Research Fatigue Among Tongans in Aotearoa: An Exploratory Study introducing the Fei’umu Research Method for empowering the researched.

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Abstract

Introduction: There has been a number of references in the literature to over-research and research fatigue1-3, but rarely have the concepts been empirically investigated, and never for Pasifikans. There have been claims that researchers have built careers out of the ‘natural experiment situations of the Pacific4-6 with minimal benefits to the researched, e.g. the Tongans7.

In response, an exploratory investigation into the New Zealand Tongan communities’ understanding of and participation in, research, (HRC Seeding Grant No. 11/529), was conducted.

Method: We consulted 2 different church meetings in Auckland (approximately 50 people in each group). We also engaged in talanoa/discussions5 of the issues with 5: church leaders from different denominations; Tongan researchers; business owners; and 5 community leaders from Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton and Christchurch, respectively

Results: The study found, that the Tongan communities are subjected to a variety of research, information, and data gatherings, from a myriad of agencies. The respondents used a variety of mechanisms to avoid discomfort, get rid of researchers as expediently as possible, including; heliaki6, white lies, sarcasm, or give expected answers, thus confirming research fatigue1. The interviews and surveys employing the Tongan language and ethnic specific research approaches were preferred, especially for sensitive issues. The study suggests that ownership of the research process will improve the robustness of the data collection, and the community ownership of research outcomes.

Conclusion: The presence of research fatigue will threaten robust data collection and ownership of research findings6. This paper discussed research fatigue and its dangers, and suggest ways to address this problem8-10, before researchers are driven further from the researched communities and the utility of research knowledge11,12.

A new research method is introduced to enhance community participation and acknowledge ownership of respondent knowledge contributions. The Fei’umu Research Methodology uses the talanoa 13 and talanga
A new research method is introduced to enhance community participation and acknowledge ownership of respondent knowledge contributions. The Fei’umu Research Methodology uses the talanoa and talanga together as data collection instrument following the process of fei’umu (cooking with underground earth ovens): covering ‘umu preparation; food and cooking processes; eating arrangement and seating; entertainment; feasting protocols; and oratory exchanges.

References

1. Clark, T. “We are over-research here”: Exploring accounts of research fatigue within qualitative research engagements, Sociology; 2008; 2(5): 953-970.
12. Thaman, K. H. Representing and Re-researching Oceania: a suggestion for synthesis. In Finau, et al. (editors), Pacificentric Health Research Methods; Anthology Series No 1, Pacific Health Research Council; Fiji: 2002
Research Fatigue among Tongans: Fe’umu Research Method empowering the researched

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1. Tongans in Auckland
2. A Community Talanoa
3. What’s Research Fatigue?
4. Why it’s important?
5. How was the Talanoa?
6. Outcome of the Talanoa
7. Conclusions
8. The Fe’umu Model; a response to research fatigue

Tongans in Aotearoa

- 50,481 Tongans in 2006
- 90% church affiliation
- >50% NZ born & raised
- Increase of 24.0% from 2001
- Fastest growing Pacific group
- 38% <15 years old
- About 34,000 live in Auckland
- Highest abortion rate!

Redefining Tongans Life Problems in Auckland: the 4 Ps

- Powerlessness: minority, no equity
- Poverty: affordability, access
- Poor Education: acceptability, employment
- Personality difference: marginal existence

Driver of Change “If we don’t do it no one will”
What is Research Fatigue?

Respondents' & Researchers' Complains of:
• Over-research;
• Helplessness to control research directions and returns;
• Misrepresentation of data

E.g.: Ms. M. Mead’s Samoa; “Growing up in Tonga?”

Features of research Fatigue:
1. Clarity of purpose

Respondent Fatigue:
- Topic is irrelevant and uninteresting to respondents
- Research questions are decided by researchers & funders
- Research don’t seem relevant to respondents.
- Research may be carried out too late (after the event).

Researcher Fatigue:
- Researchers feel research lacks clarity of purpose.
- Researchers feel research fails to ask questions that are genuinely useful.

Features of research Fatigue:
2. Research Methods

Respondent Fatigue:
- Respondents are tired of responding to ‘same old’ data collection methods (e.g. questionnaires, feedback forms)
- Research methods used do not energise or engage respondents.

Researcher Fatigue:
- Researchers are experienced in one or two methods but lack confidence to try others;
- Suitable to respondents.

Features of research Fatigue:
3. Research Execution

Respondent Fatigue:
- Topic relevant and interesting to respondents;
- but respondents are tired of irrelevant questions;
- or methods of data collection, particularly if respondents have already voiced discontent; and
- are feeling that “nothing changes.”

Researcher Fatigue:
- Researchers feel anxious that data quality is poor due to poorly worded questions, etc.
- Researchers feel that research is restricted by clients’ briefs, regulatory frameworks/demands for “hard”, “transparent” data.
- Researchers feel research is restricted by resources (time, money, personnel, etc.)
**Features of research Fatigue:**

**4. Practical Actions & Outcomes**

**Respondent Fatigue**
- Respondents are frustrated at giving responses yet receiving no feedback about research findings.
- With receiving feedback that seems misleading or lacks credibility.
- Respondents receive feedback but changes due to research do not happen.

**Researcher Fatigue**
- Researchers do not see much changing as a result of the research.
- Researchers feel frustrated that research may have raised respondents’ expectations but changes as a result of the research are unlikely to happen.

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**Why is Research Fatigue important?**

- Knowledge and experiences are finite resources and shouldn't be mined mindlessly and recklessly.
- Robust data depends on robust respondents.
- Research fatigue affects robust research.
- Current processes are disempowering and tiring, favouring researchers.

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**How was the Talanoa Done?**

Talanoa by Tongan known to respondents in/outside researcher.
- Practice tradition & spoke Tonkanese.
- Collective Consen.
- Taped for transcription and thematic analysis.

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**Study Population**

- 2 church meetings of 30-50 people of all ages and gender.
- 5 church leaders: 2 Male & 3 female.
- 5 business owners.
- 5 researchers: health; education; social science.
- 5 community leaders from different sectors.
- Each category: saturated and triangulated.
**Ola 'e Talanoa**

**Church groups:**
- English and Tongan questions used
- Too many strangers asking
- Quick responses to get rid of researchers
- Questions on a wide variety of issues from health to death
- Sometimes: lie, joke, and/or heliaki (‘secret talk’)

**TRA Conference, Tonga 2011**

**Ola 'o e Talanoa**

**Community of 5s all similar:**
- There should be laws against useless questioning
- Plenty of strange researchers
- Hard to understand researcher behaviour and questions
- Varieties of “researchers” are hitting the Pacific communities
- Tongan nuances used: heliaki, fakakata, polepole, fakatokilalo, ku’i loi, fieme a, hua, takapangopango, etc.

**TRA Conference, Tonga 2011**

**Conclusions & Talanoa Summary**

- Research fatigue ++ present
- Protection & power sharing with respondents needed
- Research ownership of respondents needed
- New empowering research approach needed
- Some legitimate research not supported because of fatigue
- Nuances of language affect robust data collection!
Tongan Realities

Need to use both
Talanga & Talanoa
• Talanga: verbal sparring to establish a new truism
• Talanoa: tell stories
• Necessary exchange to uncover reality
• Deconstruct the nuances of Tongan to expose meanings!

Talanga Methodology

The Kava Circle

Eureka! The Fei’umu Research Model: the steps

1. Okooko & Ngoto’umu
2. Tokonaki & Fusili
3. Feime’akai & Talanoa
4. Tal’umu & Talanoa
5. Fuke’umu
6. ‘Au’au & Fokotu’u Pola
7. ‘Ilo & Talanga
8. ‘I nasi & Tufs
9. Lea Malie & Lea Vovo

1.0kooko & N goto’umu

Fei’umu: Everybody’s Business

Ta Fefe & Keli e ngoto’umu
• Preparatory phase
• Study Design
• Identify Study populations
• Sampling
• Funding
• Study Instruments
• Logistic design
• ID Research team
2. Tokonaki & Fusi Lu

Food & Recipe collection

3. Feime’akai & Talanoa

Feime’akai: Toungaue

Talanoa: Data Collection

Tokonaki: Ako Toungaue

Talanoa and Talanga: Explanation of project and data Collection

Talanoa & Talanga; Sharing the data and agreeing on robustness

Talanoa & Talanga; Sharing the data and agreeing on robustness
Feime’akai & Ako Talanga

Talanoa: Share Data & explanation to ensure quality

Talanga to verify data accuracy

Feime’akai: Tele, Fohi & fufulu

Participatory process: all involved

Fe’umu: Everyone’s business

4. Ta’o’umu & Talanoa

Data entry, Data incubation and Storage

5. Fuke’umu

Data retrieval
Then Unpack data surprises
Some editing and cleaning and then: Re-present data to respondents
Kai Pola & Talanoa

Data Analysis: researcher and respondents

6’Au & Fokotu Polau

Unpacking and classifying data
Setting the tables & grouping data
Data sorting

Kai Pola & Talanoa

Sharing analysis and agreeing on interpretations

7’Ilo & Talanga

Share & Digest Results
Talanga & talanoa about results
Agree on interpretations & representations
Analysis: respondents & researchers share the meaning
Fakame’ite & Lea Malie
Fakame‘ite & Lea Malie

Celebrating the agreed results and share research outcome!

Lea Malie & Me’a Malie

Respondents and researchers and present the results together or independently

‘Ilo & Talanoa

Sharing the results and fruits of research

‘Ilo Kava & Talanga

Kava: medium of talanoa & talanga
Respondents & Researchers
Talanga, Vahevahe Felingiaki
- Share analysis
- Agree on Conclusions
- Co-authorship: respondents & researchers
- Information dissemination
- Fiemalie & Nonga

Fiemalie & Nonga

Tufa Tu’unga

&’Iredi & Tufa

Fiemalie & Nonga
Malo ‘Aupito: Ke mou Nonga

Let Fei’umu Fix Fatigue
Pasifika Medical Association

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