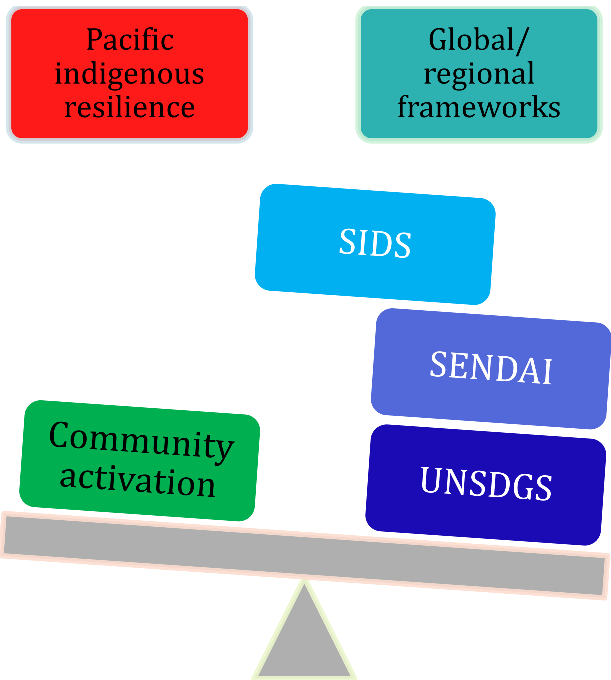
indigenous input is valued through engagement with Pacific communities, resilience will be strengthened.

In parallel the SAMOA pathway framework and future frameworks for increasing resilience within SIDS needs to include and allow indigenous input into all aspects. This is particularly important within this framework due to the high population of indigenous people living within the SIDS Pacific Islands. Only recognizing a "wealth of culture" possessed by SIDS (para. 80) is not effective or adequate. Considering and applying Pacific indigenous resilience to global frameworks would allow global powers to hear what is happening on the ground in local communities and to consider and hear indigenous voices, values, and worldview.

## Conclusion: Listen and let us lead

This research has highlighted how crucial it is that space is created for the voices of Pacific communities to be part of disaster strategy, policy and the activation of emergency and disaster management. Disaster response for Pacific communities currently is an uneven playing field with international policy and frameworks such as the SFDRR and the UNSDG having the most weight and power (refer to figure 11). To truly achieve resilience and activate solutions, Pacific communities must have their voices heard and be allowed to define what resilience is to them and share where their vulnerabilities lie. Power and space are needed to even out the playing field of disaster response.

**Figure 11.** *The uneven playing field of disaster response for Pacific communities.*




How effective can global frameworks be if governments and organisations continue to dictate to those in local communities – those who are working on the ground - what their vulnerabilities are and how they should build resilience? These global frameworks are intended to be about strengthening sustainable and resilient communities, but they are not understood or accessible at a community level. In general, Pacific communities do not engage with these frameworks, nor are they taught them, and most do not know they exist. To create a connection between community level and international frameworks, Pacific communities must be involved in creating them, and Pacific indigenous populations must be viewed through the lens of Pacific indigenous resilience. Creating space for indigenous input provides Pacific communities a safe passage to engage with relevant and effective frameworks that have been created by and for them. Pacific indigenous resilience is key to understanding that resilience lies within the communities, and that community solutions are either already happening or are known and needing to be activated through partnership.

The strength of Pacific people and their communities continues today as it did for their ancestors – the people within these communities and their knowledge, connections, and willingness to act and serve the collective community will continue to build resilience. If Pacific communities continue to be written only into the margins of international disaster framework and viewed through lenses of worldviews which are not their own, their resilience will continue to be overlooked and the inaccurate label of vulnerability will be perpetuated. Pacific people have always been resilient - just as their ancestors were when they navigated their way through the thousands of islands across the Pacific Ocean and created systems to withstand disaster without foreign assistance. The fluidity and strength of the Pacific people is still found today across the Pacific Islands and throughout the Pacific diaspora. Pacific communities are still moving, still pushing boundaries placed on them by outside powers, and still resilient.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Full version of Table 1

*Theme One: A History and a Future of Resilience*

| TALANOA 1 | TALANOA 2 | TALANOA 3 |
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| | **Learning from the past** | |
| So instead of returning to how it was there certainly is always an opportunity to look at what was there before. And as we know, many of the systems. Many of the practices are not the best they've come from particular pathways and so it is an opportunity to reflect (DJ T1) | I've taken the liberty to expand extend my talk to encompass different natural- natural disasters and tragedies, Samoa has faced in the last 11 years so that we can get a more holistic view into community dynamics of them both locally and internationally. That resilience isn't principally reliant on these relationships. (AP T2) | At the moment what I'm seeing is leaders that were basically their responsibility as leaders was behind the pulpit and speaking a message of faith and grace too- and hope to their congregation are now having to put back the hats of being a social worker, an immigration consultant, a key connector for employment opportunities for their flock. These were traits that the earlier pioneer ministers did for their flock when they came in the 60s but now they're having to learn these new skill sets that they didn't have to worry about, because of the change of the environment that we're in right now (WT T3) |
| | **Resilience** | |
| In light of where we are. How do you tap into the resilience and some of the things that are happening? The resourcing in the community to respond to this. (WT T1) | Our families have grown up in such a diverse resiliency that bring whatever comes, we'll survive this. So it's already inbuilt in us through experience as you've shared, that we can take on anything as long as there's a commitment that we are one in responding to everything (U T2) | I think that's where we as an organisation are trying to address the fact that many of our pacific people had- were facing real struggles before these lockdowns, before Covid and if anything they got worse during Covid but at the same time there had a resilience that's born out of a long history of resilience that helped them during covid (RT T3) |
| | **Leadership** | |
| I take on board some of the sharing that was provided by E you talked about the roles of ourselves when I say ourselves those that stand in the gap for your communities that have hats that wear hats and leadership roles whether it be churches or your ethnic communities, but you're part of that community but outside of that you also have a hat as a social entrepreneur or also as a leader also as a provider and sometimes you're seen as conflicted or should I say you should declare because we're all conflicted when you're a Pasifika and you wear many different hats and different setting, so my | But leadership manifests in various ways and in different contexts, when something happens in this room right now we have who we have on one particular moment we might have certain skill sets, or they're not here because they're not here at the time. Leadership is drawn from those who are around so the ability to teach leadership or show leadership has to be at all levels, whether it be from a family level to a community | I was in another forum actually where one of the church ministers was sharing how he was actually going to go and enlist in an unemployment benefit because he didn't want his church to consume- you know like if his parishioners were already starting to go out of work, then he didn't want to be another burden on them (SA T3) |

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| question is really around the roles of communities. (WT T1) | group (DJ T2) | |
| **Ability to Adapt** | | |
| But also just supporting them and repurposing their tourism and the farming inland. So our factory isn't as busy and neither is our Cafe, but our team are all still onboard and are farming. So, you know, opportunities to go back to the land and farm. And sow, and replant so repurposing jobs repurposing what the season is about for now (EM T1) | We simply often do not know what's going to come next, but a flexible approach acknowledges that we don't know or we made mistakes and it corrects itself...and all too often we've seen policies taking too long to change and not flexible enough to adapt to the situation. (DJ T2) | When we realized that when you can't physically go and engage face-to-face with leadership to get into your communities to start socializing the message of what's coming, we moved quite quickly we changed tactic creating this online platform to start getting some key messages out, key messages to our community within their cultural context of understanding not the jargon, but breaking down what's been said (WT T3) |
| **Build forward better** | | |
| And I think that's part and parcel of this Talanoa HUBBS is to see if we can bring together like minds and communities to have some real hard conversations about the realities that we live in. and then from there construct some new ideas or new ways of- as you said David of building forward better. I think what you highlighted right now Em is exactly why we're pivoting this Talanoa HUBBS, so that we can get more people thinking about these issues, instead of just continuing to try and grapple with them in our communities ourselves. (SA T1) | We understand today in that having a high level of good governance at the national level and the ability to firmly coordinate a multi sectoral response based on science, lessons learned and new knowledge coming to the floor on a daily basis is critical for long term recovery within the broader multi sectoral agenda here in NZ, how and where are Pasifika peoples placed? (AP T2) | So in the circles that I've been involved with and exposed to, one of the key things we try and do is listen to the information, find out the different sources that it's coming from, government, we then unpack that and look for the key messages, or key information to help coordinate and mobilize our communities but also try and empower them as we go forward (WT T3) |

## Appendix B: Full version of Table 2

*Theme two: A Pacific community is a strong community with solutions*

| Talanoa 1 | Talanoa 2 | Talanoa 3 |
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| | **Community Support & Service** | |
| We live in the community. We live and breathe and fellowship in the community we serve. So when we talk about these low socioeconomic communities that we currently live in, but we're seen as leaders as well because maybe we can articulate ourselves a little bit clearer, we've had the choice to live here so that we can serve our community in this way and doesn't really allow us too much distinction from our clients i don't think. I think it, it gives us a lead (??) [17:13] way into being able to create something, create a pathway where we can better support our communities and serve them because we are close to them in that fact (EM T1) | However, with the current COVID-19 experience, that people pockets do not necessarily translate to greater resilience. In some way, having less can be a blessing in disguise. The community cohesiveness, for example, and some more throughout the Pacific, makes it's communities more resilient than many larger communities in developed countries. Village communities have particular function as a single unit and have a rich understanding of weather patterns, rivers and landscapes, helpful in types of tragedies like earthquakes and cyclones, perhaps the risk factor in terms of pandemics. (AP T2) | I haven't actually heard this term of "new working poor", but having heard it for the first time I don't actually feel like it fits our narrative like when I *think poor* (??) [16:54] that tells me that our communities have nothing, we have nothing in our hand, but as you know our communities always have something in the hand and we never see ourselves as poor, maybe financially, economically, but as a community we are never poor in spirit and poor in generosity, so yeah I'm just trying to reconcile that term to what I see in our community. (YT T3) |
| | **Family** | |
| I think that one of the biggest impacts of the Covid 19 effect is the isolation...families can't return, you know I've been supporting Tongan families on Zoom every week, whose daughter could not return because her flight was closed the day she was leaving, you know, and so yeah we're a family-oriented people, we feel that our family is us. And so just that disconnect that psychosocial disconnect around isolation. I mean having my father visit me all through level four and stand at my step, you know, and I needed to give him a hug on week three, you know, it was just, you know, the, the effects of the bubbles, just like what you said. Jane around the funerals and the gatherings, they're so significant. I think for our well being. For our mental health, you know. It's who we are, our sense of belonging. (EM T1) | The real core principle of-based on the community, we are the community, we are family (R T2) | We're heading into a recession, Pacific people are going to suffer the most because of our existing numbers and so what's the long-term thinking and strategy and systems change that we want as a people to make sure that our Tama and Tina are blessed and affected and our children are connected to those things in the future, so I think those are a couple of thoughts, real strong strategy planning that has to involve Pacific people, isn't done for us but is done with us (RT T3) |
| | **Pacific Diaspora** | |
| I think you're right. Jane there are separate issues for the islands and also | I often wonder about vulnerability, whether Pacific | Our churches when they first established in the early 60s or so from when they |

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| the diaspora, but they're also very much interconnected because as diaspora, children of families who are still in island nations like Samoa and Tonga we're always very much interconnected and very much so financially as well. You know, I was just thinking of just last week when we had to contribute to a funeral in Samoa and trying to find the Western Union (SA T1) | Islanders are here more vulnerable in the spaces that they are, compared to back home. With the work that me and T (??) [55:56] do as volunteers with the red cross, we often talk about this: whether or not our people are prepared and it's about- and what is the best way to have them prepare? We actually did a survey and we're just getting the results in, just trying to gauge our Pacific Islanders- Pasifika peoples how they were able to handle the different alert phases. I've only looked at some of the first response, which is basically how did you prepare for the first one? and our people did really well, I think our people are incredibly onto it (AP T2) | came to NZ they came and they established church, that was their village and as they created these villages and church structures across Aotearoa they also addressed some of the social issues that were happening at the time because they were new migrants and they were being disadvantaged and so they were helping a lot of our new families that were coming in from overseas, and at that time the church was the village hub, the social hub for Pasifika communities. (YT T3) |
| **Church support** | | |
| So the Presbytery invested in covering Zoom subscriptions for the churches, basically get them all connected up the leadership, so that they can start speaking to their own ecosystems within their own churches, and we've met pretty much every week, every twice a week to push information down but also get information from our communities, what the gaps are so that we could feed it back to government and to some of the NGOs, where some of those gaps are, for example, food parcels where do you access food parcels? Where do you access testing stations? What's the process around wage subsidies? All the sort of key information that was top of mind for community. How do we get them connected and training our leaders, so that they are comfortable using Zoom? (WT T1) | We actually sent our volunteers to Auckland emergency management office in town to actually see it in real life and threw us in the deep end, so I think there's the communication discussion and it's to see how churches can then help relay that message from neighbourhood support because they're equipped with the help of Auckland Emergency Management and Auckland Council to get the ball rolling for getting the community out there and being prepared with education and knowledge (T T2) | Often our villages - it's churches but I think in the mainstream space we- what I tend to observe is that there is a misunderstanding or misperception of churches as a religious organisation right? As opposed to a village network which is what I see the difference between understanding from a Pacific lens (SA T3) |
| **Communities know best (their needs & solutions)** | | |
| Recovery is almost universally community based it is communities who know themselves and know what the needs are and really needs to be community centred, so much of the social economic recovery in- from disasters is driven from the base, the Community upwards and then supported | Community recovery is best when it is community based and involves community, now- outcomes are better, so some of these are obvious and it's the essence of community development, it's essentially all your work, the community who | These food packages went out is that it wasn't from an establishment to this poor person but it was actually about, within our own communities, like there might be one of the Pacific ethnic groups like there's- especially in a place like down here we're smaller, you know people know each other, all of the Tuvalu |

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| or not by agencies and organisations. So it's really that interface, but it needs to be community led (DJ T1) | know their community are best placed to deal with the needs of that community, often simple things but often our policy and practice doesn't align to that and it's really a challenge, especially for rare events where that community may not have had a lived experience with the event they're dealing with, but as I said we draw on other strengths, knowledge, so really around community based. (DJ T2) | community know each other, all of the Fiji community know each other. It's not like someone has to ring up and ask, actually it's known in within that community if there's a need or it's just kind of like given without being asked and it's not from a stranger or from this powerful outside system but it's happening within the community and I think that can kind of make a difference, it's about the types of relationships and the giving, there's the actual package, the actual material thing that might be needed, but the meaning that can come with that, and even if it's not needed and it's given it's that knowing that someone had thought of you, knowing that it matters (TM T3) |

## Appendix C: Full version of Table 3

*Theme three: Don't tell us we're vulnerable - listen and let us lead*

| Talanoa 1 | Talanoa 2 | Talanoa 3 |
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| **Vulnerable Communities** | | |
| What's going to put Pacific communities at risk is that lack of desire to go back into lockdown lose their jobs again miss their income. The kids will be back home. The increases and potential increases in domestic violence because everybody is locked into an apartment or house and there's multi-generational and a lot of people and I think that that's something we have to be mindful of. (JR T1) | Teaching about vulnerability, sometimes a response of vulnerability is also familiarity, like for example my mum, when she heard about this Covid she wanted to go home, because she could actually respond in a place of familiarity, in the place of vulnerability, and so therefore resilience is more around, not just being vulnerable but being able to respond in places of familiarity because of the vulnerability of this (inaudible at 1:04:25) (U T2) | I think that's where we as an organisation are trying to address the fact that many of our pacific people had- were facing real struggles before these lockdowns, before Covid and if anything they got worse during Covid but at the same time there had a resilience that's born out of a long history of resilience that helped them during covid (RT T3) |
| **Information deficit** | | |
| We've asked the question of some of the government officials, especially within the Pacific sector is- well I'll be right up front within the Ministry of Pacific peoples - do they see relevance to community groups responding, or you just putting all the investment in government departments and providers speaking on behalf of communities? - to which we've heard a deafening silence in the last eight weeks (WT T1) | It happened in the early hours of the morning, it shut down everything, shut down, basically Mangere, Otahuhu. And for two whole days, people didn't know what was happening. So we were getting calls of all sorts to say what is happening? How can you get my kids to school? How can I get to work? What is actually happening? On the morning that it happened, there was no- you know how we would pick up our phones and we get on social media and then onto the media outlets and everything and you kind of can pick up the latest stories. zippo, none of that. So everyone was wondering what was happening. (L T2) | Churches are trying to get their heads around it so that's a capacity capability issue for leaders and those communities you've asked them to come and learn the language of government, on how you write proposals, and business- that's a total foreign thing for our leaders yet they are saying how can we get some help to help us build capacity? What we've seen in our journey, we've seen a lot of the churches and leaders have been forced through covid to learn new skill sets, so what we're doing right now around connectivity one of the things we did really quick was try and skill up all the leaders around how you connect on zoom, never before did they do computer stuff but they did that, (WT T3) |
| **Exclusion from wider society** | | |
| I understand how frustrating it must be for community to know that we are the solutions and to be a solution and to still not be supported to be activated in that solution. (EM T1) | I do know that what we did kind of miss though with Covid, being community groups though, that we found we were left out from the Auckland Council emergency level and completely bypassed, | Government is siloed and they contract in silos and it's competitive contracting procurement model and that's not the way that Pacific communities work so I think any challenge to the government procurement modelling, model or system I think is important for Pacific |

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| | even though we had things in place, our churches had things ready, and all our NGOs because we have the database to connect to our community. We were literally- we were forgotten about until later. So I just hope that this was a learning that we take- that we come through another pandemic or another civil emergency to go straight to the community groups, build it up this way (T T2) | community leaders, so I think it's a good thing to think about (RT T3) |
| **Partnership** | | |
| What we need now is courage and I think courage is a way of really putting it out there. We need people whether it be in government or the NGOs and the communities all to take- be courageous and say, we don't want to do this this way anymore. It's not working for us. Let's take that courage. Let's approach- we have friends in the ministries, we have friends in these organisations and say let's do something courageous and do it differently. (JR T1) | in Samoa what we've started to do is actually, the local churches host us and then what we're doing with their training of Malua for example, and the theological colleges, what we've done is we've partnered with them and they're doing not psychological first aid which is what it's famously known for, but pastoral first aid but we're merging some of the psych concepts with the pastoral because we all know like you said, not all the churches are the- as we do know LDS is the famous emergency manager across the pacific because they actually have that engrained, but I think this is an area where we can all step up to the plate (S T2) | When Covid hit what it has created is an opportunity for people to be creative but also to come and work together collaboratively, and one of the things that we share in our workshops when we go around to our churches and our champions is looking- no matter what denomination or organisation, but looking for- to partner with people who you can either tag into something that they're doing and fill a gap somewhere in what they're doing in the service that they're providing rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, you know somebody is already providing maybe a meal on a specific night and then your church wants- "oh yeah let's feed the homeless" and we'll run it on the same night, so looking at ways you can partner to maximize your impact out to the community. I think that's something that is great in terms of what we've seen across the community and people come together to work collaboratively (SL T3) |
| **Government & Outside Support** | | |
| How can the government begin to acknowledge that maybe some of their funding pathways need to be broadened or widened they can't just continue down the same track... If we're continuing the same funding tracks down the same way pre Covid obviously it wasn't working then because we still had big issues. How can we, in this new Covid environment or Covid climate really push the government, other than just reading some and contributing- are there other ways (SA T1) | I would throw that back to you as a question. If you're those groups, those groups are important, how would you do it? how could you do it? So it's not for me to go out and do it, it's- so I would agree with you, and maybe that's a conversation for everyone is how do we- how do you enable that to happen? And how can that be supported? Because there is support from councils and communities and other | Government have a role, providers and social agencies have a role, but the roles we do from a community perspective, we complement what the government are doing, they have a role, but their role goes only so far and we know you can't penetrate into some of the hard to reach- and our vulnerable communities so it's a different way of engaging- they're engaging but there's different aspects of engaging when you want to penetrate deep down into our communities and that's the roles that we're trying to play. (WT T3) |

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| | NGOs in the research community and globally, there's ways to support them, but I think those questions have to be asked within the community and we can help that, but we can't answer that, and it shouldn't be us to answer (DJ T2) | |