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**KITIAGA MO FAKAMAHANI E HIKIHIKIAGA MATAGI HE  
TAU FIFINE NIUE: TAU PŪHALA HE TAU HIAPO  
NIUE WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES  
OF CLIMATE CHANGE: A HIAPO APPROACH**

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BY

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# **TAU MANATU HAFAGI**

## **ABSTRACT**

Indigenous communities in the Pacific are on the front-line of some of the most severe climate change impacts. Pacific leaders have consistently stated the urgent need for climate action (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2019) and fought for larger emitting nations to be more accountable for their inaction. While Pacific leaders fight to be heard, our people are also fighting to reclaim and draw attention to Indigenous knowledge, language and cultural practice as key areas for strategies of sustainability and resilience. To understand the complexities of climate change in the Pacific, people of Oceania must have control in framing and voicing their diverse narratives. As a daughter of Niue, I have a vested interest in the conservation of a dynamic and diverse Niue environment and culture, and the stories of Niue people, by Niue people. In the face of global climate change, drawing attention to the specific experiences and lived realities of Niue people contributes to local, regional and global Indigenous narratives that come from a place of strength and self-determination and challenge dominant Euro-centric coverage of climate change.

This thesis is about starting conversations that provide a greater platform to recognise and amplify the voices of Niue people. Specifically, this research focuses on Niue women's experiences of and perspectives on climate change. Niue women are important holders of Niue knowledge and culture. Stories of Niue's female ancestors are full of strength, resourcefulness, ferocity, and capability; unapologetic women who protect, nurture, provide and lead. Yet, very rarely do these stories make their way into primary school education, let alone any academic spheres. The perspectives and experiences of Niue women are important because in knowing them, it is possible to learn from their insight and culturally specific knowledge that has value and benefit in grappling with complex changes.

From the intersection of Management Communication and Pacific studies this research draws on specific values around voice; communication that centres and values cultural identity. While interdisciplinary work is common in both fields, very rarely have these two disciplines come into contact. I used my background in Management Communication to critically engage in conversations about the possibilities of meaningful engagement with Niue stories and perspectives to better craft relevant communication that has both strategic and social relevance. This thesis adds to critical thinking in the spaces of Pacific Studies and Management Communication, raising questions of how these two fields might shape and be shaped by each other.

To have a conversation about climate change in Niue, clear and considered attention needs to be given to the specificity and uniqueness of Niue women's voices and lived experiences. This calls for a Pacific research methodology and methods that centre Niue culture and the diversity of perspectives of Niue women. I developed hiapo methodology as a Niue-specific way to approach this research and create a space where Niue women's voices are privileged throughout the research process. Drawing on existing Pacific research methodologies, I explore the metaphor of the hiapo as a qualitative methodology that has particular relevance in culturally respectful research of Niue women's narratives. Hiapo is known to be the domain of women, an embodiment of process, practice, ancestry, herstories, and relationships in and of Niue culture. Metaphors from hiapo allowed me to explore the complexity of climate change through the narratives of Niue women in ways that respect the cultural and gendered relationships that entwine in Niue lived experience. Hiapo methodology necessitates greater dimensionality in foregrounding and privileging Niue knowledge and culture through visual, written, and oral narratives and archives.

Centring Niue women's voices highlights intricate culturally-laden meanings and actions in response to the realities of vastly changing environments. Twelve Niue women, all of whom were based in Niue, collaborated with me on this study. Their

narratives form precious tāoga for this study and – importantly for Niue people – for generations to come. These women’s voices are thematically analysed which brings into focus a multi-dimensional conceptualisation of climate change that reflects across their life stories and experiences. Climate change perspectives and experiences for these women are not just related to the physical impacts of the environment but much more diverse ancestral and cultural connections to the land, the sea, and our people.

Climate change in this context involves paying attention to family, stories of genealogy and generational knowledge. There is a richness to the insights of thinking about climate change in the stories of Niue grandmothers, mothers and daughters that teach Niue values of strength, resilience and resourcefulness. Niue women’s voices offer different perspectives on how climate change impacts are considered and dealt with in every-day experiences. Paying attention to personal and specific stories that seem beyond the realm of climate change in fact offer sites to challenge dominant perspectives and consider the capabilities embedded in Niue culture and practice that comes from generations of experience and observation. How a vanilla farmer pollinates her flowers, how a mother teaches her children how to live without electricity, how a young mother navigates the convenience of imported foods, are just some of the factors that contribute to lived experiences that are exacerbated by climate change impacts. Yet these narratives also provide insight into the opportunities of climate change, the ability to become more aware of key issues that these women prioritise in order to provide for their families, make a living and how cultural and ancestral practices are vitally embedded in these actions.

These women’s narratives provide insights into climate change and Niue cultural knowledge that has relevance both in Niue and beyond our rugged coastlines to Pacific and Indigenous communities who are also on the front-line of climate change.

# **FAKAMATAPATUAGA**

## **DEDICATION**

For my Grandma, Siale mata Lela.

For my Dad Peni, Benjamin Pasisi.

And for all daughters of Niue.

# TAU MANATU FAKAAUE

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# FAKAMAPOOPOAGA HE TAU KUPU FAKAAOGA

## GLOSSARY

**aga fakamotu** *Niue culture*

**faka Niue** *the Niue way*

**fifine** *woman*

**fonua** *land*

**fuata, tau fuata** *young people*

**hiapo** *Niue bark cloth, tapa, aute, 'ahu, siapo, ngatu, kapa, nemasitse*

**lukulukufeua he tau fifine** *the power of women*

**motu** *island (often in specific reference to Niue Island)*

**Pālagi** *European person*

**pule** *power, authority*

**tafe ka niu** *broom made from coconut fibres*

**tagata Niue** *Niue people*

**talo** *a Niue staple root crop, also well-known as the best in the region (according to all Niue people), can also be referred to as taro*

**talanoa** *conversations, storying*

**tāoga** *treasure*

**tupuna** *elder*

**vagahau Niue/vagahau** *Niue language*

**veveheaga** *chapter*

## A DAUGHTER OF NIUE

I was born in the Waikato. On a November afternoon in 1990, my Mum and Dad, Michal and Ben, welcomed me into the world. They named me Jessica Lili Pasisi. I was the fourth daughter and fifth child of an eventual six. On my father's side, I am the granddaughter of Sialeмата Lela and Matagi Pasisi, sometimes written as Patiti. My grandmother's mother is Lavinia, daughter of Tukumale. The roots of my Niue family are harder to find from this point on but in doing this research I have started new projects with my Dad to find out more about his family. I was given the name Lili to connect me to my father's heritage; unlike most of my older siblings, I had fair skin which prompted my parents to give me a Pālagi first name, Jessica, after a porcelain doll my mother had recently bought. My roots from my father to my grandparents, to my grandmother's maternal grandparents, the ancestors I'm yet to learn of and my middle and family name all mark me as a daughter of Niue. I am a Niue woman, born in the Waikato, part of the Niue diaspora, and with lineage connections to Ngati Pikiao, Tahiti and the United Kingdom.

These roots spread out before me like a great printed hiapo, full of knowledge, full of meaning, full of things I am yet to learn. They are roots not confined by place or distance but venerated in the blood lineage that claims me. It is a heritage that is mine, it can be ignored but it cannot be taken away by people or words or documents. It similarly isn't measurable, it cannot be broken, divided or judged for authenticity by any action, or inaction, by me or by others. It is a heritage that has meaning and significance first beyond and then within this space of academic writing. It is a heritage I literally and figuratively embody.

I am still learning vagahau. I am still learning about Niue culture and heritage. I am still learning how to unlearn the colonial and westernised systems and thinking that create a smog over my Indigenous heritage. Throughout this thesis, I grapple with these intersecting but distinct worlds that have specific implications for me as a

woman of mixed heritage, born and raised in the Waikato, who is researching with Niue people in Niue and for Niue people both in Niue and beyond.

I write from this vantage point acknowledging that my voice is not representative of all Niue people. Nor is it representative of the few people who share my eclectic genealogy, which I'm pretty certain is limited to only five other people in the entire world. I acknowledge that as a Niue woman existing and walking in particular worlds means I am exercising certain privilege in being able to write in this space, yet fairly or unfairly I have a responsibility to represent my people well; this doesn't mean I cannot be wrong or that shouldn't be challenged, in fact, it's the opposite. It is a significant weight and I am not the first to feel it. Many Indigenous people and people belonging to minority groups around the Pacific and the world have spoken and written about this struggle. I am not even the first Niue person to be writing in an academic space. But my presence in this academic space is uncommon and my position particularly as a Niue woman researching with and for Niue people marks this thesis as unique. At times the weight of this research has been uncomfortable, but discomfort can be important. As someone largely brought up in Pālagi, non-Niue, western-European systems and settings, I try to own the discomfort, to know and name it so that is visible and can be learned from.

My vantage point is specific because of my ancestral connections, my family, my education and upbringing, the environments I have experienced, the knowledges that have been gifted to me knowingly and unknowingly, the relationships that create and connect me, and the stories that culminate in my body and my whole body's life experiences. My vantage point is also specific because of the inverse of these things - the knowledge I do not have, the experiences I have not had, the environments I have not experienced, the vagahau words I still have to learn. I acknowledge my limitations while also acknowledging the value and importance of my voice as something that changes the more that I learn.

This learning experience is not for me alone. Niue knowledge in my experience is never only for an individual, it is always shared. Seeing this thesis as a sheet of hiapo, unfurled, spread long and proud, my ancestors, my experiences, my understanding and perspectives border the patterns that adorn the hiapo. I share this space with others, Niue people from the past and present and perhaps even the future. And while I can't write all their names as authors of this thesis, this thesis would not have been possible without them.

My vantage point like my knowledge is imperfect, flawed and can and should be challenged, not least by my future self. Yet I own my right to be wrong, to change my mind and acknowledge this space as one of learning. I take my place here as a daughter of the Pacific, as a daughter of Niue.



**Figure 1: Beating paper mulberry in Samoa (2018)** Photo courtesy: Cora-Allan Wickliffe

# VEVEHEAGA 1: TUKITUKI E KILI, PILIPILI KE MAU

## BEATING THE BARK, JOINING THE PIECES

*The striking match between words and imagery on the bark surfaces [of hiapo] initiates pathways for me to follow, creating a destination for me, a space to confirm my obligations as an artist. (Pule & Thomas, 2005, p. 19)*

In 2004, Cyclone Heta, struck Niue, my homeland. The damage and destruction caused by this event emanated in waves of trauma that lasted long after the skies had cleared, and the sea returned to an unassuming calm. In the preface of his master's thesis Niue Anthony Liuvaie Freddie (2018) remembers "the car ride down to the coastal villages to witness the extent of the damage. What greeted us was shocking especially the sheer devastation on the Southern part of Alofi, Niue's capital" (Freddie, 2018, p. viii). Over 95 per cent of the tāoga, cultural and historical treasures, from the national Niue museum collection was lost (Goering, 2016). Heta was big and has had a lasting impact on our people. The impacts of human-induced climate change are set to have an increasing effect on the intensity of these and other climate events. While the people of Niue are no strangers to cyclones and tropical storms, adverse climate change impacts are becoming more intense. The generalisation of climate change issues is clouded by an indistinctiveness and uncertainty that is reflected in the severe lack of research from, with and by Indigenous communities that are at the front-line of many of the negative consequences of global inaction and indifference. As a Niue woman, I have a vested interest in what climate change will mean for my homeland and what I can do as an Indigenous researcher to benefit my community. In this thesis, I aim to make visible the voices of Niue women who are important holders of Niue knowledge and culture. To understand climate change in a Niue context, I argue that we have to pay attention to women's narratives to view the realities, possibilities and broader underlying issues that are compounded by climate change. To strengthen, control and frame the Niue

narrative in regional and global spaces, we must infiltrate spaces such as the academy, and tell our stories in our own ways.

This research unfolds in the metaphor of hiapo, a Niue bark cloth that has always been part of our culture. Each *veveheaga* is preceded by an image of the hiapo making process, courtesy of Niue-artist Cora Allan Wickliffe. In this thesis, I develop a hiapo methodology that privileges and centres Niue perspectives, experience and knowledge, as a way to engage and collaborate with Niue women in creating a more nuanced understanding of climate change in Niue, and more broadly in the Pacific. Hiapo is known to be the domain of women, an embodiment of the process, practice, ancestry, and herstory of our culture. The metaphor of hiapo creates space for the complexity of climate change to be explored through the narratives of Niue women in ways that respect the cultural and gendered relationships that inevitably entwine in Niue lived experience.

Starting with hiapo centralises the question of how Niue women conceptualise and perceive climate change. To explore this question, I examine the archives of Niue written, visual and oral registries of Niue women and their perspectives and experiences. Specifically, this research aims to investigate Niue women's experiences and perspectives of climate change by developing and using a Niue-specific methodological approach – hiapo methodology – and thematically analysing Niue women's narratives. Foregrounding these discussions in hiapo is about paying attention to Niue narratives in specific Niue ways. It is about privileging Niue voice in the context of the overwhelming dominance of non-Niue "authorities". It is to decolonise and therefore recognise the strength, foresight and power of Niue experience, knowledge and ways of knowing and being.

Hiapo is a form of Niue bark cloth that has always been part of Niue culture, mentioned in some of our oldest stories such as the stories of Mataginifale which are explored in *Veveheaga 2*. Hiapo is rare and unique and its qualities have captured the imagination of many Niue people through art, such as Cora-Allan Wickliffe's 2018

exhibition “Reliving Hiapo: Work in Progress” (Wickliffe, 2019), John Pule’s hiapo inspired 1998 exhibition “Savage Island Hiapo” (Thomas, 2005); literature (Feilo, 2015; Kunitau & Hekau, 1982), and many other forms of storytelling. Hiapo has also captured the attention of many visitors to our nation to the point where the majority of hiapo are now found in foreign museums and much of what is written about hiapo comes from outsiders (see e.g., Pule & Thomas, 2005; Ryan, 2017). Printed hiapo bear some of the most freehand-printed styles in the region, with purposeful asymmetry, a lot of flora motifs and patterns, some even include current experiences of the time – ships arriving, foreign women, compasses, missionaries introduced flowers, spiritual figures and writing in vagahau (Pule & Thomas, 2005; Ryan, 2017).

In the context of this research, I pay particular attention to the printed form of hiapo that reached its height in the late 1800s but was still used into the 1900s though I want to be clear that my view of hiapo extends to and beyond the earliest stories of the migration of our people. While the function of hiapo may have changed over time, there is clear evidence in our ancestral stories that indicated the particular and significant use and value of hiapo; some of these stories are explored in the next *veveheaga*. Printed hiapo seem to have been predominantly made for special occasions, ceremonies and trade. Few of these pieces remain in Niue, yet the legacy and continued reimagining of hiapo through the generations of our people are a strong and significant reminder of the ancestral and cultural value of this *tāoga*.

I am inspired by the work from Pacific Studies scholars such as Katerina Teaiwa (2014), Konai Helu Thaman (2003) Sereana Naepi (Patterson, 2018, now Naepi) and Emma Powell (2013) whose work disrupts formulaic structures of academic writing in ways that recognise the importance of Indigenous storytelling and also critique the colonial framings that dominate this space. In particular, Powell’s (2013) Tivaivai methodology and Patterson’s *masi* methodology are useful in thinking about how hiapo can centre women’s voice in a Niue-specific context. Tivaivai also shares particular colonial connections – printed hiapo are largely considered the result of

contact with Samoan missionaries' wives in Niue (Pule & Thomas, 2005; Ryan, 2017). With this thesis, I challenge the boundaries of traditional structures of academic writing to create a space where Niue voices are framed in ways that are attuned to Niue culture.

Much of the dominant discourse about climate change tend to emphasise current and future physical impacts specifically the vulnerability of ecosystems (Bryant-Tokalau, 2018; Tong, 2017). Only recently other impacts such as mental health and wellbeing of climate change have had much attention (Tiatia-Seath, Underhill-Sem & Woodward, 2018). Focusing on the narratives of Indigenous people whose everyday lives are constantly impacted by broad and complex impacts from or exacerbated by climate change provides better insight and ability to identify other underlying issues that restrict or limit climate change action.

Currently, there is limited research in the area that privileges the voices of Niue people, let alone Niue women. Certainly, no research has centred our perspectives and experiences of climate change in ways that focus on a Niue context and centre Niue culture. Global acknowledgement and awareness of the additional burden of adverse climate change impacts for women are gaining attention (UN Women, 2015; Whyte, 2014), yet women's narratives remain relatively invisible. Climate change can and does impact women, particularly Indigenous women in significant ways but a dominant discourse where these are the only stories of women's experiences of climate change is misleading. To glimpse more of the reality of climate change then, attention should be paid to a broader narrative of lived-experience where underlying issues may become more visible (Wairiu, 2006). Pacific leaders have consistently called for urgent action in response to climate change (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2015, 2019; Kabutaulaka & Teaiwa, 2019). Work is being done to bridge some of the barriers of Pacific communities, around literacy for example, by organisations such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). But the scope of many climate change projects remains limited

in terms of coverage and in reflecting the realities of local conceptualisations and experiences of climate change in ways that don't generalise these experiences.

Certainly, climate change struggles for Indigenous communities are not devoid of commonalities but headlines such as 'Five Pacific islands disappear as sea levels rise' (BBC News, 2016), 'How to save a sinking island nation' (Alexis-Martin, Dyke, Turnbull & Malin, 2019), 'The leaders of these sinking countries are fighting to stop climate change' (Worland, 2019), remain a common thread for coverage of climate change in the Pacific. These messages affect a broader imagination of how the region is viewed and often embody colonial tropes that aren't uncommon for Indigenous people. It certainly doesn't reflect Pacific leaders' solidarity in drawing attention to the issue of climate change and fighting for larger emitting nations and corporations to be held accountable for their inaction and indifference (Falkner, 2016; Kabutaulaka & Teaiwa, 2019). It certainly emphasises the irony of headlines such as 'Australia to help Pacific neighbours adapt to climate change' (Mercer, 2019). These views are persistent and aren't limited to Australia or media-outlets. The academy is equally complicit in perpetuating a colonial gaze of Indigenous peoples facing climate change (Whyte, 2017; Cameron, 2012). Research of climate change in the Pacific is still largely conducted by outsiders. It is therefore important that our stories are told by our people in our own ways (Smith, 2013; Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Smith 2004). In this thesis, I argue that Niue women's experiences and perspectives are vital for how we understand and respond to climate change.

### **Tau Kupu ne Fakaaoga** *Use of terms*

It is instructive to clarify some of the terms used in this thesis that have multiple meanings and can be context-specific in their use.

**Pacific**, Moana, Moana Nui a Kiwa, Masawa, Tasiq, Matawa, Lamana, Oceania, the great ocean continent, are some of the many names by which this region is known. In Niue, we use the word Moana to include the ocean and deep sea, but tahi can also

be used to describe the ocean from the cliff edges right to the deep ocean, tofia is another word that can be used to describe the sea. In the context of this thesis, I follow the work of Niue people before me such as Samoa Tongakilo (1998), Maihetoe Hekau and Vilisoni Kunitau (1982) and others who situate Niue as part of the Pacific. While 'Pacific' does not do the work that moana, tahi or tofia do, it has a common meaning and understanding for Niue people. Though time may change how we as Niue people view ourselves, for now, in this largely English thesis, the terminology of Pacific has convenience. I use this word with an understanding that many Pacific thinkers have and continue to dialogue about a name or several names that may connect us beyond the confines of uninformed colonial views and labels and that it is also a term of convenience (Lopesi, 2018). I also borrow from Konai Helu Thaman (2003) the notion that "my Pacific is Oceania" (p. 2) in the sense that it is expansive, vibrant and encompasses the diversity of our region.

**Niue people, Niue** – While the use of the term "Niuean" in reference to the people of Niue is common, I have been advised that it is a bastardisation of the language and the correct term to use is simple "Niue" or "Niue people" or "tagata Niue". There are a few instances where *Niuean* is used, but only when directly quoting from an external source or reference.

**Vagahau Niue/vagahau** is a living language and there are diverse views on translations. cursory translations and a glossary of key terms are provided for the general reader. However, I share ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui's (2018) sentiments that "No language thoroughly translates the gradations of meanings of the original language into the "target" language" and that in translations "...subtle but important nuances of meaning will inevitably be lost" (ho'omanawanui, 2018, p. xxxv). Vagahau makes limited use of diacritical marks, only using the macron above vowels to indicate an elongated sound. While early published Niue did not use macrons, it has since become common practice. In this thesis, I follow this convention of including macrons except when a text is cited directly and does not include them.

The purpose of italics is conventionally to set words apart in a sentence, add emphasis, or to specify foreign words within English text. I purposely use italics for cursory English translations of Niue and other Pacific words or phrases that are not included in the glossary. By not italicising Niue and other Pacific words I am recognising that in this thesis that *vagahau* is not considered foreign and our connections to other Pacific cultures means they are also not foreign. It makes sense to use Niue along with other Pacific languages in this thesis because Niue has always been connected to other places in the region and beyond through migration, trade (Lopesi, 2018), warring tribes (Smith, 1902), missionaries, jobs abroad, blackbirding, being a former colony and our continued relationships to New Zealand, and by the geographical dispersion of the Niue diaspora. Some *vagahau* words are also found in other related languages and so italicising, for example, *talanoa*, as a Tongan word but not when being used in the Niue context, would unhelpfully reinforce barriers that cut across existing connections. There are some instances where other Pacific words are italicised for emphasis.

*Vagahau* is my second language and I lean heavily on cultural advisers who have generously helped me navigate this space allowing me to include *vagahau* in this thesis and contributing to my own learning in the process. My advisers expert advice has been willingly accepted, however, any faults are entirely mine as a learner of the language. The inclusion of *vagahau* here, though limited, is not tokenistic but instead a step towards deeper understanding for myself, a mark of recognition insofar as I can make at present, and an encouragement that others might be able to go further. These phrases and terms also connect this thesis with other conversations in other Niue spaces; offering glimpses into the rich realm of articulations and theorising in *vagahau* that sits beyond and alongside this research. While some words I have learnt along the way, others represent new relationships and friendships, the kindness and generosity of others to teach me. While one view may see a single word or simple phrase, I see the living language of *vagahau* that moves in and beyond these words. I use words and phrases throughout the thesis as and where they make sense for me

and as a reflection of my learning of the language and of my intention to contribute to further use of vagahau in academic spaces.

### **Fakamahao ke he Mataulu he Kumikumiaga Outline**

In this thesis each veveheaga is guided by part of the process of producing a printed hiapo: (1) Tukituki e kili, pilipili ke mau, *beating the bark, joining the pieces*; (2) Taute tau vali, *making the dyes*; (3) Talaga e tau matafakatino foou, *printing new designs*; (4) Kumi e alito/kakano he mata fakatino, *finding pattern in the print*; and, (5) Fakamaali e hiapo, *making the hiapo visible*. A brief preview is given below for each veveheaga.

*Veveheaga 1: Tukituki e kili, pilipili ke mau* is divided into four sections. The first section provides an introduction to the thesis. Subchapter 1.1 unfurls and lays out the hiapo approach that guides and underpins both the substantive as well as the methodological aspects of this research. To be able to contextualise hiapo as a research method, subchapter 1.2 locates this research within Pacific Studies and Pacific Studies research methodologies. Subchapter 1.3 elaborates on the specific methods used in this research.

In *Veveheaga 2: Taute tau vali* I explore specific Niue narratives in written, visual and oral forms. Just as the hiapo is housed in many colonial archives, so too Niue stories are bound in the colonial legacies of contact through Christianity and British rule administered through New Zealand. Re-examining these stories in subchapter 2.1 *Kua Tohi Tala*, I look at Niue stories by Niue people, where they can be found, what they are about, and how these particular narratives give rise to Niue knowledge that develops an important foundation for this research. While colonial systems in academia obscure Niue scholars and literature, they cannot completely invisibilise the work of Niue thinkers who have contributed and published their work in spite of limited access and the barriers enforced by colonial imaginings of their own superiority. In subchapter 2.2 *Kua Tau Tala Fakakitekite*, I explore particular images

of Niue women, generating a different perspective from which to draw insights from Niue women's experiences. In the final section, *2.3 Kua Tau Tala Tagata Niue*, I draw on community stories from talanoa with groups of women and talanoa with different men to build the foundation of Niue knowledge and experiences of climate change in a contemporary context.

*Veveheaga 3: Talaga e tau matafakatino foou* shares twelve Niue women's stories drawn from talanoa about climate change but not limited to it. Each story is followed by insights drawn from the conversations and broader relationships I had with each woman. Each story provides symbols and motifs that mark the design of the hiapo. Up close, these women's stories highlight the specificity of experiences of climate change in Niue and gendered and culturally specific knowledge that is made visible when we listen to Niue women's voices. The stories are presented in three sections; *3.1. Tau tala he tau tupuna fifine ha tautolu – Stories from our Elder Women*, which includes two elder women's narratives and insights; *Tau tala he tau mamatua fifine ha tautolu – Stories from our mothers*, which includes eight women's narratives and insights; and, *Tau tala he tau tama fifine ha tautolu – Stories from our daughters* which includes two young women's stories and insights.

*Veveheaga 4: Kumi e alito/kakano he mata fakatino* is an exploration of twelve women's narratives through thematic analysis and contextualising them in the space of the established written, visual and oral registries of previous chapters. While the previous *veveheaga* looks at symbols and motifs of women's stories up close, this *veveheaga* takes a step back to notice the wider connections and differences of the stories as a collective. In exploring the cultural and gendered context of how Niue women talk about (or don't talk about) climate change, key themes emerge from the stories that contribute new ways of understanding how climate change is understood and experienced in a Niue context. This analysis highlights concerns outside of typical climate change rhetoric to make visible key issues such as language retention and the

loss of generational knowledge. The analysis also pays attention to the leadership and adaptability of women in responding to adverse conditions.

*Veveheaga 5: Fakamaali e hiapo* takes a step back to view the final hiapo, to understand how it may inform and be used moving forward. It brings together all aspects of the hiapo to share Niue women's perspectives and experiences of climate change and the importance and value this has for Niue people. It ends with conclusions on how this research contributes to a broader understanding and narratives of climate change in the Pacific and beyond.

### **1.1 Tukituki e Kili** *Beating the Bark: Developing a hiapo methodology*

*Monū Tagaloo*

*Ke hake ke ti mata ailele*

*Kolomata e tama ti ua loluga*

*Monū ho inu e e e ...*

The saying above is an expression of respect for the customs, knowledge, wisdom and beliefs of the Niue people. Each *veveheaga* contributes to a great printed hiapo that will become visible in its entirety by the end of the thesis. In this section, we beat the bark; bringing together purposely cultivated plants that have been prepared especially for this task. Hiapo literally comes from the nourishment of soils; the sun and rain that falls on our island enabling life to flourish. It carries our fonua *land*. To see hiapo in this way pushes us to consider how we construct this thesis, paying attention to the 'where' and 'who' of knowledge that supports a Niue-specific approach.

Hiapo also has agency as an indicator of change. Hiapo has lived through changing times, the passing of knowledge from generation to generation, highlighting its significant cultural value. In this thesis, I think about the hiapo making process as a structure by which I can collaborate and connect with Niue women's narratives of experience about climate change. *Veveheaga 1* embodies the beating of the bark and

the joining of pieces to form the blank canvas of the hiapo. It is a foundation for the entire thesis, the base layer that each veveheaga will lay upon. It pulls together the resources needed from Niue cultural practices but also draws from the work of our brothers and sisters around the region, the shared knowledge of other Indigenous people. The Niue origin stories talk of how some of our people migrated to the island. It makes sense then to incorporate knowledge from around the Pacific and other Indigenous communities in ways that realise the shared connections and experiences of our people. Further, Niue knowledge is not restricted to Niue things. Our ancestors have long adapted to and incorporated different knowledge and practices in ways that benefit our people.

The first part of this section introduces hiapo, develops a hiapo methodology and identifies the implications of this approach for this study. The second section locates this methodology in Pacific Studies using key Pacific research methodologies and epistemologies that connect with and support the use of metaphor in Pacific research with Pacific peoples. Developing hiapo methodology to centre Niue knowledge and cultural values, Niue women, their lived experience and their *pule, power/authority*, is about recognising a significant gap in existing Niue research. The purpose of this thesis isn't to generalise how women in Niue view climate change, but rather to explore ways in which Niue women can story their experiences and realities of climate change within their specific cultural and environmental contexts. It is, therefore, necessary to ensure that this focus covers the entire thesis and that the structure of the thesis reflects Niue principles and values, which are discussed more fully in this veveheaga.

Hiapo is a cultural practice and art form. Hiapo methodology centres Niue-specific knowledge, culture, values, beliefs and practices in research that is with and for Niue people. At the heart of this methodology is the validation of Niue worldviews, knowledge and lived experience as a way to frame and define terms of reference, methods of conduct and analysis that shape any research involving Niue people and

Niue knowledge. This recognises Niue pule in self-determination at the individual, family, village, and national levels. I use aspects of hiapo and the hiapo making process to develop a flexible metaphor to guide this research, not to create a set of labels that hiapo can be confined to but rather to recognise how the flexibility and cultural specificity of hiapo to Niue allows for particular ways of viewing climate change in the narratives of Niue women. Hiapo is often referred to as the domain of women. This aspect is developed for the context of this research to focus on the narratives of Niue women as an underrepresented group in mainstream climate change perspectives. Hiapo methodology may be new in academia, but it comes from people and things that are old, ancient, and bound by lineage. Things that many Niue people know and understand or things they have felt or experienced, even if there are no words to describe this, with other sensory processes. Hiapo methodology centres Niue knowledge, Niue women and Niue culture as interrelated spaces.

Albert Wendt's (2014) poem "Maui" asks: "what is the centre thing that holds me to my life?" (p. 43) Wendt poses more questions to find his answer and this in itself is an important process reflected in hiapo. Wendt's questioning doesn't yield one perfect answer, but asking the questions opens up spaces where we can pay attention to things that otherwise are marginalised or made invisible. In asking questions we can see that what we hold at our centre changes both across space and time. Hiapo functions practically and features ceremonially in both physical and spiritual worlds, though its presence in a traditional sense has dramatically decreased since the late 1800s and it now largely exists behind closed doors of museums and galleries around the world.

Hiapo methodology encompasses moving parts that seek to collaborate on culturally responsive, context-specific stories by, with and for Niue people, specifically Niue women. Although I develop hiapo making as a guiding Niue methodology with a specific application in gaining insight from Niue women's narratives. But hiapo isn't limited by gender. Hiapo as an art form has been taken up by contemporary Niue male

artists such as John Pule, Iata Peautolu, and Kenneth Green. Kenneth Green and Cora-Allan Wickliffe are two Niue artists who make printed hiapo in a similar way to how our ancestors made it in the late 1800s. Cora-Allan Wickliffe has exhibited collections of hiapo in Niue, Aotearoa and beyond (Wickliffe, 2019). Recognising the complementarity of gender in Niue culture is a useful aspect of using hiapo to engage in a contemporary context that while focused on women doesn't exclude men.

Hiapo is an encompassing and expansive reference to cultural, social and natural environments, intimately interconnected in women's relationships and experience. Hiapo itself can only be made once and, so too, the stories this methodology develops contain a uniqueness and specificity that reflect the time and space in which they come from. What I offer in this section is a foundation, a collection of words that guide me as a Niue researcher in gathering and crafting the tools necessary to create a Niue hiapo. Central to a hiapo is the hiapo maker, and while the resources, tools and ideas for this research come from tagata Niue *Niue people*, past and present, this methodology provides space for my particular experience as a Niue researcher conducting research with and for Niue people.

Hiapo methodology draws attention to the movement and migration of our people and the importance of genealogical connections that link all Niue people back to the island. As it represents and embodies connected aspects of cultural practice and knowledge that acknowledge the past, present and future, hiapo can be used to distinguish distinct shared and affirmed identities and practices that create community, village and national identities. In developing this methodology my intention is not to expound a view of what does or does not constitute definitively as Niue knowledge; others will see a hiapo methodology differently to how it looks, feels, and is understood and written here. This is the first time hiapo methodology is being developed and applied in a specific academic context; it's an attempt to grapple with the complexities, beauty and intricacies of Niue experience, knowledge and relationships in ways that acknowledge and care for Niue culture, identity and well-

being, in an academic setting. Many of these aspects are tied to my own experiences and knowledge, influenced and guided by Niue people and others in the Pacific and Indigenous Studies spaces that have come before me. It does not seek to cover or recognise all aspects and values of Niue culture, it relies on my vantage point as a Niue researcher and as a woman of Niue descent.

Ancestral narratives are important in Niue culture, but often face significant barriers in the face of the constant pressure of western-centric thinking and systems. Hiapo is non-linear in its relationships through time and space and provides areas to think beyond the confines of unidirectional thinking and systems. Hiapo is a mediating space that connects Niue women to themselves, to those around them, and their environment. Relational values such as *loto fakaalofa the compassionate heart*, *loto fakamokoi a generous nature*, and *loto totonu empathy*, are held in high regard by Niue people and have particular relevance to the research process and the safety of collaborators. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that collaborators and their voices are not ill-used or used in ways that would negatively impact the Niue community. There is a trust bestowed upon the researcher and they must uphold and honour the trust they are given. In a similar sense, hiapo methodology requires a Niue researcher to be reflexive of their place in the research, it centres their experiences as having an important and visible impact in the research. Reflexivity is not a new aspect of Indigenous research, but the specificity of being descendent of Niue in hiapo is important to centring Niue voice not in competition to others but rather in harmony with them. It makes visible Niue experience in a way that is inclusive of the Niue researcher.

The basis for Niue customs and traditions of Niue are recorded by Atapana Siakimotu and Reverend Pahetogia Faitala (2008) to include: *fonua mo e kelekele mōmō land and earth*; *lagi likoliko sky and heavens*; *tofia sea*; and *tau faiagahau galue kehekehe feast and feasting ceremonies*. Hiapo making centres particular aspects of these areas, each of which is discussed in the thesis. Hiapo, as Pule has written, has

an intimate connection with the land through soils, plants and seeds, which form the tools and raw materials used in hiapo making (Pule & Thomas, 2005). Similarly, waters, both seawater and freshwater, are used in hiapo making. This is reflected in the stories of Mataginifale and of Fitiutouto and Kiliutamanogi (Smith, 1902) which are explored in the next chapter. Hiapo relies on certain weather patterns and in the past drew from knowledge of the stars in order call for rain to bring fresh water for the hiapo making process. This is also recorded in the story of Fitiutouto and Kiliutamanogi, which has a clear connection to the stars and sky. Hina and her daughters, who are skilled in hiapo making, dwell in the second heaven. We can think about the connection of hiapo to the sea in many ways. One way is how the sea or salt-water is used in aspects of hiapo making. Another way is how hiapo has travelled over and across seas and now lives in places outside of Niue. Both these connections to the sea provide important depth to the metaphor of hiapo in connections in different environmental spaces (sea and land) and across geographic spaces.

Hiapo has traditionally appeared in several cultural ceremonies such as birth, death, and circumcision (or mock circumcision). Hiapo has also had value as clothing or girdles for holding weapons and large pieces of hiapo have been used as sunshades for ceremonies with distinguished guests. These aspects are established in the stories and images from the written and visual registries engaged in the next chapter. In centring Niue culture, I am using hiapo as an embodiment and way to connect to significant aspects of Niue culture through its connections to fundamental Niue customs. The hiapo making process thereby draws our attention to specific principles of Niue culture relevant to the research context.

### **Fakalilifu *Respect***

Respect is a significant element inherent in hiapo and hiapo making. All aspects of hiapo are tāoga, they are treasures of Niue culture. Respect in this sense is not just of where the hiapo ends up, for example, as an item of clothing or as part of

museum display. But respect for where hiapo comes from in the first place, who it comes from, who it is made by, and what materials are used; it's also its heritage, history and the many narratives hiapo has and embodies as part of Niue culture. This opens spaces to engage with narratives that might otherwise be marginalised because of more dominant perspectives and it also recognises that there are significant relationships between people and their environment. Hiapo emphasises respect for Niue women through acknowledgement of their skill, status, knowledge and experience. Making hiapo gives special status to those women who have the skill to make hiapo and to those who wore hiapo. This power is present in all Niue women and by paying attention to ancestral tūtala, *stories*, we can create more spaces and recognition for women and women in leadership in ways that resist patriarchal structures and thinking.

Respect is important in the context of privileging Niue ways of knowing and being. Our knowledge, our customs and practices are central to who we are. *Aga fakamotu* and *aga faka Niue* encompass Niue values, beliefs, customs, language, heritage, songs and practices. In the context of a health-related project, a group of Niue knowledge holders known as the Niue Working Group. The group included Thomas Kauie, Siahi Sekene, John Ridd Kunitau, Ettie Pasene-Mizziebo, Lyrone Lino, Halo Asekona, Mali Erick, and Mokauina Fuemana-Ngaro along with writer Manogi Tavelia (Tavelia, 2012). The group described Niue peoples' views of the world as holistic and integrated:

*Aga fakamotu, aga fakaNiue and vagahau Niue* (language) express the world of Niue people as being inter-related. The human dimensions of a person's *moui* (life), for example, cannot be viewed as isolated or separate elements. The physical body, emotions, spirit and mind of a person are interconnected and interdependent. Like the parts of a body, individuals are also inextricably connected to their families. (Tavelia, 2012, p. 10, emphasis in original).

Recognising the interconnectedness of different dimensions of Niue life and lived experience is therefore important in understanding the impacts of complex phenomena. Showing respect in Niue research is recognising the lineage of our people, understanding the positions held by tau tupuna *elders*, in passing on generational knowledge. It is also about recognising the value of ordinary Niue people in being able to tell their stories in their own words and in ways that recognise the importance of culture for our people. Being respectful is also about being mindful of the colonial systems of oppression that influence our people and how we interpret the world around us and our place in it. Being respectful of Niue knowledge in its many forms in a research context requires using and being guided by Niue concepts that underpin how research with and for Niue people is conducted and analysed.

### **Tau Fakafetuiaga Relationships**

Hiapo emphasises certain values and meanings at different times, in different spaces and for different people. This pushes us to think about relationships, networks, links and lineage that hiapo signifies not just as an art form but as cultural tāoga that is rooted figuratively and literally in tangible and physical ways and in worlds and spaces that are intangible, spiritual and beyond physical. In one sense it is about the networks of people involved in making hiapo – we can consider the woman as an individual, the roles she plays, her skills, knowledge and experience that might be glimpsed in the design and form of her hiapo.

Hiapo is the domain of women, though contemporarily practised by other genders; as a domain of women, it is not rigid or exclusionary in this way. Relationships embody the values mentioned above: *loto fakaalofa the compassionate heart*, *loto fakamokoi a generous nature*, and *loto totonu empathy* (Tavelia, 2012). Heart, generosity and empathy are critical in research relationships with Niue people. The relationship must have a foundation of honesty if the relationship is to grow and flourish for the benefit of both researcher and collaborator. It is important to think

about the relational identities of Niue women. These relationships are not only bound to humans, but to all living beings that are part of the Niue cosmology. Empathy and care to the Niue people cannot be devoid of care for the land, sea, flora, fauna, sky and stars that relationally connect the people of Niue. It is necessary to have a more connected understanding of what it means to be a Niue woman; the kinds of roles, experiences, and knowledge entwined in these multi-dimensional relationships.

Gender has significance in these spaces, and the focus here is to be exclusive not necessarily to exclude. There is gender-specific knowledge that can have greater visibility when attention is focused on, in this case, women. Again, this does not seek to ignore other beings in the pursuit of women's knowledge and experiences, which is impossible in the Niue context, but to recognise that from the vantage point of a Niue researcher who is a woman looking at and engaging with other Niue women there are specific ways of being, ways of knowing that become visible in this specific set of circumstances. Some things may be more likely to be shared given that I am a Niue woman talking with other Niue women.

Vahā loto mahani mitaki, agaaga fakatupuolamoui, and kua fakalataha are three of the key principles that informed the Fakatupuolamoui Conceptual Framework; Fakatupuolamoui meaning *to thrive vigorously and abundantly* (Tavelia, 2012). Though these principles are used in the context of addressing family violence, I build on these principles to inform an understanding of the importance of relationships in Niue research with Niue people. **Vahā loto mahani mitaki** is the concept of connecting and maintaining good relationships between people. The relationship between the researcher and collaborators needs to be open, honest and truthful for collaborators to trust and reciprocate with the researcher. Vaha loto mahani mitaki is the intention to fill the space between each other with good conduct. **Agaaga ke fakatupuolamoui e mahani mitaki** translates to *the spirit is encouraged to flourish (because of) good, proper conduct of the other*. "Agaaga (spirit) is crucial in making connections to each other in order to tupuolamoui (grow and thrive)" (Tavelia,

2012, p. 9). It is the spirit of maintaining peaceful relationships through respect, honesty, giving, sharing, friendship, and acknowledging the sacredness of the self and others. **Kau fakalataha** links, particularly to unity and cooperation. Thus, research is done as one and researchers have a responsibility to collaborators beyond the term of research (Vaiotei, 2011). Kau fakalataha includes *loto fakamooli heart and mind of genuine honesty*, *fakamooli he tau kupu vagahau genuine honesty of words* and *fakamooli e gahua genuine honesty of action to carry out what was said* (Tavelia, 2012).

It is necessary to understand Niue women as leaders, having expert skill and knowledge and being able to communicate that across space and time. More broadly we can think of the intergenerational connections and the passing of knowledge over time. With this understanding, we can see women have intertwined complex relationships that aren't linear but grow and move in many different directions across space and time.

### **Kaina mo e Takatakaimotu** *Place and environment, surroundings*

The values of *loto fakaalofa the compassionate heart*, *loto fakamokoi a generous nature*, and *loto totonu empathy*, mentioned above are embodied in the relationships between Niue people and their environments. While it's possible to think specifically about the geographical or literal place and place-making by Niue people, *faka Niue the Niue way* has an intimacy or closeness with the natural world, so it is useful and important to consider place and environments in different ways. Where Niue people are and where we have been, is a story in itself. But things can be learnt from the movement of our people, all the way from our first migration to the island to the movements our tagata Niue are making today. The communities of Niue people outside of Niue are now larger than those in Niue – it is important to recognise and think about how this impacts and influences our people and how new technologies may be connecting us in these geographically diverse spaces. Our

connections to certain places hold information about our connections to and understanding of changing environments.

Climate change is not just about climate impacts, but it is inevitably tied to political spheres, personal agendas, capitalist systems, neoliberalism and other continuing legacies of colonialism (Whyte, 2014; Ghosh, 2018). To have conversations about climate change, attention must be given to the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism (Cameron, 2011). But just as we wouldn't see hiapo in a museum and only talk about the glass case or storage box it was in, colonialism shouldn't be the only frame we use for thinking about Niue narratives of experience. Hiapo recognises and respects the relationships that emerge between people and between people and their environments, both physical and spiritual. It is through these relationships that we can pay attention to specific narratives of Niue women past and present. This then makes it important to consider where information is sought and what information might be privileged in order to hear the voices of Niue women. In Niue, the *motu*, *island*, and the *tofia*, *sea*, are intimately connected in the origins, survival and resilience of our people. Understanding these connections form the basis of Niue cosmology.

In many ways, hiapo is a place of resistance. Resistance to conformity and with it a recognition that life and nature do not conform to the ideas of symmetry. Hiapo designs tend to have a sense of balance, but often they deliberately diverge from perfect symmetry or repetition. Niue people like to have a distinctive personality and style. Many Niue ancestral stories speak of a kind of playfulness or cheekiness of Niue people. While we share similarities, we don't all fit the same mould; copycats and fake people tend to be mocked. Noticing the specificity in experience and looking for the humour they carry in relation to their lives, livelihoods and perceptions of the future can suggest different ways of approaching climate change. Hiapo opens up the space to play and think in both material and non-material ways.

## **Lukulukufeua he Tau Fifine** *The Power of Women*

Hiapo methodology centres Niue women's voices, herstories, creativity and storytelling. Niue culture defines women by their connections with other women, men, children, the environment and other social, cultural and spiritual spaces. While a focus solely on women can gain certain perspectives and vantage points, recognising the interconnection of women to other beings, environments and spaces, places a greater emphasis on Niue culture, gender, and worldviews in dynamic interplay. It isn't necessarily about capturing something in each of these spaces but creating flexibility in the research process so that it isn't isolated or confined to what the researcher may deem as "of interest". It shifts the power dynamic and shows respect to the knowledge of people that extends beyond what I, as the researcher, could perceive.

Hiapo foregrounds the skill, status, knowledge and experience of Niue women. Hiapo recognises women as central knowledge hubs. Niue women have unique relationships with their environment as a place for food, shelter, medicine and for the cultural tāoga that are important for Niue culture. By re-remembering ancestral stories and connecting them with where we are we can add depth to both our understanding and connection to the environment and push back on colonial systems of oppression that can create barriers. This means that if dominant rhetoric paints our people as victims, vulnerable and passive in the face of forces much larger than them, then engaging in conversation with Niue women about things they want to talk about can shift the climate change conversation to places we might not expect – just like when we don't always expect to find hiapo in far-flung places and yet there it is. Based on the Niue concepts, principles and values established in this section and considering the metaphor of hiapo within this space it is necessary to foreground Niue women's narratives by privileging Niue knowledge. To do this, I develop visual, written and oral registries that centre Niue stories, images, and voices of Niue people.

Written accounts form the basis of the public record about hiapo. However, some printed hiapo have written narratives within their patterns or along the borders. This is a reminder that Niue voice has been embedded in cultural forms for a long time. While in the past some outsiders to Niue have perceived the teaching of advanced written skills to be wasted on our people, this never stopped our ancestors seizing opportunities to write. John Pule (Pule & Thomas, 2005) writes critically of the outsiders who have written and made careers from what they have experienced, or what they think they experienced in Niue:

Niue's art and culture have been observed and written about by many visitors to the Pacific. A lot of what these visitors have written about us, our art forms and our way of life was and still is full of partial interpretations, outright mistakes, and arrogant attitudes that marginalise us further. (Pule & Thomas, 2005, p. 17).

Pule's thoughts on the colonial representation of Niue culture openly suggests that outsider perspectives of Niue culture are lacking in many ways. This criticality of colonial influence on Niue and Niue people is a common theme in much of Pule's work. His statement in the context of Niue art also makes visible the gaps and perhaps opportunities for Niue people to come into these spaces and start telling our own stories (Pule & Thomas, 2005). Because as Pule writes, without more sustained action our narrative will continue to be dominated by the partial interpretations, outright mistakes and arrogant attitudes of outsiders.

Written narratives by Niue people are an important aspect of our history and culture that have largely been overlooked and obscured by non-Niue authors and researchers. Recognising and engaging the written work by Niue women challenges the ideas that Niue women are passive, lack intellect, or lack adaptability. It also complements the writing of this thesis; writing of the past influences writing of the present. It demonstrates the foresight of Niue women to be engaged in different spheres speaking back to dominant voices. It also shows flexibility in moving between

English and Niue, western and Niue, Niue and 'other' spaces. In some areas, there are irrevocable ties between these different worlds and worldviews. And this is perhaps increasingly the case with a Niue population largely residing outside of Niue and increasing diversity in the ethnic makeup of our people.

Printed hiapo has a distinctive visual appearance. While the methods of printing hiapo may have been passed on by Samoan missionaries, Niue women made the art form their own. The use of specific flora and fauna is most common, identifying a clear connection to Niue's natural environment. Some hiapo also included colonial symbols or objects such as a compass, a western sailing ship, and a woman in a western dress (likely a visitor to the island). The patterns of hiapo are also asymmetrical – the artists deliberately disrupt any symmetry to include additional flora or a change in the dominant pattern or direction of a pattern. This creates a flexible space in interpreting and engaging with Niue narratives. Meanings can be fluid and aren't necessarily bound by a general view or a desire to conform. In printed hiapo, there is both a physical distinction of individuality in the art form and a distinctiveness of mind. While Niue has a collective culture of supporting family and community, Niue people often have a clear sense of their own views and perspectives which don't necessarily align with popular or group views. Considering the visual aspects of hiapo is a reminder that Niue people engage in meaning-making in different forms. It is useful to draw attention to the work of Albert Wendt (1999) from "Tatauing the Postcolonial Body" which asserts that part of a researcher's role can be to cast a different perspective on historical archives of knowledge and to reinterpret cultural expressions and practices that might inform more contemporary contexts (Wendt, 1999).

Oral accounts of hiapo are passed down through generations and it is hoped that when the time is right more of these narratives may be shared more widely in the Niue community. At present, it is possible to refer to the various dictionaries of Niue language that include much of the specific language that is connected with hiapo

making. Oral narratives are an important aspect of Niue knowledge and cultural identity. While oral narratives are passed down through family genealogy, it can also extend to kaina, village, church groups, and more broadly to fuata Niue, Niue youth. Elders are esteemed for the special knowledge and therefore sought out and honoured by younger generations. Protocols and customs are required particularly for elders not of one's blood lineage. A central aspect of oral narratives is listening. It has been said that listening is loving, and in Niue culture, particularly with elders, listening is an indispensable and necessary skill.

Hiapo embodies specific narratives about the past. Certainly, outsiders ascribe many descriptions and discussions of hiapo (see e.g., Ryan, 2018; and Thomas in Pule & Thomas, 2005). Despite this, hiapo maintains a connection to the stories and experiences of Niue women by Niue women. In the context of climate change, this opens up spaces for us to consider their stories in their many forms. Rather than being absorbed into narratives that are reductive of Niue women's agency, we engage with the past as a way of connecting to and understanding the present and future. The exercise of looking back to move forward means we can critically look at our narratives of the past to understand the ripple effects these things can have through space and time. It also means we can ask questions like: how did we get from there to here? This can be taken in a geographical sense, looking at movement and migration but also in other ways such as thinking about cultural shifts. Specifically, in this research, it means accessing and engaging with oral narrative by Niue women. I acknowledge that an oral narrative does not necessarily come from one person but may be carried and shared through generations of ancestral connection. Niue culture and knowledge come from Niue people. This might seem obvious, but like dominant conversations about hiapo, conversations about Niue tend to come from places and people who aren't Niue. Paying attention to, and deliberately looking for, Niue voices respects oral traditions and respects the foresight of generations, past and present, who have communicated and adapted their knowledge in various forms.

## Implications for this research

The elements of respect; relationships – heart, generosity, empathy, ancestry; place and environment – land and earth, sky and heavens, sea; culture; and the power of women can all be accessed and embodied in the metaphor of *hiapo* that metaphorically cloaks or underpins the entire study. There is an importance in having our people carry out *gahua work*, in ways that benefit our peoples. Particular things are made possible when our people, our researchers carry out research not *on* but *with* and *for* our peoples. This methodological approach guides a Niue-centred lens and framework of research. Being respectful of Niue knowledge in its many forms in a research context requires using and being guided by Niue concepts that underpin how research with and for Niue people is conducted and analysed. It is a reminder to tread carefully, to build relationships with love, heart and honesty. There are requirements of doing research with and for Niue people, particularly women in this research, in that stories and knowledge shared should not intentionally harm or discredit what is given or gifted in trust.

This research privileges Niue women's knowledge, experiences and guidance by investigating existing written and visual narratives that support and connect with oral narratives of Niue people. Pacific methodologies are a space that can decolonise Pacific research. The contribution therefore of a Niue methodology in the space of Pacific and Indigenous Studies is both a necessary and important recognition of Niue knowledge, Niue culture and ultimately our people in having a distinct and important place in the region and the world. This valuing of Niue knowledge reflects of the importance and value of all Indigenous knowledge and experiences; being human we all have power and that it is our people who are closest to us and know or can learn the questions to ask that create benefit now and in the future. In this research, it is a necessary acknowledgement of the many Niue researchers and methodologies still to come. To locate *hiapo* methodology in the space of Pacific Studies the next section defines Pacific Studies research and explores specific Pacific research methodologies

and methods that use metaphor as a way to meaningfully engage in Indigenous research in the Pacific.

## **1.2 Pilipili ke Mau** *Joining the Pieces: Pacific Studies research and methodologies*

*Research is an exercise in knowledge-gathering, acquisition, gifting, reporting and writing or presentation; it is infused by values of reciprocity, respect for the knowledge givers or depositories, loloma (love) and empathy that is mutual care and commitment to the researched people's welfare. (Nabobo-Baba, 2008, p. 146)*

This subchapter uses the metaphor of pilipili ke mau *joining the pieces*. The base of a hiapo is the joining of pieces of bark that have been stripped and soaked and then beaten out into long thin strips. The bark in this process can come from various trees such as the Ata tree or the Paper Mulberry. The Paper Mulberry is a cultivated plant and is likely to have journeyed across the ocean perhaps through the missionaries or from our own voyaging. Niue hiapo is unique but the process of making hiapo is shared by many cultures throughout the Pacific (Koya Vaka'uta, 2013; Te Punga Somerville, 2012). Some of the common names in different places include Masi – Fiji; Ngatu – Tonga; Siapo – Samoa; Nemasitse – Vanuatu (Erromanga); Nioje – Papua New Guinea (Omie); Kapa – Hawai'i; Aute – Aotearoa, and 'Ahu – Tahiti, to name a few. Te Punga Somerville (2012) suggests that in paying attention to bark cloth in our region, we connect with something that is simultaneously regional and specific. My intention here is embodied in the quote by Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (2008) at the start of this subchapter where I am developing strong foundations by drawing on existing Pacific studies research to strengthen and uphold the stories that come in subsequent chapters. By locating and drawing from other Pacific epistemologies, methodologies and methods I use the layers of meaning embodied in the practice of hiapo to connect the pieces of beaten bark from the previous subchapter.

Understanding Pacific Studies - which pays particularly attention to decolonisation, self-determination, respect for ancestry and genealogy, culture and identity, migration and intellectual sovereignty, and culturally-centric conceptions of time and space - pushed my foundations in management communication in terms of thinking about the possibilities of meaningful engagement with Indigenous stories and perspectives to better understand and craft relevant communication that has both strategic and social relevance, and how it might be possible to centre Niue culture and perspectives so that Niue people control the narrative. Part of this work is being able to stand in Management Communication studies with the understanding that privileging Indigenous voices requires moving beyond notions of borders and labels such as stakeholders and clients, to carefully think about what communication is and looks like for Indigenous people. Thinking about Management Communication in this way offers space to consider what and who, both in the sense of collaborators and researchers, are visible when engaging in Pacific spaces. Management Communication contributes specific considerations of how communication is valued and thought about, whose voices are heard, who decides and the ramifications of those decisions. In this thesis, I use my positioning in Management Communication to ensure and maintain a focus on communication in a way that benefits Niue people.

In "Towards a New Oceania" Albert Wendt (1976) challenged colonial perspectives of the region and recalled both the imagination and reality of the vastness of our region. This work breathed life into what has become a foundation for contemporary Pacific Studies and is complemented and extended by the works of Epli Hau'ofa (1993; 2008) including his oft-cited essay "Our Sea of Islands" (Hau'ofa, 1993). Both Wendt and Hau'ofa emphasised the connections possible be revisions the great body of water we have in common; the seas and ocean that connect 'Our Sea of Islands' (Hau'ofa, 2008). Their work also included pushing back on the exploitation of religious hierarchies, exploitation of labour, colonialism, neo-colonialism, the imposition of degrading values from both within and outside of Pacific societies (Samu, 2010), racism and globalization, in the varied manifestations of these issues

for Pacific peoples. Konai Helu Thaman (2010) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2013) have been critical of how Indigenous people and their cosmologies have been treated by colonial systems that are rooted in traditions of “civilising the native”. Thaman (2003) writes that “indigenous peoples’ perspectives have been silenced, misrepresented, ridiculed, and even condemned in academic as well as popular discourses” (Thaman, 2003, p. 10). To disrupt dominant narratives that remain ignorant and narrow, there are growing movements to have Niue people researching ways that make sense for Niue people. One way of doing this is thinking about challenging the way the region is typically framed and pushing Niue perspectives into places where they are visible. Pacific scholars such as Epeli Hau’ofa (1993), Albert Wendt (1976), Yvonne Underhill-Sem (2001), Teresia Teaiwa (2006), and Katerina Teaiwa (2014) have all challenged colonially imposed boundaries, lines and framings of our region, instead, we should foreground our own vast, diverse, stories and perspectives of this great ocean continent.

Indigenous research methodologies have been endorsed as alternative paradigms for research *with, for* and *by* (as opposed to *on*) Indigenous people (Smith, 1999; Denzin & Giardina, 2006; ‘Otunuku, 2011). Along with Pasifika social movements, Pasifika researchers (see e.g., Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau, 2001; ‘Otunuku, 2011) have advocated for “the use of Pasifika research methodologies that are sensitive to contemporary Pacific contexts, advance Pacific issues and include the Pacific concepts of collective ownership” (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa’afai, Tufulasi Taleni, & O’Regan, 2009, p. 26). There is a need for the research results to be available and accessible in ways that are useful both locally and indigenously (Denzin & Giardina, 2006). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has been a leading voice on the need to decolonize research methodologies to acknowledge, empower and support the development, prosperity and understanding of indigenous peoples (see also Nicholls, 2009; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008; Thaman, 2003).

Pacific research methodologies are an act of decolonisation within research. Konai Helu Thaman (2003) talks about how the decolonisation of Pacific studies “implies an attempt to reflect critically on the nature, scope, and processes of colonialism in the Pacific Islands” (Thaman, 2003, p. 1). And while many Pacific studies scholars have looked at impacts of colonialism on our economies, environments, politics and social structure, fewer have examined the impact on our minds, our ways of knowing, how we identify ourselves, what we think is worth knowing (Thaman, 2003), and what things we can and should remember as colonialism pressures us to forget (ho’omanawanui, 2018, p. 204).

Wesley-Smith (2016) believes that the connection to Indigenous Studies and Pacific Studies should be aspirational. There needs to be an increase in Indigenous researchers doing this research and adding to the bodies of interdisciplinary knowledge. He advocates that the central themes of Pacific Studies are about deep learning, creativity, and criticality. This echoes the work of Teresia Teaiwa who put forward a lot of thinking around pedagogy, as a teacher herself (Teaiwa, 2011; 2017). If reading and writing are a domain of colonisation, then it falls to being critical, asking questions, pushing boundaries, paying attention to and consciously remembering our ways of knowing, being, learning and belonging, in order to decolonise (Thaman, 2003). Further, there is an aspiration in Pacific Studies to create meaningful connections that acknowledge and intuitively engage Indigenous space, time and place (Tengan & Roy, 2014). Konai Helu Thaman (2003) states:

decolonising Pacific studies is important because (1) it is about acknowledging and recognizing the dominance of western philosophy, content, and pedagogy in the lives and education of Pacific peoples; (2) it is about valuing alternative ways of thinking about our world, particularly those rooted in the indigenous cultures of Oceanic peoples; and (3) it is about developing a new philosophy of education that is culturally inclusive and gender sensitive (Thaman, 2003, p. 3).

Hiapo methodology contributes to Pacific Studies in supporting the decolonisation of Niue research by using Niue knowledge and being grounded in Niue culture.

Understanding the chaotic realm of colonisation can be a lot like trying to get coconuts from the top of the tree and accidentally hitting a nest of wild bees, as my Dad casually mentioned had happened to him. He ended up having the skin of his chest ripped-up from sliding down the tree. I find this analogy useful because as an Indigenous researcher, decolonisation literature can sting. The more you find out about the histories and oppressions of coloniser worldviews and actions entangled in the fabric of our lives, our ancestors' lives, our identities and culture, it creates a sense of anger, sadness, and frustration that can lead to paralysis or a constant fight of trying to 'right' the many, many 'wrongs'. It can leave you as raw as the friction burns of sliding down a coconut tree, but acknowledging it is necessary, vital even, to decolonise our thinking, ways of being and knowing, and to open old and new spaces for Niue experiences and perspectives.

### **Pacific epistemologies/archives of Pacific knowledge**

Thinking about the connections of this research to gahua from other Pacific scholars is essential in understanding the place of Niue knowledge within the space of Pacific studies. Alice Te Punga Somerville (2012) and Lana Lopesi (2018) advocate for greater attention to the connections that once were Pacific and how these connections with each other may provide more nourishing spaces for the kinds of regionalism that Wendt (1976) and Hau'ofa (1993) envisioned. This isn't to say we should ignore relationships to the nation-state, but to consider the place of Niue and Niue thought with broader Pacific connections. This accentuates questions raised in the works of Hau'ofa (2008) and Wendt (1976) of how we choose to see ourselves as a diverse, dynamic and connected region. Although I am committed foregrounding Niue knowledge and thinkers in this thesis, this does not need to cut off existing links

beyond 'the Rock'. What can be foregrounded in our approach to Niue knowledge when we connect and reconnect with other Pacific thinkers?

Elise Huffer and Ropate Qalo (2004) refer to Pacific thought as a “dormant volcano: as long as it does not erupt, no one notices it. When it does boil to the surface, it comes, to the many who would rather dismiss it, as an unpleasant reminder of its persistent existence” (p. 87). In reviewing the place and positionality of Pacific theoretical thought, Huffer and Qalo (2004) note that although Pacific thought is not new, it has only recently, in the last few decades, begun to make its way into more formal academic settings. They argue that Pacific thought is not something that has been generally accepted in modern institutions and discourse. Yet the movement and increasing attention on Pacific epistemologies come from the work of many Pacific scholars, practitioners, activists and artists who advocate Pacific thought. Pacific knowledge is created in relations (Patterson, 2018) and as such prioritises Indigenous Pacific histories, herstories, cultural and ancestral memory as collective archives of important and critical value. Engaging in Pacific Studies research then requires cultural competency and notions of reciprocity and service that embody Pacific research values of love, respect, reciprocity, collective responsibility, humility, service and spirituality (Anae et al., 2001).

Pacific Studies has a role to develop Pacific-centric ways of research that decolonise and challenge traditional colonial and imperial models and systems. A central aspect of decolonisation is self-determination, which is a way of reclaiming; the recovery or restoration of knowledge, aspects of culture, agency, position, and many other things that are caught in the complex web of colonial oppression and influence. It can also mean engaging in politics, activism for rights and justice, and creating more inclusive practices for those less heard in society as a direct result of the continued patriarchal ideologies that tend to dominate global narratives. Pacific women's voices are less visible and therefore paying particular attention to what women say and how they want to say it culturally important and for some of us vital

to share gender-specific knowledge for future generations. Pacific Studies acknowledges the specificity and uniqueness of our people. Hau'ofa's (1993) sentiments for the recognition of everyday people are a reminder of the diversity of experience and knowledge in the Pacific in ways that resist colonial and imperial labels, stereotypes, generalisations and other damaging legacies. Within Pacific Studies many conversations cannot happen without addressing colonialism in all its forms, including historical and ongoing oppression and influence. Significant push back on colonial impact comes from decolonization movements. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2013) work is often a reference point as a foundation and guiding point for deconstructing western influence, systemic oppressions and processes to privilege and make space for Indigenous perspectives, approaches, thinking and leadership to reimagine, recapture, and revitalise our cultures to empower development, progress, sustainable and strategic direction, and agency, to benefit our peoples. Smith (2013) advocates for more Indigenous researchers doing Indigenous research.

Konai Helu Thaman (2003) similarly calls for the empowerment of Indigenous Pacific peoples using Pacific researchers to decolonise both themselves and the people and communities they engage with and work for. Epeli Hau'ofa (1993) reminds us that there is also an importance of focusing on the voices of everyday people, everyday experiences and the spiritual worlds that socially connect our people (. Visibility for our people is often determined or crowded out by dominant colonial and other outsider narratives that define knowledge, value and provide their own measurements. Continuing to push back against outsider voices and privilege people in less visible spaces becomes critical in building stronger and more encompassing narratives. Care must be taken not to generalise knowledge and experience, but to recognise the imbalances of knowledge and its recognition in Pacific contexts and how research can be used as a tool to counter this imbalance, creating spaces that are inclusive rather than exclusive. There is greatness, power and connectedness in our sea of islands, there is difference and uniqueness also. It is useful then for research to explore both the connectedness and uniqueness of our nations and our people,

without the knowledge that we aren't and cannot be generalised representations that fit all people of the Pacific. Research from different perspectives, even in Pacific Studies, is important in building more realistic views of the complexity and diversity that is embodied in the many worlds and voices of this region. There is a growing movement of activism in Pacific scholarship that seeks to tell our stories in our own ways.

In scholarly work, there is a lack of representation and visibility of Pacific women who continue to resist and struggle against colonial and imperial forms of oppression and disempowerment. Specifically, there is an underrepresentation of Niue women. Decolonisation requires the recognition of our women's voices in ways that respect and value their place and positionality in our communities in the past, present and future. As Selina Tusitala Marsh (1998) points out, colonialism has had specific impacts on women, particularly through the colonial introduction of Christianity. Yet, Marsh (1998) argues that the dominant western narratives of feminism, which emphasise aspects of women's independence and rights, do not resonate with a Pacific let alone a Niue audience. Certainly, there are colonial impacts on Niue women which must be acknowledged, especially how colonial systems manifest in every-day experiences and also in Niue mentalities. We can work to decolonise the mind in this space (Thaman, 2003; wa Thiong'o, 1986) but these conversations need to be led by women.

Pacific methodologies and methods have often been critiqued for their lack of structure but it is a lack of emphasis on structure, that enables alignment with approaches that acknowledge uncertainty, complexity and relativism that are in line with Pacific tradition and culture (Vaiolleti, 2006; 2011). This research follows in this vein where the lines of the methodology and the methods blur acknowledging the importance and dynamic relationship of 'why' and 'how' questions in using the collaborative and fluid structures of hiapo to define the research space.

Pacific scholars have developed their own theories, methodologies, methods, and models that can reflect and embody the specific contexts of our people. Some of these include: *kakala*, Tongan for garland, which can be used as a metaphor for the sharing of knowledge in conversation (Thaman, 2003); *Te Vaka Atafaga*, Tokelauan meaning a traditional outrigger vessel with a sail which has been developed as a model of health encompassing relationships, knowledge, spirituality, the environment and the physical body (Kupa, 2009); *tivaevae* or *tivaivai*, a Kūki 'Āirani form of quilting that has been used to encompass values of collaboration, respect, reciprocity, relationships and shared vision in both research and practice (Futter-Puati, D., & Maua-Hodges, 2019; Maua-Hodges, 2000; Te Ava, Airini & Rubie-Davies, 2011; Te Ava & Page, 2018); *fonua*, Tongan for land but also connected with people and their ongoing relationships, which has been used for connections of people to the land and vice-versa (Mo'a, 2015); *fonofale*, a Samoan model for health developed by Fuimaona Karl Pulotu-Endemann (Crawley, Pulotu-Endemann & Stanley-Findlay, 1995) that has central pillars of the physical, spiritual, mental and other, within the spheres of family and culture that are surrounded by time, context and environment; and *talanoa* a research methodology and method where people “story their issues, their realities and aspirations” (Vaioloti, 2006, p. 21). There is also the work of Ping-Ann Addo (2013; 2007) who has drawn attention to the cultural and gendered aspects of Tongan *ngatu* in various contexts, and Fanny Wonu Veys (2017) who has similarly paid attention to how *ngatu* was and continues to be made, its collection, use and the place of gender and creativity embedded within *ngatu* making. Interestingly, Tongans refer to the tree or plant which *ngatu* is made from as *hiapo* (Veys, 2017).

These are just some of the many metaphor-based Pacific approaches that are increasingly being sought and used to benefit our communities and to navigate and creatively engage with complex issues. In the context of this research, it is useful to draw on some of these existing concepts to support a *hiapo* methodology and recognise aspects that can contribute to this research and also demarcate boundaries between metaphors derived from other Pacific contexts and a uniquely Niue

metaphor. Talanoa, kakala, tivaevae/tivaivai and masi are further explored as aspects of these established methods and methodologies connect with hiapo or my envisioning of hiapo methodology.

**Talanoa** is increasingly used as both research method and methodology (Vaioleti, 2011) (*also see* Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Māhina, 2008; McGrath & Ka’ili, 2010; ‘Otunuku, 2011; Prescott, 2011). Talanoa as a methodology draws on many characteristics from phenomenology, narrative inquiry, and feminist theory (Vaioleti, 2011). It is a traditional deliberation process and often referred to in terms of cyclical or circular notions both in physical terms – talanoa in the Tongan context tends to have people sitting in a circle (Vaioleti, 2011). Unlike many Western processes, talanoa does not follow a straight line to a final decision. It can involve a lot of repetition and does not typically have time restrictions; instead, it aims to be inclusive of both fast and slow thinkers. The philosophy of talanoa is centred on an open-style of deliberation, focusing on respect for cultural protocols and customs. Talanoa contributes to a balance of power to enable the sharing of what Bishop and Glynn (1999, as cited in Vaioleti, 2013) refer to as ‘peoples’ common sense’. Leadership is shared by researcher and collaborator at different times of the talanoa. Yet ultimately, the researcher carries leadership in being responsible and accountable to ensure the research meets the needs of Oceanic peoples and their interests. Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2014) remind us that talanoa “takes place everywhere much of the time and to function as it should, *talanoa* research requires movement” (p. 4, emphasis in original). To better understand the lived experiences of collaborators there is a need to be flexible to how and where conversations occur, both physically and in a deeper cognitive sense. Collaborators talk and share their perspectives and perhaps also how they conceptualise the world; it is not for a researcher to insert boundaries or barriers in that process. As Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba point out “...what is shared in *talanoa* is done in consideration of the wider cultural milieu of participants’ social existence. This includes the kinship, ethics, and customs that constitute an individual’s world” (p. 7, emphasis in original). Talanoa

serves as a flexible space for engaging in culturally appropriate ways but it also holds particular values and meaning for relationships. Talanoa requires respect of worlds and worldviews but does not dictate that every person has to agree.

In Niue, talanoa is a form of meetings between people, similar to the Tongan version put forward by Vaioleti (2006). I stop using italics in reference to talanoa from this point forward in the thesis as it is used in the context of being a Niue word and being used for a Niue context. For some Niue people, the use of talanoa in everyday conversation in Niue is not as common, it can connote gossip or conversation with no depth or meaning. I use talanoa here for its particular meaning in academic scholarship though I often avoided using it in my fieldwork for example to avoid any mixed-meaning. As some Niue educators pointed out, people easily recognise the meaning of the word talanoa depending on the given context.

***Kakala*** as a research method was developed by prominent Tongan scholar, Konai Helu Thaman in 1992. In 2009, Thaman revisited the framework as she thought about the teaching and learning environments in most formal educational institutions in Pacific nations. She writes:

Kakala is sourced from the Tongan metaphor of kakala, a garland of fragrant flowers. Kakala has equivalents in other Pacific cultures, for example, salusalu (Fiji), lei (Hawaii) and hei (Cook Islands). The processes involved in kakala making are similar to those used in the research process and comprised of *toli* (materials selection), *tui* (making of a kakala) and *luva* (presentation of a kakala as a sign of respect and love). (Thaman, 2009, p. 5).

While kakala has some aristocratic roots, its modern use is more widespread. Thaman's key focus is that each flower that is specially chosen because of its aesthetic values combine to create the best effect. There is elaborate etiquette associated with the making and ranking of kakala. In Tongan culture, the kakala has added significance "as a symbol of the values of *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *'ofa* (love)" (Thaman, 1993,

p. 256). In Thaman's descriptions of kakala, there are clear connections to the importance of cultural values of respect, skill, and love with the intention that the completed garland will be gifted or presented as a sign of respect and love. It is gifted to people or places that will benefit from its value.

*Tivaevae* or *tivaivai* is unique to the people of the Kūki 'Āirani and can be described as "a handmade, bedspread-size quilt made by a group of people, usually women, who are led by a ta'unga tivaevae – expert in quilt making – who work collaboratively together to produce a quilt that will become the property of one of the group of sewers" (Futter-Puati & Maua-Hodges, 2019, p. 140). Tivaevae are incredibly beautiful and made with special skill. At the 2019 Tāoga Niue Arts and Culture Festival, the Niue Council of Women hosted Mamas from the Kūki 'Āirani, who did demonstrations of making tivaevae. Many Niue families are connected to families in Kūki 'Āirani and there is also a shared history of connection in hiapo as well. Tivaevae methodology and methods can embody relationships in a more tangible sense, breaking the research process into meaningful parts that each contribute to the development of something larger. Tivaevae developed from quilting by missionary wives in the 1800s and over time the unique patterns of Kūki 'Āirani tivaevae have become well-known (Futter-Puati & Maua-Hodges, 2019). The Tivaevae research method was designed by Maua-Hodges to establish a culturally responsive framework for use in a Kūki 'Āirani education setting. This methodology has three main aspects: koikoi, tuitui and akairianga.

*Koikoi* refers to the gathering of the patterns needed for the making of the [*tivaivai*]. They are picked and readied for discussion before being sewn together. *Koikoi* process requires knowledge and experience in planning, gathering appropriate materials at the right time and at the right place and ensuring that the pattern tells a story of Cook Island history (Te Ava, as cited in Powell, 2013, p. 5, emphasis in original).

Debi Futter-Puati identifies Maua-Hodges' use of four key stages within the process of designing a research project: (1) 'akapapa is like collecting materials and deciding which patterns, fabrics and cotton to use; in research, this means thinking carefully about conceptualising and planning a project; (2) 'akaruru, the data collection and methods; (3) patoki, analysis and interpretation of data; (4) and, o'ora te tivaevae, presenting the findings (Maua-Hodges, 2016 as cited in Futter-Puati & Maua-Hodges, 2019). Tivaivai has also been picked up by Kūki 'Āirani scholar Emma Powell (2013) in literary studies as a way to centre a Kūki 'Āirani worldview in close-reading the works of several Kūki 'Āirani scholars and writers. As a craft predominantly practised by women that can be used in research as a way to pay attention to gender, tivaivai has some clear similarities to hiapo. Hiapo and tivaivai also have a shared colonial history being developed through the influence of missionary wives in the 1800s. While tivaivai tends to have symmetric patterns, hiapo emphasises asymmetry, but both often use symbolic flora within their patterns. Tivaivai in a research context can also guide the structural formation of a research project by breaking down the process of making tivaivai in relation to how a research project is done, what is included, where information comes from and when it is gathered. As demonstrated by Powell's (2013) use of tivaivai to structure the chapters of her thesis.

***Masi***, like tivaivai, is a useful metaphor to compare to hiapo as the process of making masi has been applied as a research methodology (see Patterson, 2018). In her doctoral thesis, Sereana Patterson (2018, now Naepi) developed masi methodology to centre Pacific women's voices in relation to experiences of higher education. Naepi used the embedded notions of gender in masi making to pay attention specifically to Pacific women's perspectives. She highlights how a focus on Pacific women in this way can reduce cultural and religious barriers that can influence the kinds of conversations that happen when other genders are included. Masi has some clear connections with hiapo in being able to centre women's voices without diminishing the value of men's voices. Instead, these methodologies offer a space

where gender is a recognised factor in shaping the realities and lived-experiences of Pacific women.

Talanoa, kakala, tivaivai and masi offer insight into the use of Pacific metaphor in research and research methodologies. Central to each are the cultural values and processes that are embedded in the terms and phrases that are associated with the practice or item being made. One of the benefits of developing Pacific-centred methods is that they establish a broader space of education. These methods and methodologies aren't exclusionary; they pay attention to the possibilities of being exclusive and specific with what methodologies we use in Pacific contexts (Naepi, 2015; Vaioleti, 2011). However, the process and outcomes are fluid and highly dependent on factors including who the researcher is, where they come from, what or who is being researched and so on. In the context of a hiapo methodology, these particular metaphors provide a foundation and connection to a space of researching ways that promote and notice things that our people value and can benefit from. I shift now to consider the place of the researcher and positionality as important aspects of Pacific and Indigenous research and draw particularly from talanoa as a methodological space for thinking carefully about relationships and honesty.

### **Research positioning: Where and who**

I have a background in management and communication studies and in this thesis I draw on this disciplinary training together with Pacific studies to explore new approaches and questions in the spaces where these three disciplines intersect. Storytelling is one space where management, communication and Pacific studies intersect, and it can be used to extend our understanding of the connections between personal, local, regional and global narratives. As Indigenous communities are put in the spotlight of climate change impacts, it is important to have conversations in management and communication studies that are more flexible and fluid in adapting to the kinds of stories that Indigenous people are willing to share. Reflecting on the

potential contributions of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) Gail Whiteman (2004) has argued that TEK has value in management research as an ecologically embedded approach. I am hopeful that this thesis demonstrates the potential synergies between Pacific studies and my discipline of origin.

Reflexivity is a key aspect of many Pacific and Indigenous research frameworks (Naepi, 2015) and has had increasing attention as an approach for de-westernising communication studies (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014). Karen Martin and Booran Mirraboopa (2003) suggest that “reflexivity challenges us to claim our shortcomings, misunderstandings, oversights and mistakes, to re-claim our lives and make strong changes to our current realities” (p. 212). Reflexivity allows spaces to decolonise, to hear Indigenous voices and recognise Indigenous researchers whilst also adding levels to the types of research questions that are appropriate, culturally and contextually considered when we work with Indigenous communities. It’s also important to challenge who holds the power to ask questions in research relationships. The Pacific research methodologies mentioned above advocate for researchers to enter spaces with care and love and to be culturally competent. Another central aspect of these methodologies is that they are context-specific. Of course, they may be adapted, but their use in particular cultural settings have clear impetus in the kinds of research that benefit our Pacific communities by not attempting to “make them fit” into a particular mould.

From a research perspective, being open to the worldviews of collaborators can be critical for the depth in sharing of knowledge and the openness of the collaborator in return. Percival et al (2010) describe the concept of vaha loto mahani mitaki, which is about the connection and maintenance of a good relationship. Vaha loto mahani mitaki is the intention to fill the space between each other with good conduct, positive and beneficial to both researcher and collaborator. Similarly, the concept of agaaga fakatupuolamoui e mahani mitaki is where the spirit is encouraged to flourish because of good and proper conduct from the researcher to the

collaborator. Creating a fruitful relationship with collaborators requires the connection of *agaaga*, *spirit*. This aspect also recognises the distinctiveness of individuals and the place of identity. In research, particularly in this Oceanic context, it is important to recognise that the experiences of collaborators and how I interpret these in my research “are indicative of, rather than representative of, the multitudinous ways one may be Pacific” (Wilson, 2013, p. 15).

As Debi Futter-Puati and Teremoana Maua-Hodges (2019) argue in the first line of their article on the *tivaevae* methodology, “The use of a context specific research model is critical when researching in Pacific context” (p. 140). In line with this approach, this research frames Niue people’s responses to climate change in ways that recognise their specific cultural, social, political and religious contexts. Developing a framework that respects and embodies that commitment and provides both time and space for a Niue-led and a Niue-directed response requires, as Tania Wendt Samu (2010) says, looking up, out and away from the metropolitan settings we live in, the (often) western-ruled institutions we work in and “searching for ideas and insights that [we] can draw on, from Pacific thinkers, scholars and academics, particularly from those who have established formidable regional and international reputations” (Wendt Samu, 2010, p. 2). Building on the foundations of these particular research methodologies, the *hiapo* methodology I use is a context-specific methodology in which the positionality of the researcher needs to be made clear.

Another aspect of the researcher-collaborator relationship is that, from a *talanoa* perspective, it requires open dialogue where people can speak freely from the heart (Vaiioleti, 2006). As much as possible the researcher and collaborator should not carry preconceptions and communication should come from the heart (Halapua, 2008; Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012). Preconceptions can be more embedded than we realise. Therefore, it is important to be aware of preconceptions and biases, acknowledge the influence these can have on how we perceive information and be open with collaborators about this process. This creates a wider space for deeper

reflexive conversations that embody the co-collaboration that is an integral part of talanoa. This openness also supports empathy which is more extensively explored by Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012) who advocate empathy as central to the effectiveness and authenticity of talanoa as a research methodology. They contend that emotions are thoughts embedded with cultural and personal meaning and expand on an empathic apprenticeship. This assumes that “emotion is integral to perception and therefore to knowledge. Embodiment, emotion and empathy come together to fine-tune our perceptions and actions toward ‘an education [apprenticeship] of attention’ ([Gieser, 2008] p. 300) to the lived and felt realities of our participants” (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012, p. 6). In Niue, *kau fakalataha* has a particular link to unity and cooperation. When research is done together as one, the researcher has a responsibility to collaborators that lasts forever. The term includes *loto fakamooli heart and mind of genuine honesty*, and *fakamooli he tau kupu vagahau genuine honesty in words*, and *fakamooli e gahua the honesty to carry out what has been said*. To develop empathy there needs to be honesty and connection of the heart and spirit.

In talanoa, there is an emphasis on the ability of the researcher to understand and respect silences or what seem like drops of conversation, which can have significant and telling importance. Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012) suggest that ‘attunement’, as the perceptual ability to communicate, is required in talanoa; a perceptual ability for researchers to recognise the spoken and unspoken words of collaborators. This also supports and can enhance “empathic understanding across insider-insider, and insider-outsider positionalities” (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012, p. 7). Talanoa is reflexive and requires a level of awareness of how researchers respond to collaborators through our own embodied reactions. Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba’s (2012) example is of how “a researcher observing a woman closing her body in on itself when discussing a violent incident may also observe that her own body is reacting similarly to the story” (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, p. 8) as they too imagine the feeling and their reaction to such an experience. Researchers need also to be reflexive

of how collaborators react to the researcher's silences, questions, comments, and other non-verbal communication.

Open and honest dialogue also creates a special place where the researcher can be open about problems they encounter in the project or process as well as any irregularities that come from analysis, relinquishing the burden of power which at times can be difficult to remove with the well-known aspects of Western-centred research. Again, levelling power creates deeper opportunities for deeper relationships which can support a richer connection in the collaboration and sharing of knowledge and experience for both researcher and collaborator:

Our job is to understand people's needs – from their perspectives. Unless we provide the conditions in which our participants feel they can 'talk from the heart', we are letting them down – we can do better. ...our research methodology must reflect the knowledge making and knowledge-sharing of our participants' – not the other way around. (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012, p. 9).

To understand people from their own perspectives we need to connect in more than one space or way, a researcher is required to have cultural competence that includes an understanding of interpersonal communication. Basic knowledge of culture is beneficial but there are nuances that Indigenous researchers are more attuned to when they research in, with and for their own communities.

Talanoa connects the emotional and spiritual states of both the researcher and collaborator. Havea (2010) notes:

people who are native to Oceania understand that what happens on land and in the ocean, is connected to, and the consequences of, their actions and attitudes... people's thoughts and actions are conditioned by what happens around them, both on land and in the ocean. (Havea, 2010, p. 348).

We, therefore, understand ourselves and act as part of our environment. There is power and importance in this specific point because in referring to a Pacific nation, the intimate relationship of the land and sea to our people is binding. Havea describes it as a delicate connection of people to their environment that no one can be free of. To survive in the islands requires an attunement with the environment and many cultural practices, customs, and knowledge is shaped from the relationships that our cultures have with the land, ocean, stars, planets and constellations. In a research context then, it is important to position myself as uniquely connected to the topic of this research and intimately bound to the people I am doing this research with and for. Positioning myself is also useful in aligning with the critiques of Western knowledge and generally-accepted conventions of research by using self-reflection to unpack who I am and my relation to the community that I am researching (Naepi, 2015).

### **My positionality**

Right at the beginning of this thesis, I introduced myself as Jessica Lili Pasisi. Jessica is my Pālagi name chosen because I have fair skin like my Pālagi mother. Lili is my island-name that my parents use more often than my first name; it was given to me as a connection to my father's heritage and homeland. Pasisi is my father's surname, it is our family name and as far as we know, a name that my grandfather chose for himself. I am the daughter of Peni (Benjamin) Pasisi of Mutalau. I am the granddaughter of Siale mata Lela, a master weaver, craftswoman, midwife, and mother from Mutalau.

I am Ngāti Pikiāo through my mother's side, but I'm still learning what this connection means. I also descend from the infamous mutineer Fletcher Christian on my mother's side and Mauatua (Maimiti) a Tahitian woman who later married Fletcher. My genealogy connects me to Niue, Aotearoa and Tahiti.

I was born in the Waikato and continue to live in Kirikiriroa. All my major education has been in institutions here. I was grown by the land and waters here, and from the warmth of an upbringing by two working-class parents. I embarked on my doctoral journey at the University of Waikato because I wanted to learn more about my people. My experiences of Niue culture largely come from my father and the Niue community of Kirikiriroa. I walk in many different worlds from my ethnic makeup, my education and my upbringing in the Waikato. I am part of the second generation of Niue diaspora. I am a daughter of Niue.

### **1.3 Tau Pūhala** *Methods*

I visited Niue for the first time in 2015. I took my parents and my partner, and we spent one week on the island. While this ostensibly initial consultation trip was to establish my connections with Tāoga Niue in particular, I was aware that spending a week on Niue is never enough time to really connect with people. Relationships require presence, particularly for people new to the island. All of my following trips were two weeks or longer from that point. I spent four weeks in an internship with Tāoga Niue in 2017. Tāoga Niue is the Niue body which is mandated with the promotion, support, use and preservation of Niue culture, tradition and language. It also manages the national museum. In 2018, I stayed in Niue for six weeks, doing a part-time internship with Tāoga Niue. My cumulative time in Niue throughout this research was just over three months.

The data for this research was collected in three key phases. One phase was collating selected personal and public Niue photographs. Another phase was a series of talanoa conversations with Niue women, men and groups of women. In analysing the data, a third phase of developing a personal story for each talanoa was completed with some people choosing to collaborate on the story. This section provides a summary of the collaborations and explains the methods used in the research. The Niue values and protocols of knowledge drawn from the ocean of Pacific Studies and research methodologies are embodied in the quote by Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (2008) at

the start of this subchapter. Qualitative methods were employed to both collect and analyse the data as these techniques were considered to best support a Niue hiapo methodology. The methods include talanoa and collaborative storytelling, both of which helped build relationships not just for the duration of the research, but beyond it. An important way to show my credibility in doing this research for Niue people was to be physically present in Niue for longer periods. This resulted in just over three months spent in Niue, with some virtual contact with certain collaborators when I was in New Zealand.

To be able to work with and for the Niue community in Niue, it was important to have a cultural advisory group. This group was established at the beginning of this research in 2015. Meetings took place on a one-on-one ad hoc basis and were generally face-to-face or via email. The function of the group was to ensure that culturally appropriate and respectful practice was used at every stage of the research. It was beneficial to have advisers based both in Niue and Aotearoa as most of the research process outside of fieldwork was conducted in Aotearoa. The cultural advisers included my father, Benjamin Pasisi; my cousin and Green Climate Fund regional director – Pacific, Coral Pasisi; Government of Niue Head of Statistics, Kimray Vaha, and, Director for Tāoga Niue Department, Moira Enetama.

A purposive snowball sampling method was used to select collaborators in conjunction with my own networks that developed over time. Initial collaborators were recruited through contacts of the two Niue-based members of the cultural advisory group and from contacts made during an internship at Tāoga Niue. This created an organic process of involvement that meant collaborators would not feel obliged to take part in the research. While the aim of the research is focused on women's voices, the participation of men who were suggested through the snowball sampling, or introduced themselves after hearing about the research, were accepted and are reflected in the *Community Stories* section in *Veveheaga 2*.

I felt the weight that comes with the privilege of doctoral study almost as soon as I arrived in Niue. Epeli Hau'ofa (2008) has reflected on the positions that were afforded him not because of his vast experience but because of the status of gaining a doctorate. In fact, he was given leadership roles and responsibilities that had no connection with the work he had done as an academic. In my case, being a PhD candidate changed the way people acted toward me. It's not that researchers are viewed as intelligent, some people think that we like the sounds of our own voices too much. But this influences the people they might recommend we talk to as if the likeness of people in certain positions or people who 'like the sound of their own voice' might fit in better with what we want to hear or do. It can also impact the people we do talk to in that they say the things they think we want to hear. For me, this meant being conscious of how my questions could be leading even if in a Pālagi sense they might not be. It also meant respecting my respondents as experts, people worth listening to and engaging with. I was particularly mindful of this when talking to people who hadn't been asked to be a part of research before.

In academia, we usually talk about snowball sampling where a collaborator might recommend or be in contact with someone else potentially relevant to the topic. While I did follow up some of the recommendations made by different people, I was wary of my research becoming dominated by people in positions of power. Niue has long attracted the attention of researchers from beyond its rocky coastline. But for some, there is a distrust of researchers who come in to mine local knowledge and leave with no trace of what they did with that knowledge. Research can often be done for selfish intent, and though I'm not naïve enough to believe that many in Niue will read this thesis, it is important that Niue people have access in the first place. Although I did use a form of snowball sampling then, I was conscious of respectfully avoiding some people and purposely listening to people whose voices are perhaps not often sought out. Sometimes people who hold important knowledge are not in positions of power. They make up the fabric of society without drawing much attention, but all at once they are part of safeguarding, living and practising culture.

This collation of Niue women's voices at a specific time in their lives reflects part of a story that by no means speaks for all Niue women but begins a conversation that privileges these voices in ways that centre on how these women grapple with climate change if they grapple with it at all, and how paying attention to their perspectives in culturally responsive and respectful ways develops insights into the specificity and complexity of climate change in Niue.

One of the biggest learning curves for me in this research was following my instinct of people to talanoa with. I use talanoa here in the broad sense that it can be about more than the words spoken but that at the centre of talanoa is storytelling (Māhina, 2008; McGrath, & Ka'ili, 2010). Talanoa embodies respect for cultural practices and protocols but also a mutual understanding of relationship and expectations about being honest, caring and open to what is exchanged (Vaioleti, 2006; 2013). I make the distinction in these sections of talanoa encompassing the various conversations and other interactions that I had with people. All of these aspects then form a specific tala or tutala/tala *story*, for each person which develop and show the pattern of the hiapo. These stories were collaboratively developed from the talanoa I had with each specific women. While the main focus of the story is from our conversations, I also draw on the places where we met, how our relationship developed and the smaller conversations that would inevitably happen as I ran into people in different places around the island. In the stories, I incorporated the specific phrases or words that each woman used in our talanoa. While some direct quotes are used, the stories reflect aspects of a larger transcript and collection of notes that I made for each woman who collaborated on the research. The reason for developing each story in this way is that it draws attention to and privileges each unique voice within the context of this research. Rather than placing the details of the stories in an appendix or threading together isolated quotes into pre-determined themes, I give them a literal space in the body of this thesis, privileging what has been shared with me. This process is also useful in positioning myself as a collaborator in the talanoa

with the subjectivities of my interpretations and reflections acknowledged and open for critique.

Talanoa were conducted with collaborators as culturally respectful conversations held in locations and at times that suited the collaborators. Locations varied from local cafes, private homes, workplaces, meeting halls, or village grounds. It was important to use a flexible approach so that collaborators could be as comfortable as possible. Most talanoa were conducted in one session with times ranging from 30 minutes up to three hours. Collaborators could read and edit transcripts from recorded talanoa or review and edit stories developed from their particular talanoa if they wished to. The collaboration on stories or transcripts only occurred with collaborators who chose to do so. Most elderly collaborators, for example, preferred for the talanoa to happen once and that to be the end of the research conversation. This reflects a cultural practice where elders may teach or pass on knowledge to a younger generation once, and it is up to the receivers of knowledge to pay attention the first time. This is a practice that I have learnt from my Dad and from the stories he told me about how he learnt to do things; he was never taught by others but watched them or figured it out for himself.

All collaborators were afforded anonymity in the study. In part, this was an attempt to allow greater freedom to collaborators speak without fear of negative ramifications. However, as the population in Niue is small and people are familiar with each other, collaborators were aware that that there was always a remote possibility of being indirectly identified. The conversations were open-ended and I did not use pre-determined questions. Only on two occasions did collaborators ask for some questions ahead of time, so that they could prepare before our conversation. The conversations were cultural but not ceremonial. They were casual and I shared my own experiences with collaborators. This created an open environment for collaborators to be comfortable in sharing their personal experiences. Although the interactions were casual, I followed cultural protocols at all times. For example, I took

food or paid for food depending on the situation, as food, feasting and the gifting of food is an important cultural practice and sign of respect in Niue.

Talanoa were conducted predominantly in English and audio-recorded by smartphone. The audio files were then transcribed and then, for collaborators who wanted to see them, returned to collaborators to check intended meanings of particular phrases and words (particularly if they used Niue words). Some conversations reverted to Niue, particularly in group settings. This is acknowledged as part of the talanoa but the translations were not recorded. This is a respect for the use of Niue language in that the use of Niue in parts of the conversations did not stop the research. While collaborators knew of my limited vagahau they were still comfortable in using it during our conversations. However, this wasn't used to exclude me; rather the use of Niue offered valuable insights for me as a Niue researcher, which is discussed in the stories to follow.

Twelve women collaborated on this research through one-on-one talanoa. All these women are referred to as collaborators even if our contact was brief; it is a mark of respect for the tāoga that are gifted through the creation of stories. Two talanoa with groups of Niue women were also conducted. The first group included eight Niue women from the Niue Council of Women, the second group included four women who I was invited to talk with on one of their breaks. A few of the women were aware of my research and made a point to tell me that they would help me with it. Five men collaborated on the research. These men were recommended by people I had met and who had heard about the research. The men's responses, along with the two groups of women, are in the *Community Stories* section of this thesis. All of the women in the two groups were older women, many were mothers, some grandmothers and a few great grandmothers. While it wasn't necessary to specify age, learning about peoples' family helped provide some distinctions in the *Veveheaga* 3. I acknowledge Niue culture in showing deference to elders and did this to the best of my ability with all who collaborated with me in this research. The

women who collaborated on this research were from several different villages, though this didn't include anyone identifying as coming from Vaiea, Namukulu or Toi. Interestingly, these are three of the smallest villages in Niue. I didn't intentionally miss these villages out, but it is a drawback of even purposive snowball sampling. The village or villages that some of the women are from are indicated in their story if it came up during our talanoa.

The edited and final transcripts were developed into personal stories for each of the twelve women who participated in an individual talanoa. The combined conversations among the two groups of women and five men who collaborated in the research were transcribed and woven together as community stories (the men together, and the two groups of women separate) in *Veveheaga 2*. The individual women's stories are not constrained by word limits; length does not denote value or importance. Instead, they reflect partial connections that mark the specificity of knowledge and experience at a particular time both for me as the researcher and for collaborators. It would not be possible to repeat this process and get the same stories. In Niue culture, knowledge does not remain static but changes and adapts constantly.

Part of the respect for relationships was about allaying the fears of people who engaged in the research of being portrayed as what one collaborator described as being "too fob-ish". I knew what she meant because I grew up worried about the same thing. It relates to when our people speak, particularly in English, their accents and/or sentence structures can sound illiterate or unintelligent. Perhaps this is a remnant of practices adopted by some past researchers, who undermined collaborators' communication patterns as a form of colonial oppression. Beyond sounding too fob-ish I also was aware and respectful that the stories being gifted came with the condition that I would write their intended meanings and not be limited by whatever forms of English language the collaborators used. This isn't to say that words weren't important, but that showing respect for the relationship necessitated respect for what was being said and how it may be interpreted by others.

Using a hiapo methodology has meant that the research data in the form of collaborated stories have been analysed acknowledging Niue cultural concepts and frameworks where possible. Thematic narrative analysis has been conducted based on the stories developed from the talanoa. This analysis focuses on patterns amongst the women's stories and also with the written, visual and oral registries that are established in *Veveheaga 2*. I draw from the tivaevae and masi methodology approaches in using the particular process of hiapo making as a guide for the analysis and interpretation of these stories. This also reflects central aspects of Niue culture, which is underpinned by the key themes of land and earth, sea and water, sky and heavens, and food and feasting. Ultimately, it is within our stories that come from the vibrant and varied culture that marks us as Niue people and our stories as unique.



Figure 2: Painting Hiapo, Taako Piaso (2019) Photo courtesy: Cora-Allan Wickliffe

## VEVEHEAGA 2: TAUTE TAU VALI

### MAKING THE DYES

#### 2.1 Tala Tohia *Written Narratives*

Hiapo represents many different layers of Niue stories: how it is made, what resources were available, what or who the artist was thinking about at the time. Hiapo then is both a story in itself and a collection of stories. This veveheaga explores Niue literary voices. Niue literature has long been, and I would argue continues to be, dominated by outsider voices. It is important to debunk the myth that Niue people were never writers and had no voice in published archives because recognising that our people have contributed to what I see as a Niue literary canon makes visible a lot more of the work that contemporary Niue writers have been and are doing. Niue voices do exist in the literary landscape and hiapo produced in the late 1800s provides a glimpse of early Niue interest in writing. While bark cloth printing throughout the region tends to focus on patterns, there are several Niue hiapo that have writing both within their patterns and along the borders. Later the *Tohi Tala*, a Niue newspaper that ran from the 1950s until 1990, was established by the New Zealand Administration and published bilingually: in vagahau as *Tohi Tala*, and in English as *Niue Newsletter*. While the content of this newspaper varied significantly with different administrators and the changing interests of New Zealand, one of its more interesting aspects is when Niue people are allowed to respond to news items and to share their own stories. Though brief, these interactions with the media hints at a strong interest of Niue people in both the consumption and creation of literature. There are also interesting insights into how Niue people adapted, at times humorously, to new technologies and the frustration New Zealand emissaries had while working in Niue. For example in 1954, telephones were being introduced and the following special notice was recorded in the *Tohi Tala* (1954):

There is trouble every week with the telephone line because of certain foolish children, and even adults, who think it is fun to push a pole over. Some people even steal pieces of wire for basket making. (*Tohi Tala*, 1954).

More specific examples from *Tohi Tala* are included in this chapter. First, it's useful to demarcate or locate boundaries of the Niue literature explored here. Foremost, this is only a very select collection of Niue literature, specifically literature that has been written and published by Niue people, focusing on the people, the natural environment and climate of the island, as well as Niue notions of identity. While I accept that some of these topics are covered by outsiders, which I also include where relevant, I intend to deliberately focus on literature by Niue people. In many cases, material written by Niue people has been published by non-Niue people, some with acknowledgement but more often without it. Based on literature I have come across in line with my research I further refine my focus to cover Niue origin stories, stories and herstories of Niue women, Niue landscapes, Niue seascapes, and Niue flora and fauna. Often only small excerpts are used, although some short stories or chants are included. I emphasise again that this is a very limited selection of Niue literature, and that often there are several versions of the same story, often with clear distinctions. My aim is not to favour any particular person, story, or village but to draw attention first to the fact that this archive exists and to suggest that even insight from such a limited selection from this archive can support a better understanding of contemporary Niue experiences in the context of climate change.

First and foremost, Niue is home. It is a home for my people and has been since the journeying of our founding families who (literally) raised the island and made it ready for all the generations of Niue people to come. Each of the stories included in this and later sections of the thesis come not just from a single person, but families and villages. As such they are tāoga of the descendants of those families or villages. As much as possible I have sought guidance from Niue elders in using these stories in this thesis, particularly if a story has a clear connection to a specific village. It is with

respect that I use them in the context of this research and openly admit that my interpretations of these stories largely come from their English translations and how they are published. I do not interpret them to find a single or dominant truth, but to glean from the knowledge of these Niue writers and thinkers who published in spaces accessible to a Niue like me, removed from the island, limited in the vagahau. Also, while my position in the diaspora and as a university researcher comes with certain limitations and barriers, it gives me access that not all Niue people have. And in later chapters I come back to this point as my access to Niue literature, both by Niue people and by others, has become a way for me to return some of the knowledge that our ancestors had the forethought to write or gift to outsiders.

This process moves away from a traditional, in a Western-sense, introduction of Niue through geographic, demographic, statistical and environmental markers. This chapter and indeed this thesis are about storying Niue experience, it's about making and printing a metaphorical hiapo that embodies and empowers Niue culture, knowledge and experience.

Something that has a particular emphasis in artist John Pule's (Pule & Thomas, 2005) writing on hiapo is his reference to fragrance; sensual experiences of hiapo that are not limited by physical sight. Pule's reflections on hiapo recognise the coming together of two entities, Pule himself and the hiapo. The colonial mediums through which they meet aren't prohibitive in the sense that they have any power in stopping the meeting or experience from taking place. Pule refers to the fragrance, his thoughts of the literal Niue earth embodied in hiapo and his own body's experience of hiapo through sight, touch and smell.

These reflections draw attention to the importance of Pule's own Niue body in this process. Pule's attention to hiapo is an attuned to the Niue-ness of hiapo, heightened by Pule being Niue. Thinking about the literal Niue-ness of the materials that make a hiapo and were therefore transported with it. These materials are a connection to the fenua, land, Niue flora, soils, rain, sunlight all merged deep in the

fibres of the hiapo. The hiapo carries these stories that lay beneath the print but can be so acutely understood when we consider who is viewing them and how they are being viewed. Pule's reflections offer one more consideration that I want to draw attention to in this chapter which is the way that the stories of hiapo can be carried with people. As an artist, Pule's experiences of hiapo are seen in his later artworks. Pule does not make hiapo, nor did he take any hiapo from the museums and galleries that he visited. But it is clear that from his experience that he carried ideas and memories that were made possible by experiencing hiapo. It is an embodiment of a travelling knowledge that stretches through time, is carried, not necessarily in its original form and then communicated in Pule's art. It is this movement, the carrying of hiapo or of knowledge derived from hiapo that I want to further explore in this section as a way of approaching Niue literature, broadly taken to include written works about Niue. To think about the relationships that happen as I read Niue literature and the meaning that I carry and then communicate in this writing.

This section considers how reading narratives of Niue, by both Niue and non-Niue (the latter often heavily influenced or informed by Niue informants) writers have specific meaning for Niue people. It is a process worth paying attention to, specifically the embodied relationships taking place. It is a space for conversations that explore the dimensionality of narratives, not just in how they might physically appear but how they can be experienced particularly by a Niue. It recognises that for Niue people there are things that happen and meaning that is derived in the process of experiencing Niue literature that moves beyond the page and at times beyond the linearity of certain approaches to reading. It also recognises that these stories or narratives can be carried or walked by Niue people; we both read and tread the narratives. The transmission of knowledge through a written medium has connotations for Niue readers and our reactions and responses are an important acknowledgement of connections through lineage, culture and identity. There is a lack of critical perspectives on Niue writing. Deriving meaning from specific narratives affords an opportunity to be critical, with the understanding that criticisms are not

devoid of their roots. My critique is focused on the imaginings of outsiders that Niue people haven't written in the first place, but there is also space to be critical of our own work and while this kind of careful critique is beyond the scope of this thesis, I hope future Niue researchers may explore this area in more detail.

This section is not about agreeing with or giving higher profiles to particular literature but recognising that it exists and that Niue people paying attention to our Niue literature is relevant in foregrounding Niue knowledge. That in doing the reading we can also carry these stories, with an ability to see our own experiences, recognise our embodiment in them and acknowledge a responsibility to the Niue people that made them possible. One manifestation of this responsibility for me is honouring the existence of Niue literature by Niue people, something I can (and do) write about in this chapter, but also in speaking about this literature with other Niue people.

As a Niue woman, as a Niue researcher and being a second-generation Niue born in the diaspora, experiencing these works for me carried a lot of first encounters with things that resonate intrinsically with my body, my literal being and my life experiences. Initially, I assumed a lot of the experiences I was having with particular readings were due to my lack of connection to explicit Niue culture growing up. However, as I discuss in later chapters, this eagerness to learn anything about Niue was something I find increasingly common in Niue people in the diaspora. Access to a lot of Niue writing is limited for Niue people and one of the key reasons for this has roots in the lasting colonial legacies of power and divisions of class and superiority. People and systems that ignored, obscured or deliberately destroyed any signs of intellect in Indigenous people.

While I read these stories of Niue, particularly those written by Niue people, I also tread the paths that they have made. It is from their paths, their work, and their foresight that I may develop a particular understanding of Niue knowledge and therefore bring in a strong foundation for being able to centre this knowledge throughout this thesis. Treading also has connotations of a heavy weight. To me, this

is reflected in the responsibility of carrying these stories or more specifically my interpretations of them and also in showing my respect. The responsibility does not carry authority in understanding their meaning, particularly in the sense that meaning is subjective and my vantage point influences what I understand and how I can communicate that meaning. As part of the Niue diaspora, as a Niue woman and as a researcher influenced by particular knowledge. My views and understanding are entwined in my analysis and exploration of the written narratives presented here. However, I accept and acknowledge the guidance I have received from Niue elders, a Niue cultural advisory group and others that have enabled me to ground my interpretations in ways that share the weight of this process and help me perhaps tread lightly when appropriate. I own the views I have in this section as a Niue researcher still very early in her research. I walk and tread this registry for written narratives knowing that I still have much to learn.

Before I begin with Niue origin stories, I include a poem by Samoa Tongakilo from Namoui, Makefu, on Niue. Samoa Tongakilo authored the poem "Ko e Motu, Maka-ha-Polinesia" ("The Island, Rock-of-Polynesia") which won the 1997 Polynesian Literary Competition. She has also been part of the Tohitohi Nukutuluea (Niue Writers Group), which established in 1995. The following poem comes from a publication by this writing group titled *Haviliviliaga Manatu (Reflections)*.

### ***The Gift***

#### **Samoa Tongakilo (1998)**

Every morning as the  
Roosters next door  
Declare the break of  
Yet another day  
I wake feeling

Forever grateful  
For being where I am-  
On a solid piece of rock  
Rising majestically in  
The middle of the  
South Pacific Ocean.

A piece of rock, did you say...?  
This is no insignificant  
piece of rock, my friend.  
This rock is incomparable.  
This rock is magnificent  
and unique in every way.  
A wonder-of-the-world today  
For this rock is my home  
Niue-  
The Rock of Polynesia.  
Generously given as  
a priceless and most treasured,  
Gift from God.

(Tongakilo, S., 1998 as cited in *Haviliviliaga Manatu*, pp. 11-12)

This beautiful poem is a reminder that Niue is home. It is a home our people are proud of and want to take time to write about. There is something in thinking about the solidness of rock as a reminder that our people and our culture were founded on rock. The coral that we stand on was made over tens of thousands of years by living beings. While, as Samoa says in her poem, our island may seem unassuming or insignificant, there is no other and will never be another island like ours. Because this island is our home and our story doesn't just begin when we arrive, but from when the first corals

began to grow; we are forever intimately tied to this land and it to us. This poem is also an act of resistance, as many of Samoa Tongakilo's poems are (see Tongakilo, 1998), to the idea that all Niue people want to leave for "greener pastures". Writing about Niue is both a colonial and decolonial act because our Niue writers use this medium for our benefit and this chapter recognises that foresight.

### **Niue origin stories**

One of the earliest pieces of published writing recorded in vagahau came from Mohelagi (as cited in Smith, 1902), a Niue writer from Alofi who contributed to *Niue – The Island and its People* (Smith, 1902). Mohelagi wrote that "The history of the island was not in writing (formerly) but was retained in the minds of the wise and clear-headed" (Mohelagi as cited in Smith, 1983, p. 132) From this simple first sentence Mohelagi makes clear a momentous point, that our histories until this point have been retained by "the minds of the wise and clear-headed" (Mohelagi as cited in Smith, 1983, p. 132) – a reference to the oral traditions that survived many generations before being transferred, in part, into a written form. Mohelagi's starting point is a useful beginning to these origin narratives in that they are a partial connection to the oral narratives that came before them.

"Ko e Tohi he Tau Tala I Niue-Fekai: The Traditions of Niue-Fekai" was written by Pulekula a teacher at Tamahaleleka and was translated into English and published in Smith's (1902) *Niue: The island and its people*. Pulekula locates and dates his account of the origins of Niue as Liku, October 1901. There is limited information about Pulekula in the book, though he writes that he is from Liku village. The story certainly has a connection to that side of the island. I work from the English translation likely provided by S. Percy Smith, an emissary sent by the Governor of New Zealand to introduce the British form of government and to announce the annexation of Niue to New Zealand. Smith was eager to obtain knowledge from the people of Niue and though he was fluent in a few Polynesian dialects he noted that Niue language was

unique and it took him longer to learn the language (Smith, 1902). Once Smith had a better handle on the language he set out to learn more about the Niue people, with a special interest in Niue customs. However, Smith had to leave early and because his stay was just under four months, his records in his own words were of a sketchy nature (Smith, 1902). That Smith chose to reproduce Niue narratives in Niue is important, as is the fact that he worked to learn the language before asking questions about Niue customs. Smith's (1902) work would be the first to include Niue narratives in vagahau, and he was open about his own limitations in being able to accurately translate vagahau to English and acknowledge the likelihood that some meaning would be lost. I similarly have limitations in speaking and reading vagahau. But the importance of including these written narratives is, in part, to highlight the fact that they exist. Pulekula and Mohelagi (as cited in Smith, 1902) are two of the acknowledged contributors Smith's (1902) original journal publications. Pulekula's position as a teacher is perhaps also an indicator of his lineage and would have been an advantage for Smith in gaining access to particular Niue narratives.

It is useful to pay attention to themes that seem to emerge from Pulekula's account to centre Niue thinking, Niue ideas and Niue ways of conceptualising the world. It is also useful to build a foundation of these different perspectives in reaffirming that Niue culture does not conform or limit to singularity and that bearing this in mind creates a more inclusive space for exploring a greater diversity of knowledge that collectively connects to Niue worldviews and cosmology. I reproduce excerpts here (numbered to reflect what is cited in Smith's book), knowing that they are a partial connection to Niue knowledge and that the medium in which they are presented has its limitations and in some ways adds to the distance between myself and Pulekula and his intended meaning. Undoubtedly, there can and should be a more critical analysis of these texts by Niue people, particularly in the vagahau form. For people who can read vagahau, some of the original versions of the text are available in Smith (1902). But for this research, the key is establishing a foundation of Niue knowledge that can inform and guide me in understanding Niue perspectives and

worldviews and how they can manifest in various forms. It's about foregrounding the place of Niue knowledge, Niue women and Niue environments in ways that connect with the legacies enriched by the likes of the Niue writers featured here.

1. There were five gods (*tupuas*) that fled hither from Motu-galo. They were men who lived in idleness, and took no part in the preparations of feasts. (So it came to pass) when their parents made a feast and when all others partook, no portion was sent to them. They were left out because of their laziness. This became the constant rule, and the parents became greedy ; then (the five) fled away to seek an island on which they might dwell permanently.
2. There are three accounts about them – that they came from Fonua-galo ; from Tulia ; from Toga – and some other islands. These are the names of the *tupua* – Fao, Faka-hoko, Huanaki, Lage-iki and Lagi-atea.
3. Between Liku and Lakepa, there is (a part of the) sea-shore called Motu – which name remains to this day ; it is a small level space on the reef, with Mata-kao-lima on the north, Makato on the east ; whilst at Hiola spring up the streams from which they (people) drink, which there gush forth from the rocks.

(Pulekula as cited in Smith, 1983, p. 97, emphasis as in original)

The second excerpt of writing by Pulekula (Smith, 193) is recorded earlier in the book in English (p. 55) and in the original vagahau on page 107.

22. Living man was born from a tree—the tree which is named Ti-mata-alea (a species of *Dracœna*) which grows in the open, not the Matalea of the original forests, which is a taue. Thus: when a married woman is pregnant she longs for the Ti, with its root or stalk; then the husband and the parents prepare an *umu-ti*, or native oven of hot stones for cooking the roots, in order to cause the child to grow. After the woman has eaten of this, the

child becomes hard (*maō*) from the effects of the Ti. This is the ancient custom of Niuē from the time the island was made. The oven is two nights in baking and then it is uncovered (*fuke*); the oven being in the ground.

It is done thus, because the Ti is the parent of man, and the child should feed on the fullness of its parent, the Ti-mata-alea; after it is born then it feeds on its mother's milk.

23. If a male child is born it is said to be “*e fua mai he malo tau*,”<sup>10</sup> or “fruit of the war-girdle.” If a female child it is said to be “*e fua mai he la-lava*,” the latter word being applied to female occupations.

24. When the first child is born, it is shortly afterwards bathed in fresh water, whilst one of the principal chiefs (*patu-lahi*) rubs the body of the child, carrying it in his hands and saying to it the following words: —

Kia teletele totonu;

Teletele fa tagi

Teletele fa tiko

Teletele fa mimi

Teletele fa vale

Kua tele mui e tama i fonua,

Ka e tele mua a mea i Palūki

Fiti-kaga ai o tupua.

Teletele ki tufuga,

Teletele fa iloilo

Teletele fa taitai

Teletele fa mafiti

Teletele fa uka-hoge

Kua tele mui e tama i fonua,

Ka e tele mua a mea i Palūki

Fiti-kaga ai o tupua.

Be facile in kindness,

Facile in crying,  
Facile in the operations of nature,  
Facile in anger.

The child hereafter will be expert in the land,  
But so and so will be more expert at Palūki,  
*Fiti-kaga ai o tupua.*

Be facile to render works,  
Be facile in knowledge,  
Be facile in fishing,  
Be facile in activity,  
Be facile in *uka-hoge*.

The child hereafter will be expert in the land,  
But so and so will be more expert at Palūki,  
*Fiti-kaga ai o tupua.*

(Pulekula, as cited in Smith, 1983, pp. 55-56, emphasis  
in original)

In this history of populating and, in a sense, the literal building of the island, Pulekula introduces us to a story of migration. It is clear that the voyagers who came to Niue were from a different place and perhaps several different places. The story indicates that the motivation for this migration was because of laziness or idleness that forced these people to leave their homelands. But inactivity was problematic in Niue. To live on the island, these men had to work to build a place that would support and sustain their families. Other origin narratives in the *Tohi Tala* have suggested that these original voyagers were forced from their homelands because of food shortages. Later in Pulekula's account (as cited in Smith, 1983), the island is given names by Huanaki "Nuku-tu-taha, Motu-te-fua, Fakahoa-motu and Nuku-tulea" (p. 99), the meanings recorded as "Nuku-tu-taha, a single island without companions; Motu-te-fua, a

desolate, barren island; Fakahoa-motu, because the work of Fāo was not finished, but was completed by Huanaki” (p. 99).

The story implies that when these men arrived at the island they weren't accompanied by women. They instead set to work to make the island ready both in the sense of raising the island and also of building dwellings to live in. The men are referred to interchangeably as both men and gods. The reference to Huanaki and Fao as gods has slightly more detail in an account by Thomas Hood, an early European voyager to Niue on board the H.M.S *Fawn*, which was on a surveying mission of the Western Pacific. Hood (1862) who does not name his Niue informant (or informants) writes:

[Huanaki] and Fao... having swam there from Tonga, it [the island] was just above the waters and washed by the waves. They stamped upon it, and suddenly it arose from the ocean; a second stamp caused the trees and plants to spring, and cover its surface, when they obtained wives for themselves, made from the Ti palm. (Hood, 1862, p. 24)

Growing up, my Dad often referred to the meaning of Niue being “the rock that popped out of the ocean” and this interpretation feels similar to the sentiments of these two accounts, and perhaps points at the changing of narratives through time. In Pulekula's account (as cited in Smith, 1983), once the island was ready, some men returned to get their families and made a final migration to Niue. Conceptualised in this story are lines of migration and movement and an ability to navigate. The reason here for the initial voyage is a falling-out of these men or these families with their parents. Yet the women and children did not voyage with the initial set of men. Whatever work ethic they had previously it is clear in this record that the men had to work in order to build dwellings and likely plant crops that would support their families. They also found Niue to be an environment that would be able to sustain their families, somewhere where they would want to lay down some roots. Pulekula's account also captures a sense of the environment in Niue, things had to be developed

for the island to become a liveable place for these migrating families. Whether or not they were lazy or idle in the previous homelands, it is clear that in Niue that inactivity was not possible; to survive they had to learn about this new environment and then be able to manipulate it to make it a sustainable home.

In the second excerpt from Pulekula's writing, the origins of men and women are connected with the Ti tree, which echoes the account recorded by Hood. While both Smith and Hood believe this to be part of the *Dracæna* family, it is more likely a reference to what we refer to as tī plant which is a shrub, *Cordyline terminalis*. Though the leaves of *Dracæna* and the *Cordyline* look alike, the roots of the *Cordyline* are white and the roots of the *Dracæna* are orange. The tī plant was traditionally used for food, with the roots cooked in the umutī for two to three days and then chewed or made into a nutritious drink (Sperlich, 1992). These connections are similar to those made in this account by Pulekula. The use of tī roots is common in other Pacific cultures too and the roots, when prepared in certain ways, can be quite sweet. While the plant can grow wild, in Niue it is often cultivated near homes or plantations. Pulekula sees the tī as a life-giving plant, as humans we descend from the plants and thus when a new child is born it is nourished by these same plants in a kind of continuous cycle.

Pulekula's narrative also reveals the care for pregnant women in Niue. The special preparation of an umutī is made by the woman's husband and their parents. It is intergenerational care that centres on the mother who, in eating the tī which is connected to the land of a lineage of all humans, nourishes the next generation. It is with both the tī roots and the mother's milk that a child can "feed on the fullness of its parents" (Pulekula as cited in Smith, 1983, p. 55). It follows then that the sex of the child is referred to as the fruit of either the war-girdle (the words refer to a particular loincloth worn by men) or the fruit of women, lālava which, in the present-day means "baby girl". These links are important in thinking about connections between humans and nature. While Christianity makes a clear distinction and separation of humankind

and nature, Niue cultural origins maintain an intimate connection that then flows into ceremonial and other cultural practices.

The final part of this excerpt from Pulekula's writing is the recording of what is said as a baby is bathed in fresh water for the first time. For baby girls the prayer is:

That she may be accomplished in making *tegitegi* (one kind of fine mat, used for complimentary presents); also in beating *hiapo*; to braid *kafa lauulu* (human hair girdle), to make *kafa-hega* (girdles of parrots' feathers); to weave baskets and all work that springs from the *la-lava* (woman's occupations) – to strain arrowroot, grate the wild yams; to be accomplished in preparing food, and to preside over all similar work. (Smith, 1983, p. 57, emphasis in original).

Something that stands out for me in these texts are the different conceptualisations of the importance of emotion and a broad approach to skilfulness. In a western-context, anger and crying are not often seen as virtuous characteristics. However, to be facile, to have a mastery of these emotions along with kindness, competence in nature, in fishing, activity, and to be skilful and knowledgeable are all necessary for becoming an expert of the land and becoming more like the ancient gods. This saying also includes *uka-hoge* which Smith (1902) cannot translate but may be a reference to strength during a famine. Each of these different aspects and values that are bestowed on a newborn hint at the complexity of Niue experience and worldview. Some of the attributes have some clear connections to the environments and experiences connected with the time periods. I would argue that all have a literal or metaphorical relevance for Niue new-born children today. Interestingly there is a significant emphasis in mastery or expertise not just in one thing but in many and these are dealt with more specifically in the prayer for a baby girl. There is a clear celebration of children striving to become skilful in a great diversity of areas. It is perhaps ironic then that a director from the Asian Development Bank, which the Government of Niue recently joined, said she was "amazed by how many different

jobs and roles people are juggling here” (TV Niue, 2019, para. 15) and that Niue is too reliant on the versatility of our people. The juxtaposition of emotions and skills in the chant is deliberate and paying attention to what seem like things that contrast can draw attention to these particular connections to people and nature and how true mastery and expertise comes from a balance of knowledge and skill in many different areas, both human and non-human.

Perhaps the origin story that most resonates with me comes from Patutaue of Lakepa, originally printed in two *Tohi Tala* issues (14 and 17) in 1956. This account is given the front page of the *Tohi Tala* both times. I reprint a large excerpt from the second part of the story related by Patutaue on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1956 in the English edition (Patutaue, 1956).

You have read in the Newsletter published on 18 May 1956 the story I related how the three men, Huanaki, Fao and Lageiki arrived at Niue. Now I will tell you a story about the woman that lived on Niue before and on arrival of the three men.

Her name was Fisigaulu and she was kind and pretty, she usually lived at Uluvehi, Mutalau but her real home was Tuo. She knows of events that were happening on the island and that was how she came to know that 3 men had arrived on the island, although the men did not know that there was a woman living on the island. Fisigaulu lived by herself and it was not known where she came from and if she had any relatives.

When the men completed their tour of the island they did not see any inhabitant, but they did not know that they were being watched by a woman and how she wanted to meet them but hesitated on the thought that they might not welcome her presence. However the men after their exploration of the island decided where they were going to live and settle down.

One day Huanaki decided to explore his share of the land. He set out heading towards the North of the island. When he arrived at Liha point he was surprised to discover that there was someone living on the island beside themselves. From where he was standing he saw someone fishing at Tuo, he tried to make out if the person was a woman or a man but he couldn't. He noticed however that the person was fishing like a man but the object of the body was that of a woman. Huanaki did not stay much long there, but quickly returned to his home very much frightened and to decide what to do. He did not know that the woman had seen him from where he was watching her and she fished like a man to provoke the stranger to come down to her, but unfortunately Huanaki was afraid and returned quickly home.

When Huanaki arrived home he quickly summoned his two friends and informed them of his discovery. They held a council to decide what to do. Lageiki suggested that they should put off in their canoe to sea and to spy from there that if there were more inhabitants they should leave the island. Huanaki agreed to this proposal, but Fao suggested that they should go on land and investigate. This suggestion was dropped because if they go on land and discover that the tribe was a large one they would be killed.

The three men put their canoe out to sea at night and proceeded slowly to make their watch from the sea. However, Fisigaulu learnt that the three men had decided to go away that night so she went and waited on the beach at Uluvehi in Mutalau until morning. When daylight approached Fisigaulu saw the men in the canoe slowly drifting in the sea and its passengers were keenly watching the island. She stood up from where she was waiting to enable the men to see her and called to them to come ashore. The men were surprised at the sight of her and they were afraid with suspicion, but Fisigaulu called earnestly to them to come ashore. The men headed their canoe to shore direction slowly and stopped in the channel undecided what to do. The woman

kept up her earnest calling to them and waving, but they did not understand her language. However they held a council to decide who should go up first and it was decided that Huanaki should go ashore first.

He took with him 2 coconuts (the only two which were left of their supplies) as present for the woman. Both nuts were bearing shoots and Huanaki husked one and presented to the woman and tried to explain to her that the flesh was good to eat and asked her to eat it. The woman found it difficult to eat the nut so Huanaki showed her how to open and eat it. She then immediately called to the two men who were still in the canoe to come ashore and made them understand that she was very happy because of the sweetness of the coconut. The two men came ashore and met the woman. However they were all in difficulty because they could not understand each other's language. The men's language was that of Tonga and the woman was Niue. They persuaded the woman to learn their language but she refused and that is why our language is different today from that of Tonga.

On that day that the coconut was presented to Fisigaulu by Huanaki, Fao and Lageiki, Niue obtained its present name. Also on that day they planted the coconut at Ululauta (Mutalau) and they placed their canoe inside the cave at Uluvehi. When the coconut was presented and later planted the name NIUE was given to the Island.

... Returning to the story about Fisigaulu and the three men. The men learnt the language of their hostess and were able to ask these questions.

Q. Where are your parents and relatives

A. Under the land.

Q. Where is your home.

A. Under the land.

Q. Would you allow us to go with you and meet your parents and your

relatives.

A. No. Nobody apart from myself is allowed to visit my parents and my relatives.

After question she told them that she had stayed long and that she was going to visit her parents.

Fisigaulu then said good bye to Huanaki, Fao and Lageiki and departed. She went down to the sea and prepared a load of live fish to take up to the bush. Her work was to deliver live fish to the bush where she tried to convert into a sea. Unfortunately the fish did not live because the water always dry up. However, that place which Fisigaulu tried to make into a sea is still exist but without water today.

One day they saw Fisigaulu returned and she had with her a load of talo in different varieties. Some of the talo she named after the fish but they did not know the meaning of the names. Fisigaulu then made an oven in which she baked the talo and gave to the three men to taste. The men tasted the talo and they liked them very much. Huanaki married Fisigaulu and they went and lived at a cave in Motu. They bored many children; some of them were half giants but some were good looking. Unfortunately Lageiki and Fao did not marry. It was said that Huanaki and Fisigaulu did not die but they went and lived at the home of Fisigaulu under the land. (Patutaue, 1956, pp. 1-2)

Patutaue's account of the origins of Niue is thought-provoking for several reasons. Foremost there is the inclusion of a woman who precedes the arrival of Huanaki, Fao and Lageiki. Her presence in this narrative, published in 1956 is perhaps the only account that includes a woman on the island as it is being inhabited for the first time and names her *Fisigaulu*. Whether the account is true or not, it poses some useful opportunities in viewing the Niue origin story from some different perspectives. It's particularly useful in the context of this research because it is not a

story that has featured in any of the descriptions or discussions of Niue's origins that I have read or been told. Like hiapo, this story seems to have almost lay-in-wait for someone to find it. Unlike most of the other written narratives in this chapter, this story is one I found in a *Tohi Tala* (English edition) while I worked for Tāoga Niue one summer. Most of the *Tohi Tala* copies in Tāoga Niue were bound in books that lined the shelves next to my desk. Some of the copies were weather damaged from the cyclone that ravaged most of the museum in 2004, some are fading or eaten by moths. I knew I wouldn't have time to read all of the *Tohi Tala*, so I took photos of as many pages as I could. It wasn't until I returned to Aotearoa that I got time to go back through these photos and pay more attention to the work of so many different Niue people. No doubt this could easily become a lifetime's work, for now, I return my focus to Patutaue's writing and to *Fisigaulu*, perhaps the first woman to live in Niue.

Even the presence of a narrative that would seek to disrupt the male-dominance of the Niue origin story raises so many more questions about what motivations could have led to such a detailed narrative of Niue's origins, particularly considering the timing, the general acceptance of Christianity (which is thought to have supplanted or oppressed memory of Niue history before the 1800s), and it's lack of mention ever since. One thing I will note about the *Tohi Tala* is that it represented one of the earliest opportunities for Niue people to write their own stories with the knowledge that it would be seen by other Niue people. It's not a coincidence that before Patutaue's (1956) origin account there were at least four other accounts of Niue origins in the *Tohi Tala*.

How *Fisigaulu* is portrayed and potential implications this could have could offer some different starting points in approaching women's stories. It is clear in the story that *Fisigaulu* is intelligent and seems more socially adept than the men, despite a language barrier. While the men were able to land on Niue and claim to have found the island uninhabited, they are unaware of the woman who has been living on the island sustainably for an unnamed, but unlikely to be short, amount of time. This is

implied by her ability to cook and share different varieties of talo with the men, her ability to fish and also her knowledge of the men's arrival and whereabouts even when they are unaware of her presence. This narrative disrupts the assumptions of gender roles. *Fisigaulu* can fish, can sustain herself by growing her own food and even though she seems to be alone (in one sense) she does not carry the same fear that the men have once they come to realise she is living on what they thought was an uninhabited island. There is perhaps a hint at *Fisigaulu* having spiritual or godly connections as her parents and relatives are from "under the land," a place only she can visit. A lingering aspect of the story is *Fisigaulu's* role in naming the island and maybe even birthing the nation. There is a certain power that *Fisigaulu* holds in this narrative and amongst the men that challenge the colonial and Christian conceptions of the place of women that permeate Niue culture but throughout our history, has never quite gotten the recognition that is deserved.

While there is more that can be unpacked from Patutaue's (1956) written narrative, I aim to do this in later chapters as I draw together the meaning derived from these narratives with meaning drawn from different oral and visual registries. The next section focuses on Niue women in written narratives. It seems fitting to think of the lineage explored in these various origin stories both from the perspective of those who wrote the stories as well as the potential lineage links of the women recorded in them.

### **Tau Fifine Niue *Niue women***

This sub-chapter includes explores Niue women as they have been referenced in Niue literature.

### **Hina**

One of the most well-known women in Niue history is Hina. She has been recognised as a chief deity but also as a larger representation as a second heaven for

good souls: “The second heaven, is that above wherein stands the sun and the moon and the stars; but that heaven is low; it is called Motu-o-Hina” (Smith & Pulekula, 1983, p. 114). *Motu* can refer to island/nation in Niue. The meaning of Hina includes, but is not limited to, white, to be blank, and paleness. It is possible that mahina, the Niue word for moon, is connected in this way. Hina is known to have had dealings with humankind such as the tala of Mokofulufulu and the daughters of Hina. Niue women would ‘pray’ (or sing) to Hina when they were beating the hiapo. According to Pulekula cited in Smith (1983), Hina’s family are:

1. Hina
2. Hina-hele-ki-fala (a beloved child to Hina)
3. Hina-o
4. Hina-e
5. Hina
6. Hina-kula
7. Hina-taivaiva
8. Hina-ma
9. Hiki-malama
10. Hiki-lauulu

In *History and Traditions of Niue*, Loeb’s (1926) informant, Uea of Alofi, provided a story of Hina which is reproduced below.

### The Story of Hina

Written by Uea of Alofi

It was Hina who dwelt in this island in the sky [this island also called *lagi tua-ua*, the second heaven] where the gods lived. It was a beautiful island, for it never grew dark there. It was an island in the sky, and it was an island of

daylight never ending. Hina did not live on the earth, but she came down one day to throw in the game of *tika*.

The *tika* of Hina was a black *tika*, the people gathered together to see this *tika*. Hina went before the multitude who were looking on. Then the *tika* of Hina went the furthest of any.

When the time of Christianity came to the island, peace was brought to all. But the people still believed that the stories about Hina were indeed true, and one of the *toa* sang this song, "This is the island of Hina, blessed be the island of Hina, blessed be the island of Hina."

It was Vemoa who originated this song. [Vemoa was the grandfather of my informant Uea.]

(Uea, as cited in Loeb, 1926, p. 214)

The original Niue translation provided by Uea records the song as:

"Koe motu a Hina, kua talolo he koe motu a Hina, kua talolo"

Many stories have written about Hina. Uea was a key informant for Loeb and well connected with the church. In Uea's story, recorded above, he mentions how his father had composed a song about Hina. Songs are an important record of knowledge in Niue culture and while the song is simple and perhaps even out of context (as it may only be part of a song), the subject is clear. The story itself sets a clear placement of Hina, a Niue deity, in second heaven, the home where other gods also lived. Uea's connections to the church may influence the translation and perhaps the story itself in relating to second heaven as a place of eternal light with no darkness. The time before Christianity is often referred to as darkness, sometimes literally that Niue's had no light (therefore no ability to write things down because it was dark) but more often a metaphorically as darkness connected with savagery, violence, and illiteracy. For Uea, Hina escaped the fate of other Niue gods who became "heathen gods" lesser

than the “one, true God” that some argue was superimposed on Tagaloa who Niue people referred to as the rainbow God, though Tagaloa, as for many Polynesian cultures, had a much more complex role shown in the many chants and songs that reference him. Still, even at the time of Loeb’s research in the 1920s, Uea believes that Hina still holds a revered position in Niue society.

In this particular story, Hina comes down from second heaven and competes in tika, *dart*, throwing. This is interesting for a few reasons, the foremost being that tika throwing is typically considered to be a male sport. Indeed, tika throwing is still popular in Niue but is typically confined to males; women bowl coconuts instead. Another interesting point in the story is that the tika that Hina uses is black, perhaps a reference to kieto, and a highly regarded tree in Niue for its dark appearance, hardness, and rarity. Kieto is referred to in English as ebony. The black kieto is found in the heart of the tree. While Uea notes how Christianity has been accepted throughout the island, knowledge and reverence of Hina has not yet been obscured by the process. But perhaps in Uea’s remark that Hina is a ‘belief’ signifies a shifting of her position in Niue cosmology to one of myth. It is perhaps telling then that Uea’s father recounts the song of Niue being the island of Hina; this knowledge then belongs to an elder generation.

In another part of Loeb’s book, Uea mentions Hakumani, a goddess “wise in *hiapo* cutting” (as cited by Ryan, p. 236, emphasis in original). It may be a similar story to who Smith records as Hina-hele-ki-fala, the beloved daughter of Hina, who paints and marks the bodies of all the different fish before she is eaten by a whale, which is very similar to the story of Mataginifale (discussed later in this section). There are differences in narratives relating to Hina but important to note throughout is that though she dwells in second heaven, her lineage is connected to the people of Niue. She has several daughters who have specific skills and talents. While many of our Niue narratives, particularly origin narratives, focus on men and their role in establishing our people on the island, it is interesting to include these narratives that name Hina

and recognise her place among our gods, and as such recognise her power and ability to impact human life and enact justice.

In an article in the *Tohi Tala*, Falani of Lakepa writes the story of Hina and Mokofulufulu. Hina sends her two daughters to get fire from Mokofulufulu in the first heaven. The sisters asked for fire, but instead, Mokofulufulu mistreated and teased the elder sister. He then demanded that she take the insects out of his hair and in exchange he may give them fire. As the elder sister began the task, her younger sister wove Mokofulufulu's hair to a nearby post of his house. When the hair was well tied to the post the girls rushed to get fire and fled to the second heaven. In the *Tohi Tala* version, the account ends with Mokofulufulu struggling against his post, try to get free and chase the girls. In an extended version of the story also written by Falani of Lakepa and published in the book by Edwin Loeb, when the two daughters return to their mother Hina, they are questioned as to why they are late. The girls say they have acted like the rat and the veka. This version implies that Hina learns of what happened to her daughters and decides to punish Mokofulufulu for his treatment of them. Hina invites Mokofulufulu up to second heaven where he may marry her eldest daughter. She sends a rope down for him to climb. Just as he begins to reach the top, Hina uses an axe and cuts the rope and Mokofulufulu plummets to his death. In this story, the consequence of not recognising the mana of the daughters of Hina the goddess is fatal. That Mokofulufulu would defile and not recognise the malolo he tau fifine of a daughter of Hina has a severe punishment and has some commonality with the tau tala of Kanaka Maoli deities, such as Pele and Hi'iakaikapoliopele (ho'omanawanui, 2018).

### **Mataginifale**

One of the most well-known heroines in Niue history is Mataginifale. The *Tohi Tala* features the story of Mataginifale and the whale. Mataginifale in one account is said to have lived at Paliatoa, near Avatele (Smith, 1902). Pulekula (as cited in Smith,

1902) noted the skills of Mataginifale and her daughters as being accomplished in female crafts of braiding or plaiting, weaving and hiapo. Mataginifale would go down to the reef to beat and wash hiapo, collect shells and shellfish, and also to paint fish the vibrant colour and patterns that they carry to this day. There is a similar story of a daughter of Hina named Hina-Hele-Ki-Fata, sings to the fish and as they come to her she paints their bodies (Smith, 1902). In a *Tohi Tala* version, most fish swim up and receive their colours, but when the shark comes it is proud and tells Mataginifale that it does not need colours. Mataginifale feels insulted and this is why the shark has no special colours, only grey or plain colour and the flesh of the shark tastes and smells bad to this day. Smith (1902) also received an account of a woman with expertise in printing hiapo with shells, and her name was Gini-fale. This story seems to reflect a time predating the missionaries and is a, therefore, a reminder that printed hiapo may have been practised in Niue, through perhaps using different materials.

There is a story where Mataginifale is by the reef, beating hiapo, painting fish, collecting shells for paint, or gathering food, when a whale begins splashing and showing off nearby. It distracts her, so she mocks the whale calling out: 'Big rough head! Big rough head!' In some versions, Mataginifale calls the whale ugly and stupid. The whale is hurt by the insults and submerges out of site. The next day Mataginifale goes down to the reef as usual to collect seashells. In Kunitau and Hekau (1982), Mataginifale sees an octopus and to catch it has to turn her back to the sea. In both versions, Mataginifale comes very close to the edge and the reef and the whale takes its chance and snatches Mataginifale up in its great mouth and swallows her whole. Inside the belly of the whale, Mataginifale lives on, she remembers a shell she has tethered to her waistcloth. She uses the shell to cut the whale's stomach open. In agony, the whale loses energy and strands itself on an island named Mua, Tonga. The locals, upon seeing the woman and the opened stomach of the whale, carry her up to their dwellings. There she is bathed and adorned in beautiful flowers and sweet-smelling oils. The king Ha'atakalua or Fakaleipua soon hears of the woman who had been eaten by a whale and survived and also of her unique beauty, so he travels to

meet her and see for himself. The king falls in love with Mataginifale and they are soon married. On the day of the engagement there was lots of dancing, the king danced and played the drums, but he chanced a look upon his new bride and accidentally hit himself in the eye. From then on Mataginifale also became known as Laveamata, which loosely translates to *accident, hurt in the eye*.

Mataginifale, now a queen of Tonga, fell pregnant. The king was overjoyed with the impending birth, but as the time of the birth drew near, he became sad and began to lament. Mataginifale noticed the change and asked her husband what troubled him. He explained that he knew she would die soon, for when she came to term, they have to cut the baby from her as mothers before her on the island had done, and she would die. Mataginifale assured him there was another way and that she would show him the way of natural childbirth. Thus, the Niue woman who went to Tonga introduced natural childbirth to the island. The names of the first three children of Mataginifale and Ha'atalaua are not known. But the fourth was named Mutalau, also referred to as Tepunuu Mutilau (Kumitau & Hekau, 1982). This child has a particularly close relationship with the mother from birth and once he reaches adulthood, decides that he will journey to the land of his mother. It is Mataginifale who tells him of the direction and winds to follow so that he may journey to his mother's homeland. This son of Mataginifale eventually becomes a chief in Niue after he defeats a great warrior and chief, Tihamau, in a riddle-off. Some have suggested that Mutalau was one of the early patuiki in Niue, but it is not clear if all other iki (area, tribal chiefs) at the time consented to this elevation. I have heard anecdotally that the name Mutalau is a clear indication that Mataginifale herself is from Mutalau and thus gave her son clear directions to return to the exact area she was from.

### **Mataginifale and the Fonu**

Mataginifale and the Fonu *turtle* (Smith, 1902) is a story that relates to her friendship and travel with a turtle. This story comes before she ends up in Tonga. She

again is noted for her skill in making hiapo. She visits the little beach at Paliatoa in Avatele, here she beats and washes the hiapo bark in the saltwater. One day a turtle comes up to her and speaks many flattering words to her. Mataginifale is happy to receive such compliments and asks the turtle if she may travel with him. The turtle agrees and Mataginifale brings some coconuts for food for herself. As they travel Mataginifale becomes thirsty, she pierces the coconut and drinks the water inside. Then she becomes hungry, but she has no way to open the coconut. She seeks advice from the turtle who then ponders the question. Eventually, the turtle says, 'break the nut on my head', and so to this day the turtle's head is moveable and can be hidden beneath its shell for it was struck several times by a hard coconut to break the shell.

The Mataginifale story is imbued with many lessons that correspond to Niue culture and worldviews. Mataginifale is a woman of great skill, beauty, strength, intellect and power. She is adept in utilising resources of the land to make hiapo, she is a gatherer, and is attuned with the sea, being able to paint fish, speak to or understand fish, turtles and whales, travel on a turtle, and also navigate the ocean using winds as a guide. Her ability to engage with sharks and turtles is particularly significant as these are both considered tapu. In a song translated by Uea (as cited in Loeb, 1926), *Ko e ulu lologo o maletoa*, there is a verse that reads:

Come here, come here  
Tagaloa thy island be blessed  
Blessed be the king of Niue.  
The shark and the turtle are sacred fish,  
The two swim in the sea.  
The two are the best of all.

(Uea as cited in Loeb, 1926, p. 221).

Royalty recognises Mataginifale's beauty and strength, and her son who returns to Niue gains a chiefly status. She is also a teacher, passing on knowledge of natural

childbirth. Mataginifale suffers, for chiding the whale, she is eaten and must use her wit to free herself. In doing so she regains a type of mana, in the sense of power that contributes to her eventual marriage to a king of Tonga. The stories of Mataginifale contain many elements that seem fantastical from a western perspective, a perspective that seems to restrict their status to that of myth or legend. Yet, Mataginifale offers much in the way of knowledge and power for Niue women. As one Niue woman told me, it is the blood of these kinds of women that flow in us. Undoubtedly women's stories have been affected by the sensitivities of missionaries and ensuing patriarchal systems that oppressed the roles and abilities of women. For example, one aspect of the Mataginifale story that is rarely recognised is her ability to navigate and travel the ocean. Whether by turtle, whale or perhaps other means of transport, Mataginifale understands the winds and currents of the ocean. She gives clear directions for her son Mutalau that enable him to voyage to her homeland. Mataginifale reminds us that Niue women were not restricted to passive, subservient or stay-on-the-island types. Our female ancestors had specific knowledge of the land, sea, winds and currents. They were mothers, leaders, voyagers, skilled artists and craftswomen, they had *lukulukufeua he tau fifine*, *the power of women*. It is perhaps more readily acknowledged when these narratives are brought together and given exposure or recognition.

### **Fitiutouto and Kiliutamanogi**

Another story featuring Niue women is of the sisters, Fitiutouto and Kiliutamanogi. They were the daughters of Kalofokapaete and Matafineiki. The version below was recorded by Hipa of Hikutavake in Loeb. The sisters, Fitiutouto being the elder, Kiliutamanogi the younger, were from Tamakautoga and when a drought came to their lands, they went to beat hiapo at Mahei. They beat the hiapo, dried it out and put it in bundles that they carried on their backs as they went to look for water to wash the hiapo with. Needing freshwater to wash the hiapo they prayed for rain. The elder sister began the prayer:

Stars, stars, cluster of stars

Let a little rain fall

Let a little rain fall

Then the younger sister joined in:

Stars, stars, cluster of stars

Fall down to the ground.

Look up (to the sky)!

Look down (on the fallen stars)!

Come and look

Come and look

It is like the breast of the hega

The rain will fall in the bush.

Fitiutouto was not pleased so Kiliutamanogi told her to pray again. While she did so, Kiliutamanogi went over to cut a banana leaf. As she did, water welled up from the roots of the banana tree. The chant had worked, the sisters rejoiced, washed their hiapo and then returned to Tamahamua. There are several important messages within this tala, which covers many complex themes that centre on the women of this family. In the beginning, the value of hiapo is reiterated, with the two sisters completing the tasks together and, interestingly, invoking the stars to fall so that rain might come to wash their hiapo. Their prayers to the stars work, and rain does come, but through a welling of water from beneath a banana tree. Perhaps there is even specificity in the stars that they pray to, very little of Niue astronomy has been written about, yet many other cultures in the Pacific derive meaning from certain constellations and a few, such as Mataliki, or the Pleiades, have been recorded.

## Women warriors

Historically, only clever women were able to weave together feather ornaments and hair girdles, often worn by *toa* (warriors). Women did not customarily participate in wars but they are said to have been present on or near battlefields where they would call to their warriors “fakamalolo”, encouraging them to be brave (Loeb, 1926). However, records a list of women who were said to have braved war alongside their men:

- Tifakalipa, who fought in the war at the battlefield of Avaau
- Finekalaga, who fought in the war at the battlefield of Hikuniu
- Malimaliheiki, who fought in the war at the battlefield of Mougakelekele
- Hakehakehetoa, who fought in the war at the battlefield of Gutukiu. It is said, she only through one *maka*, but that it struck the head of a powerful *toa* (warrior) and his head split in two.

Then there is the story of Halakikula. An excerpt below is taken from Loeb (1926)

Her parents came from Mafuiki. Her father was named Finetifa, and her husband was named Tialei. He had a long *male* (field for sports) at Tamalagau. The troops of Motu went down once to fight at Fatuana. Halakikula went down to where the Tafiti troops had gathered at Gutukiu. The Tafiti troops then waved their arms and shook with the war dance (*takalo*). But after this they turned back, for they were afraid. Then the woman Halakikula jumped into the war dance, and performed it so violently that skinned her arms. After this she led the troops down to Fatuana, where they were victorious and defeated the people of Motu.” (Loeb, 1926, p. 83).

The point of this section is not to say that Niue women necessarily need to be warriors to be able to have agency in their communities. But it is to recognise that these stories and oral traditions that speak of our ancestry and genealogy are important to disrupt

the idea that Niue women were only present in certain capacities or limited to certain roles in the household. We can think about what being a woman warrior looks like in a modern context. Often Niue women go where they are needed in order to serve our family and community. Niue women are highly mobile and their networks and an ability to serve larger national, regional and global communities seems second-hand to many of the women I've met. Taking these things into account raises questions about how research with Niue women is shaped, the kinds of questions that are asked and what kinds of assumptions are being carried. I'm interested in conversations about how our women are leading in their families and communities, how they are leading in national, regional and global discussions, and what this means for how they view and contextualise climate change.

### **Moving forward with a Niue written registry**

In concluding this section, I want to draw attention to what is possible with even just a small look beyond the non-Niue perspectives that dominate Niue literature. While the archives of Niue writing are perhaps not as easily accessible and are often invisible yet in plain sight within non-Niue accounts, researching these archives offer value and insight into the knowledge that can be accessed from our Niue writers. To recognise that Niue has a long-standing writing tradition that sits within multiple archives shifts our perspective of where Niue academic contributions are and the contribution they make to a broader Niue narrative of research. The Niue cohort of academic writers is diverse in terms of where these scholars are positioned within the academy. For example: Zoe Catherine Lavatangaloa Henry (2018) completed a Master's in Medieval Studies which looked at how early medieval Christians used and viewed punishment; Nogiata Ediff Tukimata (2017) also researched Christianity but focused on the role of the Ekalesia church in supporting vagahau for youth in Niue and in Auckland, Aotearoa as part of her Master of Arts. Darcel Apelu's (2013) Master of Art and Design, explored the perceptions of the Pacific body within New Zealand and the Pacific. Anthony Liuvaie Freddie (2018)

completed a Master of Architecture and wrote about how knowledge of Niue's traditional values, practices and contextual situation can support the identification of more sustainable and resilient architectural solutions; Vili Nosa, who works in the field of health research, has written about topics from the impact of transnationalism on Niue (Nosa, 2009) to drinking behaviours of Niue women living in Auckland (Gray & Nosa, 2009). Artist and scholar Janice Ikiua (2006) has paid careful attention to Niue ceremonies and practices. Terry Chapman (1976) was a public servant and completed research in public administration on the decolonisation of Niue. Colin Tukuitonga has published over 40 peer-reviewed articles and contributed to a number of books mainly in relation to Niue and Pacific health (see e.g., Tukuitonga, 2011; Paterson et al., 2006; Tukuitonga & Finau, 1997) but also about Pacific regionalism (Tukuitonga, 2017) and climate change. Yvonne Te Ruki-Rangi-O-Tangaroa Underhill-Sem, a Cook Island-Niue scholar, has contributed to many research spaces including population geography, post-colonialism, feminist theory, international development, gender and development to name a few. Underhill-Sem's has been thinking and writing about climate change in the Pacific for nearly two decades (Sem & Underhill, 1992, 1994; Tiatia-Seath, Underhill-Sem & Woodward, 2018; Underhill-Sem, 2001).

Sunlou Liuvaie (2008) completed research in management studies and business administration and published an investigation of the barriers of tertiary participation of Niue students at university institutions in New Zealand. Liuvaie's (2008) research found particular barriers around socio-economic familial, information and communication, students' academic performance, policy and role models which all factor in low tertiary participation. The point here is that I'm not alone in the academic space, and by minutely shifting vantage points, to consider the mass of work being done by Niue scholars in Masters and doctoral writing, there are many more questions being raised in the possibilities that come from thinking about this larger body of writing. Liuvaie's (2008) research shows several issues and barriers that continue to limit the number of Niue students participating in tertiary research. In addition, there are relatively few Pacific academics that are in positions to supervise

and support Pacific, let alone Niue, students (Kidman & Chu, 2017; Naepi, 2019; Patterson, 2018). Eurocentric academic systems decide the legitimacy of certain knowledge through the ability to reach specific academic journals, yet these institutes continue to reinforce barriers that restrict Pacific students from even making it to high-level learning, let alone being in a position to publish. In the context of Niue research, this means it is important to consider a wider field of research and to be critical of the requirements that would confine views to journals or peer-reviewed work, which is not to say that Niue scholars haven't infiltrated these spaces as well.

While some may argue that there are few if any Niue writers, this chapter easily identifies a strong group of Niue writers who have had limited recognition as part of the Niue canon of literature and even less recognition in both academic spaces and our wider Niue communities. There is a significant access issue in how published work makes its way into Niue hands, or rather how it doesn't end up with our communities. And this can have a flow on effect to how our community views and values our own writing. In identifying and analysing even a few Niue writers work it's evident that there is so much more work in this space to be done by Niue people. While select few may be able to gain access to this knowledge, there are also a limited numbers of contemporary spaces for our communities to robustly engage with our literature, let alone have access to it. For me it's a reminder of the value of my position in doing this research and of being located in the country that was the former colonial administrative and governing body of Niue. While I only came across the *Tohi Tala Niue Newsletter*, in Niue, the works of Niue people recorded in the likes of Loeb (1926) and Smith (1902) and even in Niue dictionaries (McEwan, 1970; Sperlich, 1997; Tregear & Smith, 1907) which are incredibly rare finds on the island (and even outside of Niue too). While I aim to make this thesis available online, there's an importance in thinking carefully about the sources that make up my reference list and how those sources can become more easily accessed by a wider number of Niue people. Because it is vital that more of our work is seen by our people so they have the ability to engage in this space because it can directly contribute to how we control narratives about

ourselves and how we protect, develop and maintain our intellectual sovereignty. Another issue in this space is how the majority of academic literature by Niue people is coming out of institutions in Aotearoa. While the Niue population is largely based in Aotearoa, there are growing communities in Australia and increasing movement back to Niue. There's no doubt that the stories that come from Niue people situated outside of Aotearoa are unique and valuable and therefore require particular attention in terms of nurturing spaces for our diaspora and our home island community to become more visible.

If it wasn't for my upbringing largely away from the culture perhaps I wouldn't now have the curiosity to find and treasure the legacies of knowledge laid out in these narratives. As mentioned throughout the chapter the different perspectives and meaning gleaned from these narratives contribute to a foundation of Niue knowledge and ways of accessing Niue perspectives that can help me pay attention to specific themes that emerge from exploring Niue narratives in other forms. In reading and treading these narratives I can walk and carry the meaning in different places and spaces. The next section explores visual Niue narratives.

## **2.2 Tau Tala Fakakitekite** *Visual narratives*

Hiapo is a visual art form. It is from the imagination and memory of the artist that designs and patterns find their way onto a hiapo. Each of the design elements is drawn from a context that often indicates collective and shared meaning. This subchapter is about paying attention to the lenses we use in order to centre Niue knowledge and culture. I also aim to add to the work of Teresia Teaiwa (2010) in reclaiming some of the visual roots of Niue literature, that our stories may not only come from written and oral spaces, but also from our rich visual archives.

**Taumaleku ke he tau mena mukamuka ke kitia** *The invisible in plain sight*

In this section, I explore the conversations that are possible when our lens is focused on visual representations of Niue women. How unpacking meaning from, in this case, photographs enables us to approach conversations about climate change in different ways. One of the jobs this chapter is doing is thinking about what it means to be Niue and what this can look like in an academic thesis.

Why focus on Niue women in photographs? Why not go straight to representations of women responding to climate change? Or something similar? It certainly sounds straightforward to do the latter, but as researchers, we are often quick to impose, often unknowingly, our expectations of a situation or context. There's also the assumption that we already know what climate change is and looks like for Indigenous women. Particularly coming from a largely Western-based education system and society, I can understand different perspectives. Perhaps it is the story we want to see, the story we expect to see. It is possible for there to be an overlap in what we might expect and in how Niue women perceive and communicate climate change. But assuming it from the outset pre-empts and directs discussion, rather than allowing the different perspectives to emerge, particularly for acknowledging the cultural and gendered spaces that can be made less visible depending on the research approach. In my experiences with Niue women, very few spoke about rising sea levels, drought-resistant crops, workshops or the Paris Climate Accord. They were talking about other things; things about their lives, things they faced and overcame. While I explore this later, for now, I want to disrupt the power dynamic of the researcher and collaborator that often skews in favour of the researcher and engage with a different sense.

I seek to create a space that is more responsive to the stories of the women and men who I had talanoa with and recognise that their stories aren't only spoken, but encompass connections to other Niue women, in different times and places. This is the point of having a hiapo framework to guide this research, it means being open

and flexible to the dynamics of what these women have said and my understanding that is then influenced by that and thinking about the different voices that have come before us. It also means looking outside of the traditional Western models of where we can find knowledge and the associated credibility of the knowledge that is housed in those spaces. Pacific Studies rejects the idea that our knowledge can only be held by the academy and other institutions (Marsh, 2010; Huffer & Qalo, 2004; Thaman, 2003; Hau'ofa, 1993). Epeli Hau'ofa (1993) advocated for paying attention to everyday people, their experiences and their knowledge. A nation's identity is not only made up of the people most visible. Often it can be collective and individual movements of those less visible that can shape what people identify with most and what forms as cultural and gendered identity.

In a roundabout way, this leads to these photographs. A way to bring to the fore things, moments, memories, connections and people that are otherwise less visible. Photographs can give voice to different experiences and highlight different lines of questioning that empower different voices in these conversations. Photo elicitation research is found predominantly in anthropology – though increasingly in other areas of sociology, psychology and education (Buckingham, 2009). The general principle is that using photographs in oral methods, like interviews, creates something new and different to respond to. There's certainly a lot of brain science research that looks at how our brains react and respond to visual information. Unlike photo-elicitation as a visual methodology that usually has some form of engagement with collaborators, the use of photographs here is slightly different. It wasn't part of the talanoa process but has been influenced in part by what has emerged from those conversations over time.

Photography itself, particularly by early European missionaries and scientists, has a continuing legacy for the Indigenous peoples of Oceania, specifically women. Early greyscale photographs by the likes of Europeans in the region often portrayed highly sexualized and exotic pictures of our women, commodifying their beauty or

labelling them as part of their visual inventories of objects and artefacts. Sexualised images were reiterated in literature and later in film with significant impacts that still exist today. These ascribed identities and images have made our women and their voices less visible and created cultural and gender barriers that obscure the relationships we once had, something Lana Lopesi (2018) has critiqued in her recent work *False Divides*.

To learn more about the lived experiences of Niue women, it is important to pay attention to the different places where women are found as well as spaces that are the domain of women. Some of these photographs weren't taken by Niue women, yet they are all of Niue women. Reflecting on these photographs from an Indigenous, Pacific Studies, Management Communication perspective that is interested in their story is about connecting with and privileging voice. As a Niue woman, my voice matters here too, because I have a personal connection. I am an insider and in this position, I have both a responsibility and care for what is being analysed, how these images are written about and how they are respected. It is more than just bias as an inclination to view Niue women favourably. My mother is an avid quilter which perhaps influences my view of bias in this context. In quilting, when you cut the material on the diagonal, against the weave of the fabric, you are said to cut the bias. There is more than one way to think about bias and while I do have an inclination to view Niue women favourably, I do so against the grain of any literature that seeks to view Niue women impassively, without care for their welfare, or without the understanding that women are more than circumstance, more than a moment of research, more than a photograph.

The photographs in this section viewed for both their stories and memories. These photographs sit against the backdrop of the images that precede each chapter which reflect the process of making hiapo. Unintentionally, there is a mix of both black-and-white and colour photographs reflected on in this section. Australian based Pacific artist Angela Tiatia has talked about similar senses of emotion when she

recreated a colonial image of a woman naked (herself) baring the malo, amongst island flora in her art piece 'Dark Light' (Tiatia, 2018a). Tiatia's work pushes back on the popularised and highly sexualised colonial depictions of our women as dusky maidens. 'Dark Light' like many of Angela Tiatia's other artworks, force us to re-examine things that are familiar or things that have disguised themselves as part of our story. We need to create spaces where we are critical and honest about what colonisation looks and feels like but also what decolonisation is and what it can look and feel like. In Tiatia's visual media piece 'Holding On' (Tiatia, 2018b) she responds to climate change and rising sea levels in the Pacific (Karipoff, 2018). Lying on a slab of concrete in the sea Tiatia's body is buffeted by waves that increasingly cover her and threaten to wash her away. There are wider conversations happening about climate change in the Pacific by Pacific artists, poets, film-makers, and others that resonate with visual, oral and written aspects of our cultures.

The photographs I'm using here don't necessarily feed into the popularised colonial beliefs of our women. It is interesting to note that it is more difficult to come across images of Niue women portrayed in this way, perhaps owing to the infamous label of "Savage Island" that James Cook bestowed upon our island. That's not to say there aren't photographs or renderings of Niue women semi-nude or in staged poses or environments that accentuate the exotic dusky maiden vibe. But the photographs used here have been a consequence of my research, not necessarily in seeking them out, but in bumping into as I did my research. Thinking about Teresia Teaiwa's (2010) argument that we reclaim our visual roots in Pacific literature, I found myself in a position where these visual narratives from old and new photographs provided space to question and explore Niue history and Niue connections through time in non-linear ways. The photographs contribute to an understanding of both my personal experience and to flesh out different aspects of lived experience that emerge from the talanoa and other spaces. Different aspects of each photo emerge and provide a way into connecting with written and oral registries that combine to shed light on different perspectives, experiences and ideas. Through each photograph, we can also

connect with the past, not just by representation, but as a sensory place of memory, relationships and ideas. Harper (2002) cites John Berger's work on the connection of photographs to memory and found that photographs evoke memory, feelings and emotion, which results in data that cannot be experienced in oral methods such as interviews or focus groups. Visual methods of analysis in this sense, provide different information that can enrich our understanding of a certain space. Berger's work (as cited in Harper, 2002) also notes that sharp and isolated stimuli are more memorable for our brains to more comprehensive stimuli. So, for example, black-and-white photographs can be more evocative than colour photographs; our brain works harder to fill in what is left out or missing.

This section is by no means an exhaustive analysis and relies on the subjectivities I have as a Niue woman to notice certain threads or themes that emerge. No doubt others will draw different conclusions, but the point here is not to have a definition of meaning, it is to notice. In paying attention to these tangible, visible elements raises questions about how we understand what it can mean to be a Niue woman, how this can be identified, and what meaning this might have in connection with Niue women's perspectives of climate change. Change is the operative word here, and, as the photographs show, change is something synonymous with Niue culture and with what being a Niue woman can mean. In some photographs there are elements have transcended time, things that remain very much a part of Niue culture and identity. Each photo is a tāoga or treasure that is connected to women of Niue and I respect the significance of sharing them, not only to credit the person behind the camera, as is required in academic settings but to recognise the women themselves. I don't know the names of all the women in the photographs, but in bringing attention the photographs there is more of a chance that others might see and recognise who they are and in turn, new conversations may be started. Through these photographs, we can draw out meaning in relation to gender, identity, experience and place that contribute to and connect with the diverse experiences of our women across space and time.

## Ata 1: Finding my Grandmother



**Figure 3: Sialeмата Lela (My Grandmother)** Personal Image

This is a photograph of my Grandmother – her name is Sialeмата Lela and she’s with my aunty Su, who is the youngest of her 11 children. The second part of my Grandmother’s name “Lela” is also the name of my eldest sister. My Grandmother passed away when my Dad was a teenager, so I never met her. I only found this photo a few months ago. I wasn’t looking for it at the time, but I had been asking around different relatives if anyone had a photo of my Grandmother, no one seemed to. My Dad didn’t think he had any photos of her either. Finding this photograph was the first time I had ever seen my Niue Grandmother. It’s kind of jarring to think that it’s taken a PhD before I could have this experience. And I’m not necessarily alone. Though social media seems to connect us increasingly to each other with ease, how it connects us to our past often require a little more work. Considering the photo itself I’m drawn to the two figures in the middle – my Grandmother and her youngest child. They are outside the family home in Mutalau which still stands today as do those houses in the background, though a little worse for wear. My Grandfather’s bike is

resting on the western-wall of the house and the clothes hanging on the line are likely to be his as well. My Grandfather passed away after a truck collided with his bike on a track. He was returning from the forest as he had been working on a new building for the village church.

The house is very similar in style to the ones you can make out in the background. The layout of these houses is similar - three rooms, each about 2-3 m<sup>2</sup>. They are made out of a kind of crushed coral concrete which is bright white, but some of the houses were, and are still, painted. Our family house is painted blue and yellow. The proximity of these houses speaks to a change that began after the arrival of missionaries in Niue in the 1850s. Villages up until that point did not really exist. People were connected through *kaina* and *magafaoa* but their homes were located further inland, which is where a lot of the richer soils are and where most of the plantation areas are still located. What the missionaries instigated was the movement of people from the inner areas of the island to the coastal areas. Now, most villages in Niue are closer to the outer belt road which roughly runs along the coast of the island. You may easily guess that this can then contribute to the damages people experience during cyclonic storm surges. Mutalau, like many of the villages, is located closer to the coast now. Though, unlike places like Alofi, Mutalau is located higher and further inland from the nearest coastline which is up around Uluvehi.

Our family house doesn't look like that now. There is growth that has come up around it and the *makatea stones*, are now covered by grass. Other houses around there have broken walls or have been emptied after significant numbers of Niue people left for New Zealand over the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Still, a brand new house was recently built in front of our family home, but this has sparked conflict as the owner built part of their house on our land. Land ownership is a continuing issue throughout the Pacific. For many countries, this has been exacerbated by western practices of putting legal titles on land. Thinking about land here, we can notice that this area is relatively flat, no big rocks, no dense bush. Often land is cleared for these types of

settlement. Today it is happening more quickly with two designated bulldozers that circulate to each village throughout the year. Village locations also distanced people from their plantations. For poorer families, this meant a lot more work to ensure they had viable crops that would be able to feed the entire family. There is more research being done now that looks at how through colonial and imperial systems we see the advance of urban environments that distance people from the environment. And yet, part of the climate change conundrum is engaging people with their environment. Drawing attention to such a personal photograph is not just talking about how things in the photo have changed, but being reminded that climate change is a human story, it has consequences for families and communities that we, particularly as Pacific researchers, are a part of. Often as doctoral researchers, the writing process can distance us from those who collaborate on the project. I'm fortunate to have been to Niue a few times and met with people who collaborated on this research more than once, but in this photo, I'm reminded that I carry with me a family, my grandmother, ancestors who are a part of how I see the world. I think it is critical to pay attention to these personal narratives that influence or embody the narratives of the research topics we work in.

This photograph draws attention to a kind of worldview, or lifeworld, a reality that might at first look and seem normal. This is a woman with her child by her house, the washing is hanging on the line and there's a bike leaning against the wall. But why is this "normal"? Whose normal is it? We can argue that it challenges the notions of Pacific women being exotic, highly sexualized, in tropical surroundings, staged in cultural dress or with cultural items. I think here of Angela Tiatia's work *Hibiscus Rosa Sinesis* (Tiatita, 2018c) where the camera pans across tropical leaves to reveal an island beauty, but with the hibiscus flower in her mouth. The flower is big but you can still see her eyes. Slowly the flower begins to move, almost as if it were talking, and then she eats the flower entirely, wiping her fingers across her mouth as if it were juicy and perhaps dripping with the contempt. While we can notice that this photo isn't of a "dusky maiden", we also notice that there isn't fanfare in the photograph, in

fact with the bike, the western-style clothes, there is little to necessarily distinguish this as Niue. Which also tells us of another story, the impact of a colonial empire. The changes that Niue has undergone following European contact reminds us of the legacy that includes significant migration of our people who are now in higher numbers both in Australia and New Zealand compared to those still in Niue. And I don't mean to imply that Niue people only end up in Australia or New Zealand, or that colonialism was the only way that Niue people left the island.

Lana Lopesi (2018) recently wrote of how Niue was part of a trading ring that stretched around the region to Tonga, Samoa and Fiji. Paying attention to an image like this reminds us that Niue people aren't necessarily always in Niue places and in part that is because of a colonial relationship that continues to exist today. Niue continues to govern, though independently, in free association with New Zealand and this has ramifications on how Niue women view climate change. It is also a reminder that the frame of climate change has dominant perspectives, largely Euro- and Western-centric, that continue to diminish the roles and power of women --- and yet, there are ways Indigenous people are benefiting or creating opportunities in these spaces, and often it comes from women creating their own opportunities. A photo may be seen as something frozen in time, a moment, and static but for me, emanating from this photo is a world of relationships, connections, migration, told and untold stories. Colonial representations of the Pacific often portray an exoticized version of our women surrounded by flora, trapped in time and place and yet this photo seems to do the opposite. It is a connection point for many different experiences I have had throughout this research, experiences with my Dad, with other Niue women, memories of being exactly where my Grandmother is standing. The photo itself then is more than one moment as it is overlaid with my experiences; it comes with its own genealogy, relationships and connections. This photo embodies a spreading story of travelling ideas, knowledge and experiences both on and off the page.

## Ata 2: Niue woman and child with giant talo leaf



**Figure 4: Niue woman and child with talo leaf** From [Adapted from] “The Ancient Hawaiian House,” by W. T. Brigham, 1908, *The ancient Hawaiian house: Memoirs of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum of Polynesian ethnology and natural history, II*, p. 50. 1908. Reprinted with permission

This photo is of a Niue woman with a very large talo leaf. The timing of the photo is sometime before 1900. It appeared first in a collection of memoirs by William Tufts Brigham - an American. The photo itself is more recognizable as part of a Wikipedia page that has a section heading of “Niue women”. There is a lot to be said of the way the internet can connect us to parts of our heritage – Lana Lopesi (2018), has recently explored this space in both a critical and positive perspective. Yet, the internet can also be a controversial space for the exploitation of culture and cultural heritage. In some ways it seems like your typical early-era colonial photo; the beautiful young island woman holding flora, smiling out to a world of people she won’t meet, but who will nevertheless bear down judgement on her and her children

as belonging to an exotic race. In the case of Niue however, exotic is replaced by savage, the first European-name that Niue was to be saddled with for over 100 years, in fact, some still use this reference point today. In exploring the photo, it is possible to notice that there is a richness in what is captured here, beyond the imaginations of a white audience in colonial New Zealand and beyond. The central point is the woman with her giant talo leaf. Though we don't know the woman's name, we can see she is relatively young. Draped around her neck is a long scarf with a dice-like print on it. These aren't clothes typical of Niue culture. We might wonder where she got them. They certainly don't reflect the gowns worn by Niue women during the visit of Premier Seddon in 1900. This woman (or girl) shows a significant amount of skin. And yet, the scarf doesn't seem like something that all Niue people were wearing, so how she came to wear it hints at even more stories. Though the image is a little grainy, she looks to have a necklace with shells in flower shapes. Her clothes underneath seem to be made from imported material, it drapes with a little rise in the middle, perhaps it is tucked this way, or maybe it is a wrap-around. The shoulder of the dress seems to also drape with a large hole where the arm is exposed. Although there are lots of questions that could centre on who the woman is, what kind of dwelling is behind her, whether she wanted to be photographed, why she is seemingly the only one being photographed and where the rest of her family is, I want to focus some attention on what she is holding.

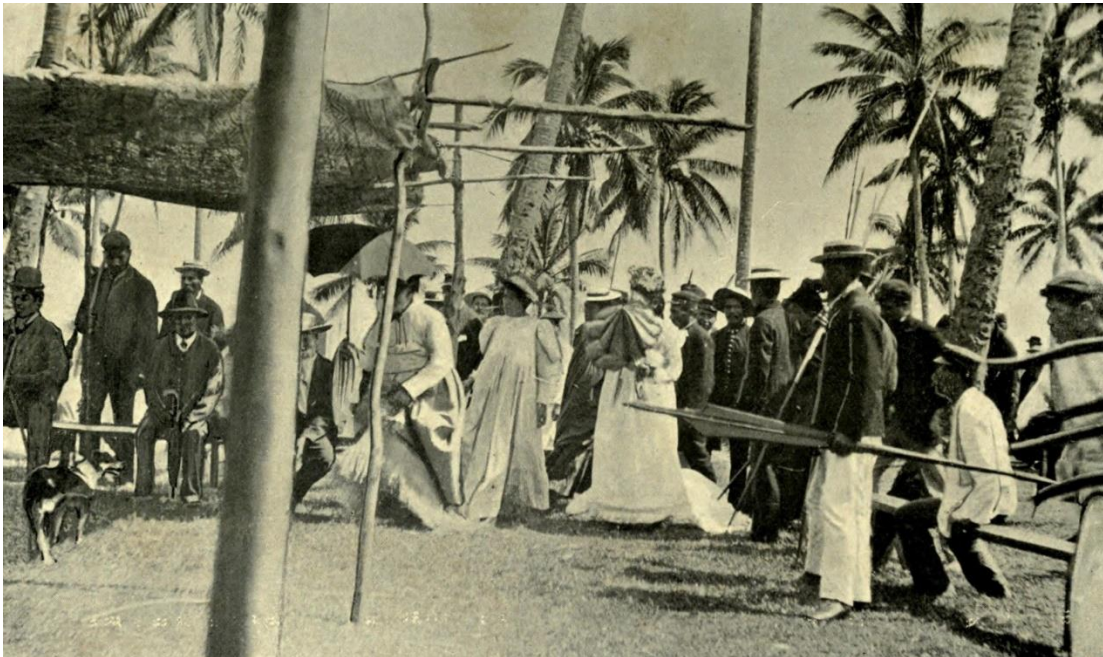
Colonial descriptions often gesture to agriculture as a male domain, yet this woman holds the talo leaf, a talo leaf almost as tall as her house. Perhaps this speaks to how Niue women were an integral part of plantations in Niue, completing a lot of the clearing of land through the slash and burn techniques that enabled men to then go through and plant new talo or other crops. The house in the background is also interesting. It is a style of house that is no longer seen in Niue. It has a raised floor of larger rocks and woven coconut fronds that make up the walls, door and also the thatched roofing. One of the people I interviewed during my field research had built a small version of this, as far as I know, it's the only type of building like this now on

the island, but it has a thatched roof and woven walls. What's important about this in a contemporary context? Why does this matter in relation to climate change? Images like this point to our past ways of living and being. They remind us of the resilience of our communities to use the environment they had to provide the literal roof over their heads as well as the walls, the door, and likely the flooring and bedding as well. This isn't to say that we need to return to this and stop building houses out of imported materials. Instead, it pushes us to consider these relationships we had with the environment, the knowledge that we had, and some still have in making use of the environment, being self-sustaining and resourceful. It is possible to think more broadly about what that can mean we can interpret the resources our Niue women have today and how they are using them with a different appreciation and perhaps from different vantage points. Niue women using their skills and knowledge in myriad ways that aren't gender-defined then becomes something that isn't outside the norm but culturally underpinned.

Though it's not obvious at first sight, the woman is holding the child in place while she is posing for the photo. Perhaps this was intentional or perhaps the photo was meant to capture the woman with the child. It certainly reminds us that some things can be invisible but in plain sight. This photo is a reminder of the relationships between women and children. Though we can't know for sure that the woman is the mother of the child, it seems likely that there is a familial connection, she might be an older sister perhaps. That this young Niue woman would be carrying a child is not surprising. Women have and continue to have specific roles in nurturing and raising children. It is important to recognise and celebrate these roles not as gender-defining but as part of the complex roles that different women fulfil. Though patriarchal reasoning has influenced the Niue psyche, we can recognise the complexity of various roles Niue women fulfil. The photo is a reminder that women have specific connections to flora or plants and the various uses and properties of these plants. The house in the background, for example, was likely to have been made by both men and women. But there are further relationships to flora that were the domain of women.

My Grandmother was one of these women with specific medicinal and other cultural knowledge about the uses of different plants. She was also a midwife of sorts and my Dad remembers her being called out whenever anyone was having a baby. From this photo we know that Niue women were engaged in and affected by trade, they were and are connected with broader worlds than their own. While we can assume women fill lower positions in society, responsible for keeping house and children, this isn't the only story.

### Ata 3: Gathering during the visit of Basil Thomson



**Figure 5: Gathering during the visit of Basil Thomson** From [Adapted from] *Savage island: An account of a sojourn in Niue and Tonga* (p. 118a), by B.C. Thomson, 1902, London, England: John Murray.

One of the key reasons we know Niue women were involved in trade is the making of hiapo and the location of many hiapo being housed in international museums. In the 1900s Premier Seddon did a quick visit around a few of New Zealand's growing empire. Niue was one of the stops and as expected it was a spectacle. In this image, we see preparations in motion as people seem to be moving to a set up (or being set up) area outside. No buildings are visible, but the amassed people are in quite formal looking dress. Most of the men wear full suits, trousers and

blazers, and hats or caps. While the women in the photograph are wearing full-length gowns either white or very pale in colour. One of the men, about to take a seat, has what looks like a woven garment, similar to a Tongan style of dress. It's possible from this particular dress to identify this person as King Togia, the last patuiki of Niue. To think of the heat in Niue at this time and the observed decorum of dress code is a lot to take in. At least two of the women have umbrellas which perhaps brings some respite from the heat of the sun, although humidity is likely to be another thing entirely. While this certainly shows part of the extent that Christianity has taken hold on the island, it also speaks to new hierarchies that are being established for those who wear certain garments compared to others who don't. There is a man to the right of the photograph who is carrying a katoua *war club* that is much longer than more contemporary renditions. In his other hand, he has some long spears. Perhaps these are gifts, or perhaps there has or will be a performance. There is a photo around the same time that has a Niue man holding a spear, dressed in what looks like strips of hiapo cloth (not printed) including a turban-like headpiece.

While initial focus can be arrested by the gathering people, and perhaps even noticing the dog in the left-hand corner, the invisible in plain sight is in play. The structure of wooden polls holds aloft a sun-shade made of delicate material. I believe this to be a painted hiapo, with lines visible from the design. This raises many questions. What is it doing there? Who made it? Is it a Niue hiapo? And if Niue hiapo was something essentially lost by the 1900s then how has this one survived and why is it being used for such an occasion? This final question perhaps seems straightforward, if hiapo was used decoratively in the recent past, then it makes sense to use a piece for the pomp and ceremony of hosting the New Zealand dignitaries. Practically, hiapo being used makes sense as well, it is light, flexible and flat meaning it can be spread out and used for lots of different things, including a sun-shade. Yet, it seems colonialist to imagine that the hiapo isn't there deliberately, to think that someone or some people have thought carefully about using that particular piece of

hiapo on this particular day. But before we get too far with this line of inquiry I turn back to the earlier question of whether this is Niue hiapo?

Some immediate aspects point to this being hiapo; the creases and folds hint at a sheet-like material, it would be difficult for something finely woven to have the same look. The photograph, though greyscale, picks up lightness in the material, where sunlight is showing patches in the material, which is consistent with hiapo. There is also the printed lines that are visible that decorate the piece. Undoubtedly, whatever the material may be, it is a large piece. Though this is seen in Niue, it doesn't necessarily mean it is from Niue. Is it possible this piece of bark cloth came from somewhere else? With the excitement of the Premier coming to Niue, is it possible Niue was lent a sheet of bark-cloth for the occasion? If so how did it come to be in Niue? It would perhaps be offensive though, to bring an item from another Pacific nation and give it pride of place in another nation, as perhaps former Prime Minister Bill English should well know when his government group took their own food to Niue (Trevett, 2017). I showed this image to Moira Enetama, the Director of Tāoga Niue who immediately recognised it as hiapo.

Seeing hiapo in this photograph pushes us to think of its origin and place in Niue culture. The appearance of hiapo in very old Niue chants, prayers or stories, which suggest that hiapo or the knowledge of hiapo is likely to be something that travelled with our people when they migrated to Niue.

A hiapo framework draws together these aspects of Niue women's experiences, knowledge and relationships that shape identity and perspectives. In the Pacific certain voices are heard more than others; we can't assume that what is happening for the Marshall Islands or Kiribati is the same for Niue, nor can we expect that the experience of one Niue woman will be the same to any other Niue woman, just like the hiapo, there is a uniqueness that marks us all. To have conversations about climate change with Niue women, it has to be recognised that Niue women aren't all the same. There is a reason that when I asked women to talk about climate

change, people would speak about their journeys away from Niue, their return, how they were educated, what their kids were up to, their families, their gardens or their crops, their life stories; all things that made up who they were and therefore how they navigated life. Climate change isn't only a set of risk factors but an impact on life and what that means and looks like isn't straightforward or simple.

If we only pay attention to the times when people mention climate change, considering it is rhetoric largely western-based and masculine we miss out or make less visible the lived experiences of our people. While climate change might not always be the first thing they are speaking about, we need to recognise that to have the climate change conversation we first need to know about our identity and culture, how people live impacts how and what they experience. The things that make people proud to be who they are and where they are. The imposition of climate change as something to be feared, something to be vulnerable to, can undermine the strength of communities that already face the damaging realities and their ability to determine their own responses to climate change impacts.

#### Ata 4: Niue women bowling coconuts



*Figure 6: Niue women bowling coconuts* Personal Image

This is a photograph that I took during my time in Niue. It was during the National Show Day in 2017. Something to acknowledge here is that there is a Niue woman behind the camera as well as the Niue women being photographed. While this may not seem ground-breaking, Niue women take photographs of themselves and other Niue women all the time, Facebook is evidence to many of these. However, in an academic space, there aren't many Niue women, or Niue people of any other gender, using Niue images to connect with the vibrancy of our culture and our people. I'm not the first Niue PhD, but the work in this thesis marks a certain type of first in relation to the use of a Niue methodology that foregrounds a Niue-specific context for research that is with tagata Niue.

The women in this photograph are preparing for the underarm coconut bowling. It's an activity only for women and girls of any age – truly any age and we can see this variation in the photograph – participate in. The event isn't part of an old tradition, but it developed in response to activities being for males like the tika *dart*

throwing. In the photograph, there is also a woman with a yellow print on a black shirt that is similar to the concentric circle patterns found on some hiapo. We can also notice that in contrast to the earlier photos there aren't too many skirts or dresses here. Our women are wearing pants now too. There are connotations to this that speak to different movements of women's independence and rights. The lady in the middle is wearing pants and a dress. Now we can think about that in many ways – women following the trends and movements of western or European influenced fashions. But perhaps it's also a reflection of women exercising agency and power in being able to move in spaces that are typically (in a colonial and/or Christian sense) held by men.

The name Niue comes from the coconut – niu. Some say Niue means “This coconut” others think it is “Behold this coconut”. In this photograph, it is a reminder of our women holding something vital to the survival, success and sustainability of our people. Because on the one hand, we can see that it is Niue women who hold the coconuts here. But what questions might we ask if we recognised the power and knowledge of our tau fifine *women*? What and where might we look if our question were about how women show leadership in Niue culture or how they lead in climate change action? How could this shape our questions not just of how women can communicate their experiences of climate change but how they have and continue to adapt and lead change in our communities and in response to climate change and the many other stories that are encompassed in a Niue lifeworld?

Paying attention to the stories in these different but connected photographs speak to the identity and culture of Niue people and the specificity of personal experience. The ability to adapt to many different changes that have punctuated our pasts and influence the people we are now. These ancestral and other relationships are important because we know that climate change requires broader engagement and action globally; how can we engage? How can we share knowledge if not through the connections we once had, resisting colonial stories that deliberately isolate and

minimise us, it is through these connections and re-connections and allowing them to inform the new relationships we have formed that may guide us to better decision-making in response to climate change. As Indigenous people of the Pacific we know that we have the capacity and capability to lead change, it's embedded in our ancestry, in our genealogies of connection through time and to each other, it's in our cultural practices and all the forms of knowledge that we have and continue to engage with. Perhaps most importantly then, it is our community connections at all levels that shape and empower the ways we progress and adapt together. The next section focuses on community stories at a local level.

### **2.3 Tau Tala he tau Tagata Niue** *Community Stories*

Hiapo is known as the domain of woman, but in making dyes we can think carefully about the gender impositions placed within our culture by narrow colonial and Christian views and how Niue culture tends to skirt these boundaries in favour of complementarity. While the focus here is on women's perspectives, several men were recommended to me by women who collaborated in this research. In this section, narratives developed with Niue groups of Niue women and the shared story developed from talanoa with individual men, offer insight that helps shape the context and connections that emerge from Niue women's narratives on climate change in a Niue-specific context.

#### **Stories from groups of women**

A lot can be said in a small amount of time when Niue women get together. During my talanoa sessions, conversations moved fast and women in both groups broke into vagahau often. Niue women talking about experiences and telling stories is an education in Niue culture. The first group (G1) had eight women, the second group (G2) had four. As always there is food on the table, though for G2, the women were having morning tea, so we ended up with an interesting spread of things they had and things I had brought. In G1, I had taken biscuits brought from the local

supermarket and I was glad that a few of the ones I had picked were favourites of some of the women there. Our conversations often turned to food, particularly how great Niue food was.

In G2, climate change was a part of the discussions. The women in this group talked about how every village should have a climate change adaptation plan because it was part of a project supported by outsiders some years back. Some of the women were part of the project at the time, some still try to carry things on today. The plans were to help them with climate change adaptation and perhaps mitigation. These plans included what people should do in an emergency and how to protect food and ensure they have access to water. While outsiders may contribute, it is the people of Niue, like the women around the table, who had to make sure things get done.

Climate change is about remembering things from the past. A woman in G2 talked about how they used to scrape their containers to get drips of water in the caves when drought hit the island. Sometimes the caves were locked up so people couldn't take too much. While the water was dirty some people also said it was medicinal. I remember the story by Basil Thomson (1902), an emissary from Britain, who thought the Niue freshwater given to him by an English missionary, who had lived in Niue for some time, was terrible. Many of the women in the group thought Thompson's writing about Niue was terrible. Women in G1 also talked about the caves but their use for weaving groups. Old people would go in groups to special weaving caves that were covered in woven mats. Some still exist today, but many of the women expressed a concern that younger generations might not carry this practice into the future.

In G1 there was a lot of concern for what would happen to the knowledge of our tau tupuna. Kids might listen to their grandparents and elders, but if they heard other people saying something different to what they heard from their grandparents then they would stop listening or start to talk back as if they knew everything. I got the feeling also that there were many things that elders saw as incredibly important

for Niue people and culture but didn't feel like younger generations were taking care or noticing the tāoga they had or shared. A woman in G1 talked about how culture was changing quickly, new ideas were being mixed in by younger generations and while some things were good, other things made her feel uncertain of what would happen in the future.

In both groups, there was talk of old stories, old people, old words and old things. Age was an important factor in these discussions because the women were all older than me so the frames they used were often connected with imparting knowledge with wisdom from more life experiences. For me, while following the conversations wasn't always easy, I was acutely aware of being gifted tāoga. It felt almost heightened because in these women I often felt a connection to my own Niue grandmother who I never got to meet.

Many women reflected on their past to compare how things had changed today. A woman in G1 talked about how growing up she would have to walk to her family's plantations, like many other people at the time. But now, every household has a car, a truck and a bicycle. For the number of tagata Niue in Niue, there doesn't seem to be a shortage of vehicles, which can be seen as both positive and a negative. The women in both groups compared their experiences to those of their grandparents. Some women were mindful of the stories that their elders had told them. In some ways, it created nostalgia for times now past, but there was also a sense of hope that some of the old ways will be brought back. Hiapo is one example of where this is happening, and from the conversations in G1, many of the women hope more crafts will keep being passed from generation to generation. One woman from that group talked about how she loved traditional weaving, keeping up with what our foremothers would do in the same ways they would do it. But she also noticed that today people do more of what they think is right. This was a powerful statement about how Niue knowledge isn't forced. Elders will share knowledge with those who want to learn, but if, younger generations, in particular, don't see the value

or don't show interest in some of the old ways; I would agree with many of the women in these groups, that the future of those things is uncertain.

The stories from these two groups of women push back on a lot of colonial misconceptions of our people. It wasn't so long ago that a New Zealand parliamentarian considered that tagata Niue shouldn't be taught English because they wouldn't need it in their lives, basic proficiency would be more than enough. Embedded in these women's stories is the complexity of successfully walking in more than one world even when there were clear barriers. These women aren't passive, they are critical of what has been written and remind me of the many ways Niue people have found ways to make their points known, such as in the *Tohi Tala*. Colonialism offers many reasons for anger, and some of these women were angry, but most women used a sense of Niue humour to combat destructive colonial oppressions. For many women, it was more important and practical to find ways to adapt. Colonialism may create barriers and problems, but Niue people are natural problem-solvers and experimenters. Niue women often seem to take colonial, and especially patriarchal impositions, as suggestions rather than requirements. Some women laugh off the perverted Pālagi teachers who got young girls (11, 12 and 13 years old) to dance bare-breasted with flowers in their hair whenever visitors came to the island. Many women laughed off how many times they were hit for getting caught speaking vagahau in the classroom. So, while some things are confusing and people have a lot of questions about how they came to be, humour provides one way of not being consumed by the many depressing aspects of colonialism in Niue and for Niue people. Shifting perspectives of colonialism from consuming and dominating to something that can be tackled, talked about, perhaps even laughed at, is not about dismissing or conveniently forgetting that colonialism encompasses significant negative space, but about being open to more complex responses that ultimately mean Niue people have the power to decide.

While neither of the conversations had a significant focus on religion, there was a strong point made in G2 that thinking about or engaging in climate change projects does not mean that our people have lost their faith. These women could see that things are happening around the world that is beyond their control. But they also are clear that Niue people don't all think the same way and it's very difficult to force a Niue person to do something they don't want to do. Some people feel that their faith in the Christian God means that they will be safe from harm. No one says anything explicitly but I got the sense particularly in G2 that most of these women believe it's better to let people believe what they want. It's an interesting reflection of the power of Christianity in Niue. While the island was largely converted in the 1850s-60s, there seem to have always been people willing to push the boundaries of Christian rules. There are Niue people I've met who are certainly passionate about the Christian religion and particular about how it should be practised, but it never seems to carry. My experiences have been largely of people who like general Christian values of being good people, but very rarely do they adhere to strict codes of conduct or impose this on others. It's useful to remember that many Niue people emphatically rejected the first missionaries who attempted to land on the island. Still, churches continue to occupy central community spaces and as such remains a strong part of Niue cultural identity. I would argue that Christianity in Niue does not have the same level of sway as it does in places like Tonga or Samoa, and certainly not the same level of power it had in the late 1800s.

In G1, there was a brief mention of womanhood and how it connected to the church. When a woman turned 18 and finished school, she was allowed to wear a hat to church. Men had a similar expectation about wearing trousers, but the symbolic value of being able to wear a hat was interesting to me personally because it's not as well-observed in my home community in the Waikato.

The women in G2 could talk climate change. By this, I mean that they could speak the language commonly associated with mainstream climate change as well as climate science. They were confident in talking about El Nino and La Nina and the difference between a cyclone and a tropical disturbance in ways that I don't think many people in our communities in Aotearoa would. They might not be very deeply immersed into climate change science (though I wouldn't be surprised if quite a few of them could), but their use of terminology speaks to different sources of knowledge and the penetration of particular types of language around climate change. Niue women aren't uneducated or illiterate, and these women, in particular, could talk for days about climate change data and science; they went to workshops, they saw things on the internet, and they interpreted them within the spheres of Niue culture and experiences that they lived in. While some of the women kept an eye on weather reports and current data they seemed to place equal (if not more) importance on being able to read signals from the environment, things that they picked up or learnt from their elders. In G2, several women mentioned how you can look to trees to observe what changes will be coming; abundance is often a harbinger of bad weather to come. It's clear that these women understand and value being connected with the environment. They also see an ability to connect with the environment by working the land as inherently *aga faka Niue*, the Niue way. Working the land doesn't just provide food for your family, it is an education that teaches people how to notice changes in the environment. In some ways, people are becoming more distanced from the environment even in Niue. People's jobs and technology that demands constant attention, as well as increasingly consumerist lifestyles, are all impacting their ability to read the signs and to know how to act and to survive when disasters hit. The women in these groups noticed those changes and some were wary.

### **Stories from men**

Five men contributed to this research which I have coded as M1, M2, M3, M4 and M5. Each *talanoa* happened separately but was borne out of connections from

personal relationships. M2 worked in the same place as me while I was in Niue, and he introduced me to M1, his grandfather, who I met in their village, Hakupu. I had this talanoa with M1 on the village green on a concrete wall and later we moved to one of his family's houses. M2 also introduced me to another man (M3) from Hakupu who I had talanoa with at the back of his house on the veranda. M4 was introduced to me by a woman who collaborated on the research and I had conversations with him outside his house around in his garden. I met M5 while retracing bush tracks that my Dad walked as a kid to go to his plantations. M5 invited my partner and me back to his home and was incredibly generous in sharing his knowledge and showcasing some of his work. It is with gratitude and respect that I share the stories from these men and draw from their insights and perspectives of Niue culture, identity, and more. I specifically use the stories of M1 and M2 in this section, which touch on key points from the other narratives, but also in that these two men were grandfather and son, an important relationship that reflects the importance of generational knowledge in Niue culture. While the stories and knowledge shared by M3, M4 and M5 aren't presented individually, I include key parts from their perspectives in the insights sections after each story.

**Ko e tala he matua tupuna taane *A grandfather's story (M1)***

*We meet in your village. We talk on the village green, awaiting the Olympic Torch to pass through. A crowd of people gathers a little way off. Our meeting is set up by someone in your family. They recommend you to me and take some papers outlining my research to you before we meet. You begin by telling me that the problem in Niue is very simple, it's economic development. You draw on the stories and legends about Niue and how they teach us about how people used to live. You think they got it right. Our ancestors were more connected, their philosophy was one of togetherness, living in harmony with each other and loving one another.*

*You say that living in harmony is materialistic but loving one another is spiritual. You think the systems we have now taught us to be self-serving and self-absorbed; “each man for himself” you say. And it’s because of the way all our tasks have become based on economic activities. The way we fish, the way we do agriculture; plus, many more of the things we do.*

*You’re one of the first people I’ve met here who expresses doubts about tourism. You talk about how tourism creates a kind of insatiable need to exploit the land, “...the industry needs people and needs to exploit the land, you need to import people to service the industry, you need to get more fish, you need to get more of this and that and the other”. People are very materialistic now, chasing objects and material things and living in relative harmony. But you see that there is a disintegration of the old ways of living.*

*More people are required from outside the island, Filipino, Asian, Tongan and Fijian people are all coming to fill the gaps in these new systems. You think we’ll lose our culture, lose our identity of who we are which is when people no longer stick together.*

*We talk about your life. How you lived in a village because of the church but before that our people lived as magafaoa, families, in kaina, you didn’t live in villages – villages are new. You explain that there were two sides to the island Tafiti and Motu. You live in the part known as Tafiti Uta.*

*You see so many new things in village life. The addition of toilets, schools and general cleanliness came out of the work of the missionaries. Water tanks are fairly new too. You remember when women used to line up at the water tank and fight for the water. You think about how we got water before tanks “we [got] it in caves... we collect this brackish water from caves. Then the missionaries came and people [got] water tanks. Each family [has] to have water tanks”.*

*You talk about how after the war New Zealand began thinking that our people needed more education: “the wind was blowing for change and education”. A new policy came*

*out and you were one of the first to be sent to secondary school in New Zealand. You ended up in a prep school in Whanganui. You didn't pass your school certificate in two attempts so the school said you couldn't go to training college. But it was an Anglican school so they transferred you up North. You like "up North with the Māoris". You got a Maori girlfriend and that helped. You finished secondary school and then went to Ardmore teachers college.*

*We head over to watch the Olympic torch come through the village. I take photos of you and your family which I give to your son later. We talk over many different things in between. We talk briefly about Larsen. You weren't in the country when he died. I wonder about whether it came from Niue people to ban alcohol (for Niue people). You mention that drinking was introduced to Niue from the Cook Islands. I didn't get a chance to ask why.*

*Then our conversation turns to gender. You start by saying that "well, there's no doubt in my mind that the men were in complete control". But you say it's one way of looking at it. In your mind, you also feel that the people doing a lot of work in the families are the women. You ask me if I know about the "legend of Mataginifale". I say a few parts of the story. You think the most important element of the story is in how she taught the Tongan women how to have babies. I find out later that people in my village say that Mataginifale was from Mutalau.*

*You move to talk about another story of the coconut. How two brothers go to another country that you think has definite indications of voyaging to Tonga. You think our relationship with Tonga is very strong. You mention some of your children and ask whether I know them. I do know of one who lives in Hamilton and we talk about him for a little while. You steer back to the point about Tonga.*

*You point to the bell in the village. You ring that bell every morning so people who pray can remember God and say prayers if they want. You ask me if I know where the bell is from. I don't. It's from Hamburg in Germany. Our people who lived in Tonga brought*

*it over: “because the early place we travelled to and lived was not New Zealand, it was Tonga and then the second place that we used to go in the Pacific was Samoa, but mainly because of the gospel”. You mention that people went to the Malo Theological College. But there was more contact with Tonga first. You like Tonga because you have a lot of friends there and in the Cook Islands too, and after a bit, you say across the whole Pacific because you worked in government and had opportunities to move around more. You talk about photos that you’d like to show me but most of them are in New Zealand.*

*I challenge you a little about your view of men having more control in the old times. You agree with my thoughts, you mention how your thinking is “coloured because of the many things that I’ve read about other countries and how women are being treated and I tend to paint them the same as those countries”.*

*We talk about how in battle women would often collect stones and back up their men, encouraging them to fight bravely and well. As we talk about this you mention that you need to “re-look at my thinking” about women. You often see the mistreatment of women and follow the media portrayals and all the current projects that say Pacific men aren’t treating their women properly. And while this does happen – it’s important to remember that women play an important part in the community, those ideas of community and togetherness and loving one another are important. You tell me I should keep looking to those legends and stories. Talking about women in this way is changing your perspective, you now think of how your granddaughter made an important speech at a festival.*

*We move inside your house and you serve me a drink of Raro as well as a coconut. We begin to talk about identity. You say that when building a nation, it’s very important for people to know who they are. You think my thesis might help with this because you see that many Niue people don’t know who they are. Thinking about our ancestors positively, that we are good people and that these things survive in the stories we tell.*

*“You [have] got to learn who you are and be proud of your people because that’s the guts of what life is all about”.*

*We talk about climate change. You say that in your view we’re doing nothing about it. We should have followed the man from Kiribati, former President Anote Tong. But you think for many Niue people, “they don’t give two hoots about it, it doesn’t concern us”. You think the reason is because of people’s beliefs. You think that many of our people follow what they think is God’s will and the people coming into Niue to talk about climate change are scientists who you think tend to have very different beliefs: “scientists, as you know, have different theories, different ideas, different thinking”. I wonder if we ever see ourselves as scientists.*

*You talk about agriculture and the way we bulldoze the land, cut down trees, burn the land, use weed killers. We are getting quicker at destroying the land to plant new crops. But in our haste, we are changing the very landscapes that make up our identity.*

*You give the example of the fa trees, when they are in season the whole country smells beautiful and the fruit bats come to feed on the trees. But as the trees are bulldozed, the bats no longer have a place to come and nourish themselves, so they are becoming a rarity. You see this and more besides as part of the drive for economic development that is coming with a much larger cost than we realise: “more money, more land to be destroyed. That’s my view about climate change”.*

*In the environment around us, you notice the changes in the things we are doing to the land. The birds and butterflies are disappearing, just like the fruit bat. People don’t care about breadfruit trees and people drink Coca-Cola now instead of coconuts.*

*You don’t know much about the sea, living in a village further inland, but you know that people fishing today aren’t using the old ways to get fish in and keeping fish together.*

*You ask me to educate you a little more about what's happening around the world with climate change, the kind of symptoms or issues people are facing. I talk about the document my supervisor had sent on a report about Niue with much focus on changes in cyclones, more hot days, heavy rainfall, and ocean acidification. We think about what this might mean for your village and for Niue. You think there is a danger in what the scientists know against what we don't know. You think that is a real issue for climate change because Niue people often think "who cares" because they don't know. You wonder how we can make people care when they don't know something. I guess we need to think about why they wouldn't want to know, what is drawing the interest or focus.*

*You are reminded of a man who got funding from "the climate change people" to plant talo in Australia because they are looking at the impacts on talo. You think they are doing this because some of our islands are going to disappear.*

*You think the Niue government's approaches to the environment are leading us the wrong way. You also think that people have too many things to think about, their minds are filled up with tablets, phones and computers, playing games and lots of other little things. They aren't going out to the bush, they don't depend on it anymore.*

*I ask who you think could be responsible to make people care or how people might feel motivated to act. You talk about approaching from our culture, getting people to reconnect with who they are and where they come from. Inspiring those kinds of feeling where people are prepared to die for their country. But you note that Niue people don't need to be serious about climate change because they have somewhere to go. They can go to New Zealand or elsewhere. But if your granddaughter can give speeches with feeling, then there is still hope.*

## **M1 insights**

It was a different experience to be in someone's home village for our story and particularly to move through so many different spaces seamlessly. At the start, we sat on a wall that was at the edge of the village green and opposite the main village church. This man's home was a little further back but his family had homes all around the area. As the Olympic baton came around the village, we moved toward the procession and I took a few photos of this man and his family as they handled the baton. We then went inside one of his family homes where he showed me some of his old photographs of the places he had been, the people he had met and also of his family. The experience wasn't common, not because of the special event of having the Olympic baton pass through the village, but in terms of a travelling dialogue. Our conversation was open to the elements, connections were made to the very trees this man had brought to the village and planted however many years ago. There were memories evoked from how things were and how things had changed. While it is complex and perhaps impossible to capture this, particularly in written form, it allowed for a particular richness that moved beyond our conversation. There was a generosity in this connection that I'm unlikely to be able to ever repay, but the relationship is important and has significance for me.

Our story was a reminder of the larger context of how both through and beyond this research, I'm grappling with my own identity and connection to Niue culture. And how this is also reflected in the types of topics I cover with each person that I meet. This man has been in the political arena most of his life. He maintains a clear connection to the importance of culture but perhaps not in the sense of what Niue has now, but of values that we had in the past as well. There are values he talks about like living in harmony, valuing togetherness and loving one another that he identifies as central to Niue wellbeing.

M1 points to living in harmony as being materialistic. Perhaps pushing at ideas of equality in a material sense. It's interesting to think about materialism in a

harmonising sense when from a Western colonial capitalist perspective being materialistic is often synonymous with individuality. The definition of 'materialistic' relates to excessive concern with money and material possessions. Perhaps this man meant something different, perhaps he is gesturing to the need for certain levels of material possession for people to feel like they have enough opportunity compared to their neighbour. His following point that the systems Niue has now are focused on being self-absorbed and self-serving. It's the economic model that is aped from New Zealand that pushes our people to be more interested in what they can gain individually rather than what others or the community as a collective might gain. While there is variance in wealth in Niue which is significant, the gap between rich and poor in an economic sense is markedly different from New Zealand and Australia. And yet, later in the story, he connects how these systems create a type of relative harmony. It's perhaps only a façade. It's a reminder of the Christian and colonial legacies that still maintain power in Niue. While Christianity is often credited by many as bringing peace to our people and "showing us the light", it also makes claims to pacifying warring tribes. Christianity's chill has crept, stolen and overcome so many aspects of Niue culture but this doesn't mean it is above being critiqued, or for how it has been introduced and organised to be questioned. Nor does it mean that Christianity succeeding in destroying Niue culture, which is much more complex, resilient and adaptable than I suspect many of the early missionaries were capable of understanding. In being open to questions and critique, the different forms of the Christian religion in Niue provide additional archives that Niue people can explore and it is perhaps even more critical to do so now as the number of elders, who remember the stories of our ancestors, is in decline both in Niue and in New Zealand.

Niue labour and land were put to work as the New Zealand population and appetite for tropical resources grew, particularly through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. To the point that it became a criminal offence for the men of families who did not supply the demanded crops for the New Zealand market. The cycling through of different industries from copra to passionfruit and bananas seems to leave a vacuum of

resources that can't be transitioned as well as instability of jobs in very short amounts of time. There is a continual view politically that we should follow what New Zealand is doing, how we can most benefit and align with this relationship. And while current tensions grow between the figureheads in power in Niue at the moment who increasingly promote separation from reliance on New Zealand, the issues from colonial systems and ways of thinking are not changing. This man suggests that Niue seeking more and more people from outside the island to fulfil jobs required by these new systems is harming our culture. Interestingly none of the ethnicities mentioned is from New Zealand or Australia. But what is it that prompts this fear of outsiders living and working on the island in ways that would threaten our peoples' culture and identity? Perhaps the current population is one factor. The number of Niue people living on the island is estimated between 1200 and 2000. It seems like an easy number to be overcome or overrun by an influx of outsiders. And yet there are reasons why Niue has to seek people from outside of the island to keep current systems and modes of development running or progressing. Though "progress" in this case is open for further debate: progress for who or whom? With outsider funding, many island nations around the region and further afield are turning to greener options, for example, solar energy, much faster than their former and continuing colonial and imperial overlords. It is a strategic shift that has benefits for island nations like Niue, but of course, we aren't the only ones who benefit. It is interesting to think about the notions of "making islands more sustainable" without first addressing why they might be unsustainable in the first place.

It was hard not to be interested in someone who has seen so much and been a part of many changes in Niue's national landscape. M2 has strong family values but is conscious that the concepts we have of home and place today come from missionary ideas of society and that not so long ago, our people didn't live in villages. He explained how we had spaces where *magafaoa family* lived together, but not in the same way that we live now which is largely in villages. Thinking of villages and the entire church system in Niue as new, rather than an old, long-time tradition, push

back on Christian narratives that centre on the gospel as “bringing the light” to Niue. Among many tau tupuna, there is a strong narrative that focuses on the longevity of Christianity, of its hard-fought journey to Niue and its strength in remaining the main religion for Niue people. Churches around the island recently celebrated 170 years of Christianity on the island. And that sounds like a long time. But Niue ancestry takes us a lot further back, and while much of this time is referred to as being “in the dark” as opposed to the “light” of Christianity, M1 pushes us to remember that not only is the church new, but so are villages. This isn’t to say we need to break up villages and scatter people into the bush to reclaim deeper connections with our culture. However, to see the Niue story including and beyond the arrival of Christianity, opens up spaces for deeper questions about our history and how we might go about accessing our ancestral and cultural knowledge.

For me, Christianity has an interesting hold in Niue. Missionaries were initially held at bay from landing on the island in the 1800s. Their eventual landing in my home village of Mutalau began a significant shift in belief systems for the entire island. Paying attention to the timeframe of Christianity in Niue and seeing that as a relatively short amount of time opens up spaces where we can have more meaningful conversations about the whole of our Niue story, not just limited and partial views of pre- and post-Christianity. It pushes us to think about a greater wealth of stories and movements that shaped, and continue to shape, our people. Stories that are largely obscured by the invasiveness of Christianity and other colonial development but also stories that cannot be excavated from these roots. This isn’t about removing Christianity from the picture but instead seeing it and seeing through it in order to access knowledge woven by our ancestors. There are greater stories of our Niue people that fill in some of the gaps that a couple of hundred years of Christianity and colonialism couldn’t hope to erase, try as it might.

M1 talked about how after the World Wars, which Niue men served in, there was a push for tagata Niue to be educated in New Zealand. He talked about his own

time in New Zealand, going to school in Whanganui, getting a Māori girlfriend and going on to teachers' college. This flies in the face of stereotypes that suggest our people can't succeed in New Zealand education, it also rejects the idea that our people lack the motivation to succeed in New Zealand. His comment about living and studying in Northland where there were a lot more Māori is important. His connection to Northland, not just in a romantic sense, but in how he likes being "with the Māoris" made us both laugh. While dominant narratives of the Pacific make claims of our islands being isolated, the reality for a lot of Pacific people, men particularly, was that they were travelling to Aotearoa and other parts of the Pacific both before and during the 1800s. As more Niue people came to Aotearoa in the 1950s-90s the exponential growth of white people over the previous century would have created isolation not in the colonial sense that wipes out memory of connection, but in the sense of being surrounded by a dominant other to the region and the confining systems and rules that came with that white dominance.

M1 had quite a few thoughts on gender during our talanoa. He asked me if I knew about Mataginifale and then asked if I knew how the island was named. In some ways, it felt like a test which is common in Niue culture. My Dad inadvertently taught me about this because he does the same kind of thing, especially when we say me or my siblings have said that we know something, he would probe us with questions to see if we really knew about it. Our elders often (arguably always) test us and it is not always in the form of questions, sometimes it involves patiently waiting to see what we do in certain situations. The tests can be for a variety of reasons, sometimes to measure the respectfulness or manners of the person, to test their knowledge, and sometimes it's a setup to make a joke at the "know-it-all's" expense. It's about getting a sense for another person's mind. After I had said what I knew of Mataginifale and the naming of Niue, M1 emphasized his own key learning from those stories, in some ways, it was both a confirmation that I had enough knowledge not to be dismissed and that he was willing to impart new knowledge with me, not in competition but to complement what I knew or had learned. M1 talked about how Mataginifale taught

women from Tonga how to have babies naturally and about the brothers who brought the coconut to Niue from Tonga, he suspected. The connection of Niue to Tonga and his own links to the Māori in Aotearoa are important for disrupting the dominant conversations of the Niue relationship to New Zealand as a colonial state. Many stories connect us to New Zealand but not necessarily to tangata whenua. Tigilau Ness has long been a champion for Pacific people to see our connections to tangata whenua. Ness, a Polynesian Panther, has long stood in solidarity with our Māori brothers and sisters and the continuing struggle for self-determination and rights in their homeland (Dann, 2016). It's a different kind of connection to think about in the land, sea and mindscapes of Niue people's movement and identity. The topic of gender is one we come to debate a little. With M1 it felt like a safe space to challenge ideas, not in disrespectful ways, but ways of co-constructing new ideas. Sometimes fixating on one interpretation of a story or a practice can create barriers to exploring other perspectives. It's perhaps a benefit of my position and upbringing outside of Niue and largely outside of the Niue community until I was in my 20s, that I feel curious and able to ask questions about times that others more attune to elder and youth dynamics might find more challenging. There are important markers in the conversation about how people respond to change. The example of people preferring to drink coca-cola instead of coconuts comes can have quite a few complex implications. On some level, it links Niue's increasing dependence on imported goods at the cost of locally grown or harvested goods. With this comes flow-on effects that can connect with thinking about waste, money, enforced colonial dependence.

It is perhaps fitting to conclude M1's insights with his thoughts on love. Love was emphasised by M1 as a way of connecting spiritually and a way of re-establishing the relationships that contributed to the resilience of our ancestors. Love in this context is a marker for cultural identity, an ability to see beyond material culture and exist in relationships that are nourishing and beneficial to our people as a collective.

## **Ko e tala he mokopuna taane (M2)**

*Movement, specifically migration, as a result of climate change is being closely watched. People want to know where those who are displaced by climate change will go. Some are watching much more closely than others, readily enforcing borders and policies to keep colonial divides in place. But Niue people have always moved, our origin story is one of migration and your experience reminds me that movement is more complex than leaving or arriving.*

*The population of Niue largely exists outside of Niue. And for those who live on the island, movement and migration are woven into the fabric of everyday life. But your story doesn't fit the mould of the kids who grow up on the island and then fly off somewhere else for further study or training.*

*You grew up like the Māori kids, like whangai. You knew movement early on. It comes easily when you talk, but it feels like you covered a lot of distance as a child. Moving from place to place. I wonder when Niue really felt like home to you. You've had experiences of living both in New Zealand and in Niue. There's something important about talking with you about what it means to be a Niue person.*

*We talk about Christianity a lot. The way you didn't really think about it when you were growing and stopped going eventually. But one day while you were on lunch break some people came up to you and you decided it was a sign, time to return. Their version of Christianity was different. It wasn't preaching it was more about learning. Not the usual God-fearing sermons that can be common in Niue.*

*Being a Niue person to you is about religion and having a culture and identity that is unique. It's about speaking the language, not that those who can't speak the language can't know Niue culture, but just that if you can't speak the language then you miss out on things like the Niue way of talking, telling jokes, describing the beauty of food, things that don't really translate into English.*

*Being a Niue person is also about values, being humble and family-oriented. It's different from the Samoan hierarchy, we don't just give all our money to our parents but we help each other out, it's more loving. Burn on Samoans.*

*You see the guardians of Niue knowledge as people like your grandparents, your uncles – people brought up with certain values. Values like being able to plant talo, knowing the different types of talo, different fruit trees, knowing the names of fish, and being more hands-on. You didn't grow up with that, so you feel like you missed out on that knowledge in some ways.*

*We talk about what a normal day of work looks like for you. Most days you work, starting at 8 am and finishing at 4 pm. But Saturday is always bush day. You go there with your grandparents. You usually finish up by midday and then you go home to sleep. In the afternoon, you spend time with friends, have a few beers like Lion Red or Steinlager. Not Kalaga though, that's a cheap beer, probably like Waikato Draught where I come from. You think Kalaga is more for tourists.*

*You notice when people are doing things that they aren't supposed to, but there's not much you can do about it. Seems like it's just something people do.*

*You know about medicine that comes from tree-bark. It can help with things like the flu. There's also a tree-bark that is yuck. You say not to get that one because it makes you spew. You also know of a grass that you chew and the place on cuts.*

*Because you live further inland you often buy fish, cheaper ones like the hahave, the other fish are often quite expensive. You stay with your grandparents a lot and often you end up having a lot of soup-based meals. You mention corned-beef soup.*

*You notice that people are eating more imported foods these days. And often it is in the forms of takeaways, fried food. Even though there has always been a presence of takeaway food on the island, back when your grandparents were growing up, they*

*wouldn't eat it very often. I wonder if that is out of choice, or because of cost. Perhaps a bit of both.*

*You talk about how the government gave out subsidised gas stoves, so most people now cook with those. You mention how you sometimes will cook a curry or roast chicken with the gas stove. I wonder when curry became so common in Niue. You don't know, but you think it slowly came in during the 90s.*

*You grew up here when you were young but moved to New Zealand when you were about 7 or 8 years old. You don't remember it being as cold as it is during winter months. You don't remember people having to wear jumpers as they do now. You also notice that the tides have become higher, covering the lower coastal areas where you could get shellfish more easily.*

*Spending so much time in New Zealand, it's perhaps a bit easier for you to notice some of the difference. You mention pace and freedom. In New Zealand, you are only free to do what you want in your house and everything is so much further away. In Niue, you have the whole island to be free in.*

*Everything has a cost in New Zealand, but in Niue most things are free. Families are a lot closer in Niue – they spend more time together. In New Zealand families only see each other at church or when there is a special event like a wedding or a funeral.*

*You keep in touch with the family you have back in New Zealand using Facebook messenger, you are thankful to them for helping you through your education. Most of the people on Niue spend their early education on the island and then go out to tertiary education in New Zealand. You had most of your schooling in New Zealand and then moved back to Niue after that. You see that a lot of the students who go over to New Zealand don't end up coming back to Niue.*

*You have a clear idea that climate change is human-induced. You mention a specific chart that shows carbon emissions increasing since the time of the industrial*

*revolution. You've also seen some documentaries, like on National Geographic. You see that there are different people with different views about climate change, but from your perspective, it is happening now and island communities are being negatively affected. You also see that island communities aren't the ones causing the problem.*

*You don't think Niue can do anything and you also seem to think that it'll be useless for Niue to do anything if bigger countries don't do anything. You've heard people say that cyclones are a 10-year event for Niue and so you are waiting for the next one.*

## **M2 insights**

M2's begins with movement, migration and return migration. It's a familiar story for many Niue people but there is still specificity in how it plays out. While some elder generations were shipped off to far-flung parts of New Zealand for education, M2 moved to New Zealand to be raised by his uncles. He moved a lot and seems to have picked up some Te Reo, and possibly other connections to tangata whenua as he uses the expression of whangai to explain his upbringing. While this had no immediate impact on our talanoa, reflecting on why he would use a Māori word to explain his childhood experience to me as a Niue person who is learning the language is an interesting marker for Pacific connection. The majority of our conversation is in English, with occasional Niue words, but the Māori term sticks out to me. What does it mean if we think about our connections to tangata whenua? Aotearoa and Te Wai Pounamu are the places where most Niue people are found today. It raises questions about the kind of connections we could find here and why these might be important in the context of global climate change. If decolonisation is about making connections, where colonial borders or divides have been imposed, then thinking about the ways we are connected with different people in different places, can change our ways of seeing the world and how we see ourselves. Remembering these connections is then vital in how Indigenous people both connect and self-determine their own futures.

It is useful to think about why a male perspective is being used when the focus is on women's experiences and perspectives of climate change in Niue. While I focus this research on the voices of women it was difficult to justify and maintain this boundary while doing my fieldwork. M2 didn't come recommended yet held a specific position that meant he had more connections with traditional and cultural Niue knowledge. M2's story speaks to how we can interpret and engage with Niue culture and identity, things which are not decided by women alone. The point here is not necessarily to pit male and female perspectives against each other, or to restrict the conversations to a binary of gender, but to broaden the conversations with an understanding that gendered perspectives are intertwined in a Niue context. Developing a broader understanding of Niue culture and identity is a critical part of the unfolding discussions on climate change not least because it speaks to Niue ways of knowing and being. The conversation of culture and identity can't happen in isolation, including male perspectives through these stories means considering different questions and perspectives, different genealogical connections.

Both M1 and M2 had a particular focus on education. In a later conversation with M1, we talked about how the Niue resources I was using might be made more accessible in school education. While some families prefer to have their children educated outside of Niue, predominantly in New Zealand, for others Niue education is important, both in the classroom and outside of it. When this man reflects on his upbringing he felt a sense of loss for the education that New Zealand can never give a Niue person. New Zealand cannot teach a Niue person to know their homeland, to understand their place in the Niue environment. In my experience, there is gravity in what is learned in Niue compared to being told stories about Niue from afar. My Dad has talked to me about how he would walk to plantations and look after crops. It wasn't until I walked one of his old tracks that I got a sense of the magnitude of even just the walk to get to the plantations let alone the hard work of maintaining them. Memories and stories in this way inevitably distance themselves from events and

realities. Literally being where stories happened or are happening can be significant in how we learn.

I grew up with very little knowledge about Niue or vagahau and every time I visit the island the barriers of connection to people are quick to surface. But there are more aspects of Niue culture that can be lost if you don't speak the language. M2 talked about how jokes don't always translate into other languages very well. M2 stressed that language isn't everything, just that there are things that are missed, differences in experiences when someone can't speak the language. Yet many men and women told me that to learn the language I have to come and live in Niue.

M2's story is one of the few where religion was discussed in some depth. While this man was a Christian, Christianity wasn't always a strong part of his life. Living in New Zealand it wasn't until a Christian group approached him on his lunch break that he really gave it any thought. Again, while tagata Niue are considered to be a highly Christianised group, there is a difference in how people become involved with religion. For M2, it wasn't the god-fearing sermons common on the island, but an inclusive introspective version of Christianity lead by foreigners in New Zealand that spoke to this man. In terms of cultural identity, there were key aspects that this man felt were important. Religion was important as were being humble and helping others, values that he found unique to Niue people. Specifically, he mentioned that the Niue way is more loving compared to the Samoan way which he saw as more about giving money as a way of respecting your parents. Niue doesn't have the same social hierarchies that are common to our nearby neighbours in Samoa and Tonga.

The Niue patuiki system that existed up until the 1900s certainly seems to be in that vein, where iki or chiefs are elected for each village regardless of family. These elected iki then vote for a patuiki or deciding chief who, from the time of Punimata, were responsible for the toka motu (Etuata & Tanaki, 1982). The Tokamotu was a sacred item that the patuiki would have to keep warm, day and night, else a curse might come over the land. Etuata and Tanaki (1982) record that the Tokamotu "was

covered with tapa cloth and fastened the whole day with a dry banana skin... The Tokamotu is best known as a god who had the sole responsibility over the entire prosperity of the land” (p. 99). The Tokamotu was stolen from Tuapa, by a group from Hakupu who wished to use the Tokamotu’s powers to control the climate. To this day, the cave where it is said to be hidden remains sacred, people are discouraged from entering the cave with a few cases of people who are said to have died because they ventured into the cave.

M2 had been taken on a guided tour of the land where this cave is. He noticed that people still carry a kind of curiosity mixed with fear about places like that. Even now there are contradicting stories about which cave the toka motu is in. Whether by design or not, the essence of the story remains and influences how people think and act. It’s not the only example of our ancestral culture, pre-Christianity influencing the way we think. Again, it is a reminder that Christianity was and is complex in its role in our communities (Diaz & Kauanui, 2001; Underhill-Sem, 2002). Instead, there are aspects of our culture and identity embedded not only in the scriptures but preserved in the ways we have interpreted meaning from the Samoan missionaries versions of an English version of a Latin text about Jewish people. This man’s perspective of who holds Niue knowledge reflects that of the women stories. We look for cultural knowledge in our families, in our elders. More specifically this man sees that knowledge is connected with people who were brought up in certain ways, ways that perhaps make them more Niue people in some ways because they lived off the land. In these stories, there is a clear connection with the environment that embodies deeper knowledge about our culture. What does this mean for those Niue people abroad? In some ways, it’s the same as this man’s view on not knowing the language. While not knowing or not experiencing this style of living doesn’t mean you aren’t a Niue person, there is a certain Niue-ness that comes from having specific experiences that are tied to the land and sea of Niue.

Another aspect of this story that resonates with previous perspectives is a distancing from 'paid work' and working the land. He spends more time talking about what he does on his days at home compared to the work he gets paid to do. For him, it is important to work the plantations with his grandparents. In some ways it is almost like making up for the time he spent away from Niue, reintegrating with the land and gaining the education he missed. He mentions also that he spends time relaxing with friends and we stumble into a brief topic of the kind of beer he drinks. While this doesn't have a direct link to climate change, it is a reminder of the place of imports in Niue everyday life. Lion Red and Steinlager are both imported from New Zealand. I used the opportunity to ask about Kalaga which is promoted as a Niue beer but is also imported from New Zealand. This man view of Kalaga as a beer for tourists is interesting in the connection that he makes later that tourists who come to Niue very rarely experience Niue. That view of Niue experience being connected with working the land is something that tourists don't engage with when they come. Instead, they go to cafes, eat burgers and chips with most of those ingredients coming from overseas; then they stay at the resort or in relatively expensive accommodation. It's different from the ways this man's grandparents grew up, access to imported food was limited and expensive so living off the land continued to make more sense. But there is something important that is being lost in younger generations who increasingly rely on imported goods at the expense of learning how to survive off the land. It's something that is also encouraged through tourism which increases the perceived need for more convenience.

All of these points push at the notion of tourism development which is often touted as a critical way forward for island nations, as a way to make our nations more sustainable. But from this perspective, we can consider some of the costs that aren't often recognised when the money of tourism rolls in. While tourism offers benefits for local enterprise it also harms the environment, can induce increased spending on imported goods, affects water levels, and many other things besides. What is specifically pinpointed from the story is this idea of tourism obscuring what is

culturally important. It's about why Niue shouldn't be treated as just a holiday for wealthy outsiders; that something is missing or lost in experiences of Niue if only luxury and convenience are on display.

M2 mentions briefly how people continue to over-exploit resources which recurred in my conversations with M3, M4 and M5. M2 talked about the use of slash and burn techniques for clearing land or shooting peka *bats* and lupe *pigeons* outside of the seasons. Hunting peka and lupe is an old tradition in Niue but the advance of technologies has made it a lot easier to catch or shoot more in a smaller amount of time. Further changes in the environment including the clearing of a lot of land for plantations and new buildings that have impacted habitats. Further changing environmental conditions resulting from climate change have a further impact. There's a notion here that there are existing issues that are being exacerbated by climate change impacts. So, while over-exploitation of peka and lupe may not seem connected to climate change it is a reminder that over-exploitation has a consequence and that paying attention to the dynamics of our ecosystems can be vital for all living-beings not just a single species.

M2 had more specific views about climate change and said that he learnt about different aspects of climate change by watching documentaries and being involved in different projects that happened on the island. He had also travelled to different islands in the Pacific and learnt about the issues and actions other Pacific nations were taking. One particular project he was involved with was looking at and recording traditional or cultural perspectives of the environment and then thinking about how this might also be a connection with climate change in terms of how climate change is framed in different contexts. While the project was ongoing, one of the findings he shared was that Niue people sometimes had reservations about sharing knowledge. Some people felt that people would use the knowledge for their own gain such as disclosing hunting practices. But what could this mean for how knowledge is passed down through generations?

My experience talking with other Niue elders and my own experience with my Dad is that knowledge is usually shared with immediate family only. While it is possible to learn through observation, many people are not overt with sharing how they do things or what they remember about Niue culture or heritage. This links back to this man's initial view that Niue education happens on the island, not necessarily through being told, but through experiencing the land, working it with people who know or who have learnt how to do things like planting talo, fishing or using certain woods for different tasks. There's another aspect that comes from knowledge being passed down through generations and it's that sometimes certain knowledge is given to people who either earn it or ask for it. Knowing what questions to ask and when, however, is another thing entirely. It can be a similar case for what needs to be done in order to earn knowledge. In some ways, there is less onus put on knowledge being passed down because of this value or expectation of learning through observation or experimentation. It's something evident in hiapo as well. Each print is unique and the ways patterns develop speak to a kind of playful experimentation of what will work or fill a space. It's isn't about symmetrical perfection but instead about creating things from what you know.

This story pushes us to think about connections between people on the island and those who aren't. It is a connection that has been explored by the likes of Jennifer Anayo (2017) for Niue, and Lana Lopesi for the Pacific more broadly. Connection and communication are important aspects of Niue culture and identity and it is being shaped through social media. This story refers to using Facebook Messenger is keeping in touch with family in New Zealand. Anayo's (2017) research looked at how these messages and posts, particular through the platform of Facebook, are also a way for Niue people abroad to metaphorically 'come home' to their ancestral land. For some generations, it is also a way of understanding what being a Niue person means, what the island looks like and what family and others do in their everyday lives.

My experience of Facebook throughout this research has meant an increase in connection with Niue people I know I've never met, but who are interested in connecting with me because of who I am friends with now. With this new friend network, I also get to see more posts about Niue. I've seen a lot of posts about fishing, village show days, new stores or buildings opening, people celebrating events, people hunting, and significant numbers of posts about food in Niue. It's important to think about how these messages also play into the idea of showcasing a version of life in Niue but not necessarily a reality of the day-to-day experiences. If we think back to the point in this story about tourists not really experiencing Niue we might ask a similar question here about what we aren't seeing in social media, what becomes less visible when people access culture through a manicured form of communication?

An undercurrent in these sentiments about experience is what island-life really means and the differences in reality for people who live in Niue compared to those who only visit. There are these different layers in what people connect with from a tourism perspective, or through social media compared to lived realities. At different levels, there are different realities of the impacts of climate change. Culturally, there is something important in the experiences of working outdoors that are part of what it means to be a Niue person and this contributes to caring for what happens to the environment. Asking people to do more to protect their environment then becomes problematic because it implies that people aren't already, that there is little or no connection and the onus is placed on everyone to do 'something'. But what does 'something' look like? Toward the end of the story, there is a reference to how Niue has made little contribution to global warming and has relatively low carbon emissions, therefore it is outsiders who need to make the change. And the argument is strong when thinking about New Zealand's per capita contribution to emissions which places it in the top 10 emitters in the OECD. So, while this research gives us insight into the lived-experiences of Niue people in relation to climate change, it raises questions about how people beyond Niue are thinking about their contributions.

The stories of the written and visual narratives and community section develop a useful setting in which to approach and view individual women's stories about their experiences and perspectives of climate change. It is intentional that in building up to the Niue women's voices in the next chapter, the focus of this chapter has stayed close to the wealth of Niue knowledge that is expressed in these written, visual and oral forms and how we can use this understanding to glimpse what it means to be a Niue person, what it means to be a woman in Niue, and how answers to these questions foreground culturally respectful ways of engaging with Niue women's perceptions and lived experiences of climate change.



**Figure 7: Hiapo research (2017)** Photo courtesy: Cora-Allan Wickliffe

## VEVEHEAGA 3: TALAGA E TAU MATAFAKATINO FOOU

### DESIGNING AND PRINTING A HIAPO

Recognising a living status of hiapo gives rise to the sharing of specific Niue stories that are rooted in time but contribute to different worlds of understanding and experience. These narratives offer insight into particular Niue women's experiences. Women's voices tell women's stories. And while climate change has upset that balance in many ways, seeing nature as sacred has remained not just a view of life, but a way of life as well.

The stories are structured into three sections, 3.1. *Tau tala he tau tupuna fifine ha tautolu – Stories from our Elder Women; Tau tala he tau mamatua fifine ha tautolu – Stories from our mothers; and, Tau tala he tau tama fifine ha tautolu – Stories from our daughters.* This reflects a culturally embedded respect for our elders who have wisdom carried not only from our ancestors but have knowledge that comes from so many life experiences. In Niue culture, our tau tupuna fifine *elder women*, are respected and honoured and always given the first opportunity to speak when we gather together. Tau matua fifine *mothers* have a significant role in nurturing and guiding our children. They are one of our first teachers and we look to our mothers to follow their lead, to grow and to learn. The final section is tau tama fifine *daughters*, to include the younger generation of women who are learning the ways of our culture from our ancestors but who influence how our culture will continue into the future.

Each story is followed by a reflective section of insights both from the story and from the wider talanoa I had with each person. For simplicity, each story has been coded (T1, T2, T3... etc.).

### **3.1 Tau tala he tau tupuna fifine ha tautolu** *Stories from our Elder Women*

#### **Tala ke Tahaaki (T1)**

*We start with your connections to Niue. You left on the Maui Pomare when you were young. You were sent off to school in New Zealand. Your father gave you a Niue bible before you left. The Tohi Tapu was something you clung to, he didn't want you to ever forget your language; he didn't want you to forget your heritage. It was something your grandmother hammered into you too, to never forget where you came from. And you didn't.*

*You think some people are forgetting though. Back then people were attracted to the "bright lights and everything else", they didn't have the urge to return. You had boarding school in Palmerston North and went to an all-girls school in the South Island. There was only your grandmother who you could speak vagahau with while you lived there. You missed the warmth of home, you missed how everyone talks to each other, the friendship. You didn't return to Niue until you were 16.*

*You got to come home every three years, but it was different for your siblings, they got to stay home. You laugh and say that you were the only one who got deported, but I get the sense it was something you struggled with at the time. Your siblings would be 'deported' too eventually though, they had to go to high school in New Zealand. Your parents hoped you would all get a better education. Even though you had more time in New Zealand, Niue was still home.*

*You have four daughters, two of your own and two you were given to help out other families. It makes you laugh to have had fair-skinned daughters, people confuse them for Pālagis and get shocked when they suddenly start speaking vagahau. It is a reminder of how people spoke to you in English when you first came back to Niue because they didn't think you would remember.*

*You ended up working for your Dad for a long time, but he never wanted you to work in his office. You think it was because he didn't want to show nepotism. But at the time he didn't have the power to hire or fire you, it was the Pālagis who selected people and you were one of the only people with experience as a short-hand typist, your Dad didn't get a choice.*

*In some ways, you lived under your father's shadow. He was a well-known man and a staunch Niue person, he brought you and your siblings up to be the same. You're glad that he did. Your Dad's father was Pālagi but your Dad never acknowledged that part in himself, he was a Niue person and that was it. Your Dad grew up in Fiji mostly, he lived with a Pālagi there for a long time but he always kept his Niue identity in his heart, he didn't want to be anything else.*

*Your mother was something else though. When you and your sister would sneak down to the village hall to peek through the windows at people having a dance your mother would always be waiting for you on the front veranda with the tafe ka niu.*

*You had a close connection with my aunt and uncle. When you moved back to live in Niue you came on the same boat. You would sit with my uncle and have coffee and solve all the problems of Niue. You laugh, if only you two had run of the government you could have the whole island sorted out.*

*Unlike many Niue people that I've met, you hated bush work when you came back to the island. You even took up golf to get away from it. You didn't even like golf but you definitely preferred it to going to the bush. But your parents wanted you to know what Niue life was like, even though they were sending you to New Zealand for education, they wanted you to have more than one world.*

*You did love fishing though. When the kaloama season came you would be out fishing all day. It wasn't something you learnt from your father or your brothers though, you just taught yourself. You also learned how to meke, one of the old dances that had a full Niue costume.*

*You feel sorry for the Niue people in New Zealand, life is richer in here on the island. You talk about the importance of learning and living your culture in Niue. You talk about weaving baskets and making tafe ka niu. But you also talk about knitting and crochet, things we have co-opted into our culture.*

*Climate change for you is noticing that the climate is so different now. Things like the weather, the heat, and colder winters like New Zealand: "...the weather is, it's just different. One minute it is quiet and still, next minute don't know where the wind is coming from and the rain. It's changed, the climate". The weather seemed more settled when you were younger.*

*You can see the change is all over though, in New Zealand and other places. On Niue, you think there will be definite impacts on the people. As weather shifts out of what people are used to there is more uncertainty. You don't want to live anywhere else even if there are changes though, you're quite happy where you are. You are a proud Niue woman; "Niue is where my heart is really, I love going to visit my children and the grandchildren, but I always love coming back".*

*You feel like you can see more of the changes since you have left and come back many times. The government is one example. In the government, they are doing things that don't seem right to you. Forcing people into retirement. There's also a lot of nepotism with one family filling a lot of the places inside government and outside of it too.*

*We talk about a few old stories like Mataginifale and the whale. You wonder about the truth of the story, but you do believe she travelled to Tonga, though how she survived in a whale's stomach you will never know. Maybe she was lucky. There's another story too of Fitiutouto and Kiliutomanogi and their mother who swims out following birds until she finds Fonuagalo, a lost island which she makes her home.*

*We are reminded that our ancestors, particularly our women, were navigators, women of the land and sea. They travelled and survived. I talk about how these women were clever and how we are connected to them through our bloodlines. You say that it's the point, it's why we are so smart. We laugh.*

## **T1 insights**

The old saying that wisdom comes with age is well-regarded in Niue. When we want to know something about our culture we ask our tau tupuna, our elders. It is a dynamic of cultural knowledge that comes from a respect and perhaps reverence of age; the understanding that knowledge accumulates with experiences over time. T1 is a tupuna, an important elder. It's important to make this distinction because it is a way of recognising the cultural importance of her position. The knowledge that is being shared here, and particularly with me as part of a younger generation, is important. For me, it is perhaps even more poignant as T1 isn't in my direct lineage but had a special connection with my uncle and his family which is why I was able to talk with her in the first place. For the generosity and honesty in what T1 shared I will be forever grateful.

This story moves through parts of T1's life journey, the movements that led her away from Niue and back again. In these journeys, we can mark things that change and things that stay the same. And it is also a way into thinking about how she perceives climate change as changes over time. Specifically, how the weather is changing and becoming less predictable, it is becoming harder to use cultural knowledge to know what will be coming next. And it's not just changing in Niue. T1 makes the point that change is happening in New Zealand and other places too. Her connection with New Zealand is a familiar thread and is common in much of T1's story, having largely grown up in New Zealand and then travelled back and forth when her children started living there. I didn't push the point in the talanoa, but it's interesting to contemplate how Niue people think about climate change in other places and the comparisons they make to what they are experiencing locally. In one of the

community groups, I was a part of, making connections around the Pacific was an important way of thinking about where pressure systems moved, like how cyclones tend to form west of Niue nearer Vanuatu, and then they track east. While our ancestral connections to different places around the Pacific play a part, there is perhaps also something in connections that form because of a similarity in experience. Niue people have empathy for other Pacific islands that are devastated by cyclones because they know what it feels like; it's a part of island life, but that doesn't make it any less devastating. As these events are exacerbated by changes in the climate they also take on new meaning.

In this story, one change in T1's journey is literally the way she gets from Niue to New Zealand and back again. While she sailed in the Maui Pomare or Tofua ships in her younger years, travel by air replaced the shipping service as she got older. It's interesting to hear peoples' experiences of leaving Niue by boat, something one of the women from another talanoa would like to see more written about. It's not lost on me that the naming of a ship that would sail to the Pacific taking young students abroad, is named after the first Māori doctor and one of the generation of Māori leaders to come from Te Aute College in the late 1800s. Because her family had some wealth, she travelled in a different part of the boat compared to most Niue people. She would wrap up food that was offered at her level, and then take it down to the people below who may have had less money but were better company. On one of her first return journeys to Niue after a long time at boarding school she crossed paths with her father on the stairs of the ship but since so much time had passed they hadn't even recognised each other. It was the steep cost that she and her parents had to grapple with. Being sent to school in New Zealand at a young age, and put in education that her parents thought would give her better opportunities, meant that for a time they would not know each other. She talked about how this particular meeting and lack of recognition had been hard for her father.

T1 didn't regret the education that she received in New Zealand though; it afforded the opportunity of stable employment and meant she could move in different spaces, in different worlds with ease. Her children have had similarly mixed educations, but always with an emphasis on knowing their roots and to be proud of their heritage. It's interesting to me that she didn't (still doesn't) like bush work, one of the many cultural things her parents would make her do on her return visits to Niue. Connection to the environment is important in Niue culture, but what that looks like at an individual level varies. While most of the other people I spoke with really valued spending time in the bush, it's useful to be reminded that not everyone does. However, T1 does like to grow things and her garden is full of different varieties of edible and non-edible plants. The story also includes her love of fishing for kaloama. T1's story is an important reminder that while lots of people love lots of things about Niue, people don't always love the same things, but this doesn't make them any less part of Niue.

In the story, there is an interesting dynamic between T1 and her father and the influence her father has had on how she wanted to be able to closely identify with being from Niue. Though her father was tough on her, particularly when she secured a job working in his office, she had a lot more time for him because of his outlook, because of the ways he valued being Niue and instilled that in both her and her siblings. While her father had a Pālagi father and her mother had a Pālagi father as well, neither were held in good stead. Neither of those men spoke vagahau and in her mother's case, she only found out her father was part white-Australian from someone else. I can relate to having a Pālagi parent, but it's interesting to think about how Pālagi influences in families can move people to be more protective of their Niue identity. It's perhaps easy to say that Pālagis disrupt and disconnect their children from connecting with their heritage, and in some cases that may be true, but I'm interested in how T1 fiercely upholds Niue identity and language, and how identifying as a Niue person can give a kind of strength to people. Language is seen as an incredibly important part of being a Niue person, particularly when people think you

don't look a particular way or think that you can't speak vagahau. Language is an important way to be heard and to be accepted by those on the island.

In our talanoa, we also had a brief conversation about hiapo. T1 talked about going down to watch some women making hiapo, seeing them beat the bark out, connect pieces together and eventually print on it. While finding a record of hiapo making past the 1900s is difficult, the possibility of women continuing or reviving the practice in the 1940s-1970s is a really interesting example of how and when cultural practices ebb and flow. T1 couldn't remember when she saw it but she knew she was fairly young at the time. But even the image of a young girl looking in on some older women practising a specific form of culture is a warming experience for me. That Niue women are doing things that aren't necessarily written about or published shows a couple of things. One is that there is a humbleness in Niue culture which means people don't necessarily promote themselves for the work they do. It is also a reminder that culture is practised in ways that don't have to attract attention. But in noticing these unspectacular moments we can come a little bit closer to complex relationships and worlds that those practices can embody. There's also this idea of practices not being in time but across time. The practice of hiapo may have been rare in T1's lifetime, but across time it's actually a common practice for Niue women, something we seem drawn to every couple of generations, even if it doesn't "take off". Perhaps there is learning in thinking about how and why these practices re-emerge across generations.

When so much information is made accessible through the internet talking with elders seems to create a time bubble or disrupt the Western sense of time. The reverence Niue culture has for elders includes patience and respect for their words and meaning that counters or restricts the pressures of time in that the gravity of what is given always exceeds the time associated with it. There never seems to be enough time to fully transmit all knowledge and the act of transferring knowledge collapses time in a sense. Young people hasty in seeking knowledge often miss the

lessons that come from slowing down, listening, feeling and understanding what is being said, what is being imparted. I noticed particularly in myself a sense of literally having my eyes wider, trying to capture and remember as much as possible because I knew that even recording the conversation wouldn't be enough. Certainly, there are things that I will have missed in our partial connections, but sharing her story allows us to collaborate ongoing building and sharing of knowledge in ways that have shared benefit. She was thankful, for example, that we had talked about Mataginifale and how listening to my perspective of the story had given her a new view of it too. The worlds she navigated are made up of many stark differences, cliffs and caverns that I'm unlikely to experience. But in sharing part of her story I am given an opportunity to walk for a moment in some of her worlds.

### **Tala ke Uaaki (T2)**

*I come up to your place in Tuapa. We aren't meeting in your house but at your vanilla plantation. The stories of the memories you share make it feel like a house somehow. There is so much time and love you have put into growing things here; it feels heavy with memories and stories.*

*Your parents didn't grow vanilla. Vanilla only began being cultivated in Niue in the 1980s you tell me. Vanilla plants have always been on the island, but people didn't know that pods could form if the flower is pollinated. I've never seen vanilla growing before. You show me. You gave most of your land to your children, but you kept this part just for you and for growing vanilla.*

*The flowers have come early. The last time flowers came at this time was the same year of Cyclone Heta. You remember that you were still pollinating flowers when Heta hit. "I thought it was great, heaps of flowers out of season. [Then] The cyclone came and strip all the vines and scatter them". You wouldn't be surprised if there is wild vanilla around here because of that.*

*You taught yourself how to grow vanilla. It was a bit of a hit and miss. You asked an environment officer for help to start things off. You cleared your land, watched a demo he did, copied it and went from there and did some reading. When you first you started there was well over 200 and 300 people growing vanilla, many families grew their own. Now there are only a handful of growers. You think it's possibly because it is labour intensive. Also, the people who grew them 30 or 40 years ago are much older now and there hasn't been much interest from our young people.*

*"Young people they just like to sit in the office... they don't want to get their hands dirty". You observe that kids don't really go with their parents to the bush anymore.*

*When you first started planting talo people's tongues were wagging about whether you had planted right: "I left here when I was fourteen and people thought that I was useless". But the talo grew up to be really big plants and you were happy that it shut them up for a bit. People thought you had lost your Niue knowledge because you left young. But you had followed your parents into the bush and remembered what they did. When you came back people threw a lot of negativity at you, but you stuck it out. Even when there were times that you would think "Lord, what am I doing here! And he would say 'just keep going, I'll show you what to do'".*

*You don't feel like there is anything you can do against a cyclone to protect your vanilla plants. It's possible that trimming the trees lower might reduce the impact of the wind that causes the trees to sway. But it's not just the cyclones, rain while the flowers are budding can cause the bud to drop off. When a cyclone comes the trees end up flat on the ground. But after some time, most trees pick themselves up again. It's an amazing thing that they do.*

*You show me your vegetable garden. You show me the sweet potato plants growing everywhere. Some new chickens are hiding in amongst the garden too. There are a lot of women involved in planting around the island. Men sometimes get involved, but a*

*lot of women do the pollinating because it's a delicate task. You love pollinating. Sometimes when you come up here you can pollinate 700-1000 flowers.*

*You show me why bees can't get in to pollinate the flower. With a coconut fibre, you show me how you pollinate the flower. "Don't know what we'd do without the coconut" you laugh. The coconut shells make good charcoal too. Rain can be a real problem when the flowers are budding. Even when the rain stops and the flower opens it can be so full of water that it's very difficult to pollinate and the flowers tend to break off more easily.*

*Sometimes if you want the plant to flower you will snip the top off a shoot and tell them quietly "you better flower" and they always do. You worked hard all your life and you are retired now. You don't want to have to be responsible for everyone. You want to do your own thing. You don't know if your family will carry on growing vanilla.*

*You don't feel like there are many records kept. You think there was a big cyclone in 1942 and we know about it because our people talk about it. And people talk about droughts when everything died. You remember when not long ago after a drought we had to get new crops in from overseas, it was that bad.*

*When I ask you about climate change you say, "I think God is in control". People are jumping up and down for things that have always happened. When you were little you remembered how "we always have cyclones and we always have rain season, the wet season and dry season". You remember going down to the caves to get drinking water because you never had tanks or pumps. The sea was your bath. There still is a water tank inland from here, about 3-4 km, where you would do your washing and then hang your clothes in all the trees.*

*"Climate change has always been. There's no such thing as climate change. The sea is rough, and the sea is calm [...] no I don't believe in that [climate change]." You feel like "people will try to alarm... scientists bring this on to give themselves a job or [have] some say in everything we do in our lives. I believe in God. He's in control".*

*You feel like people go all out with regards to climate change. You aren't sure if people reducing waste and converting to clean energy is necessarily a good thing. You wonder if people just jump on the bandwagon. You tell me, you "don't believe in climate change; that we are going to be underwater or whatever".*

*I ask if you think there is an impact we have by burning fossil fuels but you don't think there is. You noticed that in Australia people can't burn rubbish in their backyard. But in Niue when people burn things, the plants near them grow more abundantly. And aphids don't go on the plants as much. You mention how your husband's work was contracted by a fossil fuel power station to put trees around the power station and how the trees have grown so well. They are the trees that your husband put in 25 years ago, and they are still strong today.*

*You think weed killer is destroying the ecology of Niue, the wild fruits that used to grow here no longer do. The introduction of outsider crops is harming our plants and bees. When you talk about bees you feel like no one listens to you. Bees were introduced in Niue to pollinate the passionfruit. But you think the bees are cross-pollinating and therefore negatively impacting the ability of many fruit trees to bear fruit. For example, the mango and the vi trees which used to be abundant, no longer have many fruits.*

*"God gave us everything [in Niue] that we need, without the bees, he knows what he was doing [...] you know what he says in the Bible, 'the intelligence of the intelligent I shall confuse' and this is what is happening". I have to look it up after, it's from 1 Corinthians 1:19.*

*But some things have changed. You haven't seen mangoes in Niue for the past few years or the hard-shell yellow passionfruit that used to grow wild. The kaloama, a type of little fish, used to come every year but they are no longer as abundant.*

*You think there are a lot of outside impacts. People bring in ideas from research or study done in other countries and try to use it here. But "they don't know our*

*environment. They have no idea. They just think that just because it worked in their country it should work here". You think we have to look at this and ask: why these things aren't happening? Why are things changing? But we don't have to call it climate change.*

## **T2 insights**

I gained so much knowledge from my meeting with this elder. My family don't have vanilla plantations so learning about them was a real privilege. T2 was open with her perspectives and held firm in a lot of her convictions particularly that climate change wasn't something she believed in. The start of this story is a brief reflection of a wealth of knowledge that would be impossible for me to capture in any written form. It largely reads as a kind of brief history or introduction to vanilla plantations on Niue. T2 has lived in Niue for many years and has built up a strong knowledge of environmental changes, though it is particularly the changes with our people that she talks about.

Vanilla is clearly her passion and having this talanoa in her vanilla plantation had a strong influence in shaping our talk and thinking about the environment we are literally in. She largely taught herself to grow vanilla, while wild vanilla can be found on the island, cultivating the vine only happened in the last 30 to 40 years. And T2 was a part of that movement. It's interesting to think about the changes Niue has undergone in having hundreds of vanilla plantations that were cash crops, to having only a handful. Niue vanilla is being revived and there are a few vanilla farmers that supply the New Zealand and Australian high-end markets. At times it may seem that vanilla production is tangential to a focus on climate change but T2's passion for vanilla embodies a lot of cultural and environmental awareness. Her awareness of cyclonic impacts relates specifically to how they affect her vanilla plantations.

T2 disrupts the idea that farming and hard labour is for men. Vanilla cultivation, as she says, requires a delicate hand which is, in her opinion, more suited

to women. It is interesting to me, as part of the Niue diaspora, that T2 thinks that young people aren't interested in these labour-intensive jobs. I've met many Niue youth that are motivated to learn more about the culture so this perspective from T2 raises questions about access, education and other systems that encourage or make it possible for Niue youth to be more involved. Perhaps T2's view is restricted to youth in Niue; would it be possible for youth from abroad to fill these gaps? Statistics show in New Zealand that young Pacific people are increasingly working in offices. In many ways when our parents and grandparents came to New Zealand a lot of them were hoping that we would end up in nice cool offices where we didn't have to work so hard. Families want their children to do well in Western education, but every step towards Western defined success seems to lead away from the plantations, from any physical labour. There is a sense that those who gain Western education will have lost their ability to work the land, and perhaps more critically will have lost their ability to work the land in the 'Niue way'. There is a similarity here in a point made by M2 when he talked about growing up in New Zealand and the consequential loss of knowledge that he would have gained had he stayed in Niue. As an outsider in this context, I see how damaging the Western versus Niue education debate can be. Perhaps like T1's parents, there is more fertile ground in seeing these different educations not in competition but as ways for tau fuata to walk in different worlds; to challenge the status quo, you have to be able to speak the same language or at least understand it. There are many more conversations about the impact of foreign education in Niue and on Niue people that need to happen.

T2 concerns that children don't want to go to the bush, because they think there is enough food at supermarkets, reverberates through many of the stories by parents. Knowledge of the bush seems to no longer have the value it had in the past. For T2, who has children who don't seem to want to take up vanilla farming, there is a sense of loss. As she educated me about vanilla she mentioned that the last time there were a lot of flowers like this a big cyclone hit Niue. Cyclone Gita developed not

long after our conversation, while it had a limited impact on Niue, it caused significant damage in Tonga and parts of Fiji.

Over our time together I got the sense that it was climate change rhetoric and narrative that she found to be untrue. Her perspective was that climate change was pushed by scientists who essentially wanted to keep their jobs and have more control over what people could do. The government was being nosy and overbearing. A lot of mainstream media coverage presents climate change as a bleak, doom and gloom, end of the world phenomena and for a practical and forward-looking Niue woman that just doesn't fly. It's a stripping of power that T2 rejects. For her, the weather has always changed, seas are unsettled, new species affect plants and sometimes there is drought. These things happen.

Ultimately, while a lot of this story seems to be me learning about vanilla, some striking themes and questions point toward significant issues about both climate change and cultural change. One example is the willingness of our younger generations to learn the environmental knowledge our parents and grandparents (even great grandparents) have learnt through experience or from their elders. Changes in expectations of jobs and the availability of imported food can influence the value of crops that have sustained our people for generations. Another aspect of change is how changes in weather are the norm and, in her experience, continue as they have always done. T2 also had a clear aversion to even using climate change as a phrase, to her it was so overused and overhyped that it could not be a credible issue of concern. Climate change is often generalised and reduced in ways that predetermine what people can and can't call "climate change" but I doubt that T2 is alone in her views and her points are a reminder that the storying of climate change, even in Niue has dominant and mainstream accents that aren't necessarily inclusive or open to discussion.

T2 said that she believes in God and that God is in control of our environment. This view was emphasised in opposition to what she felt scientists were saying. That

T2 does not acknowledge climate change is connected to her religious views. The phrase “I don’t believe in climate change; that we are going to be underwater or whatever” is telling and poignant for a Niue context, which doesn’t fit a generalised view of the Pacific as being made up entirely of low-lying atolls. The often-cited image of the “we are not drowning, we are fighting” banner by a group of Tuvaluan people in the sea protesting climate change is a similar push back on dominant narratives even for island nations that are significantly impacted by sea-level rise. In Niue, the idea that our island will be underwater in the same way that rising sea-levels are impacting Kiribati, Tuvalu, or Tokelau for example, understandably seems misguided (at best) to people who live on our island. There’s specificity in what climate change looks like, not just in different countries or islands, but within those places as well. That isn’t to say there is no effect of rising sea-levels in Niue, but to recognise that the situation is not the same as it is for a low-lying atoll.

T2 emphasised her faith and her religion several times when we talked about climate change. I identify as a Christian but only attend church regularly when I’m in Niue so I felt my lack of knowledge of Christianity as she spoke about her strong faith. In some ways, I feel critical of the impact of Christianity in Niue. But perhaps in the way Yvonne Underhill-Sem (2002) describes Christianity in the Pacific as having “localised meanings because meanings are constantly in tension over colonial, religious and local agents of change” and it being a site where “some women have been able to contest global influences” (Underhill-Sem, 2002, p. 58). In dismissing climate change as an issue, our conversation shifted to a more critical reflection of why climate change didn’t exist rather than why it did and critique of the people and organisations that were coming to Niue and claiming that they knew what our people in Niue should be doing. T2 was generous in sharing her worldview and experiences and patient with my questions of how she came to see climate change in this way which I hoped would not come across as a disavowal of her knowledge. Like the mosquitoes that constantly attacked us as we talked, it was easier to swat climate change away with leafy branches and focus on her skill in growing vanilla. One of the

benefits of using talanoa in this process was being flexible in the conversation and being open to our surroundings. I do not doubt that our conversation would have gone differently if we weren't in an environment where M2 was clearly comfortable. As our conversation moved beyond climate change, we paid more attention to her view of key issues facing our environment, one of which was the use of F.A.Ds in the sea. T2 was a keen activist in protecting whales and had very strong views about tourism operators chasing whales and their calves to satisfy paying customers.

Not discussing climate change didn't stop the conversation from addressing climate change albeit from a critical perspective. T2 had a clear relationship and understanding of the environment and in paying attention to that relationship there is a broader understanding of the complexity of climate change. It was important to pay attention to what was being shared with me and be prepared to be challenged in the views I hold as well as the approaches I was using to have climate change conversations with these women. While changes might be happening, to T2 it is the things in front of her, what she can see, that she pays attention to most. As a farmer and gardener living so close to the land, she has a strong awareness of changes in her environment and her ability to enact positive change herself.

### **3.2 Tau tala he tau mamatua fifine ha tautolu** *Stories from our Mothers*

#### **Tala ke Toluaki (T3)**

*At work, you are surrounded by piles of paper, books, posters, artefacts hidden in every spare space. I might be focused on climate change but the culture that surrounds me in books, paper and other things are a reminder that there are so many stories I am yet to learn. It's hard to focus on climate change when there is so much tāoga in Niue that hasn't been talked about or acknowledged in a long time.*

*You launch ahead with your views of climate change. It's something that happens to people, something people in Niue need to be aware of. It's a changing understanding*

*of the environment. It isn't always something we are concerned with at a young age but as we get older we became more aware of different impacts. Things you notice as you drive to work. Like changes in the way people hunt, changes in the abundance of food sources, unusual changes that don't make sense with what you knew before. When pink lilies bloom it coincides with the kaloama coming up close to the reef, but the lilies are blooming for much longer than they used to.*

*You notice increases in the number of pests. Hornet wasps invade your office space and it makes you not want to work. The wasps are silent and crafty in their nest building, sometimes you don't even notice until there is a whole bunch of them. You don't remember them being like this when you were young.*

*Climate change in Niue comes with an overflow of information, you call it promotion. It feels like climate change is talked about every day on the news, online, everywhere. People are learning from the El Nino and La Nina phases what kinds of weather to expect. People are also trying to be more sustainable, for example, by using more solar energy. You wanted solar for your office building too, but the cost meant that it couldn't be done. The education of climate change comes with a catch, often only people with money can make sustainable changes to how they live.*

*Women are often the first to have to deal with issues, climate change will become a heavier burden for women. You notice that sometimes women take over the roles of men, even though traditionally men are considered the head of the house. But Niue women are keen and proactive, they dominate the scene in Niue. If there are ever discussions at a national level, it is mostly the women who turn up and contribute, but when a decision is made, it's the men who come through and make them.*

*Some men still hold onto patriarchal views, they think they are above women. I don't think you agree, but I know you've been held back by men before. You speak from your own experiences and you know not everyone will feel the same. These experiences aren't generalizable; sometimes those with the loudest voices drown out*

*the voices of others. You use your position to get your voice heard. But Niue people seem to always have their own ideas; it is the kalahimu mentality that can hold things up.*

*You notice that women dominate a lot of spaces in Niue society, in the church, in schooling – both as students and teachers, and women are increasingly in leadership positions but, it's not as simple as just having women in these top positions. You believe the dynamic of male and female leadership has to be shared.*

*English is your second language and you are proud of that. Which is probably why you tell me to hurry up and learn vagahau Niue. The more we meet, the more you break into vagahau, testing how much I have learned. The language is at the centre of how you see the island and our people. Vagahau Niue is important. You tend to have an island-centric view of where knowledge is and who can speak to it. For you, it's critical to have vagahau Niue as part of every communication strategy that encompasses climate change.*

*You don't think Niue can be fully independent but you like thinking that we are heading towards being more self-sustaining. While the relationship with New Zealand is beneficial there are gaps in what they can provide and the expectations that come with that relationship. The New Zealand way of doing things doesn't always match up with the needs of the Niue people.*

### **T3 insights**

Poignant for me at the start of this story is a sense of timing and change. When we first met, her place of work was preparing for significant change, a change that had been long-awaited. So, when we were talking about climate change the conversation would often drift off into other changes, changes that had a more personal impact. I learnt a lot about T3 throughout my fieldwork and was invited to a special social gathering at her family home. While there is a value of hospitality in

Niue culture, often the things T3 was talking to me about or including me in were connected with broader introductions to Niue culture. Even though she let me ask a lot of questions, often the responses were about teaching me things that she thought I should know as a Niue person. An example of this is how she often spoke to me in vagahau, pushing me to work harder at learning the language whilst intentionally using it and not translating it so that occasionally I was excluded. She once told me that I had to learn vagahau faster because a lot of people were gossiping about me. More than once she told me that I asked too many questions. But as a researcher and as someone eager to learn about my culture I found it hard to take that as a negative, though I was aware of a kind of cultural tension in that there is an importance in the kinds of questions that you ask.

Sometimes in Niue culture, you must learn through observation and figuring things out for yourself. I think overall (I certainly hoped) that she saw value in my curiosity, and it led other people to be interested in the answers she was giving. In one case I had asked about a book which was difficult to access in New Zealand but included some interview data from people on the island. After some time, T3 found the book in her records and as she pulled it out, others in the office came to see what was happening. Some were a little annoyed later and told me how they were never told about things like this particular book, that knowledge was almost hidden from them even though they worked in the same space. I imagine there are a lot of things that are invisible but in plain sight in amongst the archives of those offices and I think it can be difficult and occasionally disheartening to be eager to learn but have certain hoops you have to go through to access some of that knowledge. It is a reminder of the gatekeeping of Niue knowledge, both in Niue and overseas, and the power of gatekeepers in deciding which people have access to certain types of knowledge. Sometimes it seems like without someone asking questions, no matter how annoying, there is so much that can remain hidden away in boxes.

In the story, there is a sense that change is visible even in an everyday commute or in an office. The lushness and abundance visible in crops that line the roadside can signal certain weather or certain times for hunting or fishing. Many of T3's connections to climate change are framed in relation to her work. One example is of the wasps that build nests inside her office, the number of wasps had dramatically increased compared to what she experienced in her childhood. She also makes connections with her past; what things were like when she grew up compared with how they are now.

T3 frames climate change in Niue as a kind of promotion, in the sense that it's heavily pushed on people, often talked about but perhaps doesn't necessarily connect to the realities of what people experience. This sentiment is one I also heard in several conversations on the island where the relentless push of climate change in forms of education, awareness, adaptation, mitigation and resilience workshops, strategy meetings, projects, seminars or similar, creates a kind of climate change fatigue. She holds the view that it is largely Niue women who "turn up and contribute" to these things but men who ultimately sit in positions of power and make final decisions.

This brings up the role of patriarchy in Niue society. Although most people said that men and women had equal opportunities and rights in Niue, patriarchal views persist, and they aren't only reinforced by men. Women have a growing presence in positions of decision making but there are still barriers and unspoken protocols that favour men, particularly in the higher levels of government, which have always been male-dominated. We know that women carry a greater burden of the adverse impacts of climate change and from this story, there are perhaps questions that need to be asked about why women do a lot of climate change work but aren't necessarily acknowledged for this work. And this includes spaces outside of work such as in the church and in the community where women have a significant presence. But particularly in higher positions of government, it seems that women experience a higher degree of job safety if they don't ruffle too many male feathers.

T3 has many roles in both the community and in her workplace and has a clear and genuine passion for supporting and sustaining Niue culture. Her position at work afforded her certain power and responsibility. People often sought her advice on cultural and linguistic matters. Many people I met talked of the hard work she was doing for the benefit of all tagata Niue.

While I noticed she was generous with people in sharing her knowledge, she (not unlike my Dad) was more generous with some people compared to others and also very careful in what she did share. She was protective of the knowledge she had. She once mentioned that some groups overseas were trying to teach the language but weren't always correct. She had tried to direct them on ways that she felt were right or correct, but some groups resisted and decided to do things on their own.

There is a friction between diasporic Niue communities and the people who live in Niue. Grappling with insider-outsider identities is challenging and in this story, I'm aware of how I shift between being part of the group and then being outside of it. T3's particular view was (unsurprisingly) island-centric in terms of what Niue knowledge is or means and the people who should have authority over it, though I also think she has a clear deference to Niue elders who are overseas. Language is a kind of black-and-white space for her, she felt that there was a specific way to speak and write vagahau and that it should be upheld by all tagata Niue. It reminds me of home, where many of the tau tupuna tend to think they are right and everyone else is wrong. I understand that preserving language is important, but I see our vagahau as ever-changing, particularly in the vastly different geographic spaces that Niue communities end up in. But it can be difficult to keep pace with change and there are always stalwarts who resist change. At times I felt that way with T3, that there wasn't always space for new interpretations of the language or culture. In part, it is a reflection of my own bias in being an outsider and feeling limited (and at times isolated) in the ways I can engage with and learn about my culture. But there is a weakness in having this bias that can blind me from the importance of people who

staunchly protect and preserve language and culture in ways that I don't (and possibly can't) understand.

There is protocol embedded in aspects of language and culture that are difficult for me, as part of the diaspora and from growing up with limited interaction with Niue culture, to be able to walk the culture and understand it as well. Sometimes cultural understanding doesn't come from an explicit lesson but rather subtle ways of knowing and being that are developed over time, through language and careful observation. In hindsight, I don't believe T3's actions were resisting change and I have a different appreciation for how my bias of wanting to access culture and language in ways that "fit" me or my educational upbringing can be a re-enactment of colonial cherry-picking. I want to be careful in this space because my instinct for culture and language as part of the Niue diaspora is markedly different from a non-Niue outsider. But in wanting to learn about my culture I have to be aware of how my colonial, western-upbringing and education can be a barrier to understanding my Niue culture. Sometimes in responding to a question I had about Niue culture, T3 wasn't not answering my question by talking about other things. Not all Niue words translate directly to English, and knowledge of culture doesn't necessarily look like the same thing to all people. Sometimes knowledge is passed not through learning what one asks for or seeks, but for what the elder decides. The knowledge may not seem of use, even to that generation, but when retold to the next generation it can have significant value or meaning. There are and will always be Niue people who believe that their way is the right way and everyone else is wrong; the learning comes from not prioritising one person over another but in the greater benefit of acknowledging that in Niue we have a lot of people who know a right way.

T3's story makes some interesting references to New Zealand. While she doesn't see Niue as ever becoming a fully-independent nation, she doesn't hold a candle for New Zealand ways of doing things. This idea isn't new, but it can have some significant importance in thinking about connections and communication of climate

change in different places around the region. Niue has significant financial ties to New Zealand. It is difficult to have conversations about climate change in Niue without thinking about the connections that Niue has to New Zealand.

#### **Tala ke Faaki (T4)**

*You grew up moving between Niue and New Zealand, but you have settled in Niue for good now. Life in Niue is different from when you came here with a young family. Your daughters have grown up and are looking to study and travel overseas. It's just you and your husband at home but your motel keeps you both busy.*

*You think there might be changes coming for various reasons. You think New Zealand is changing, like the housing crisis, changes in costs for education, or finding a job. And you see it affecting your children; their ability to get good jobs or to buy their first home is a lot harder compared to life in Niue where we already own the land.*

*There have been changes in the environment and one of the big causes is cyclones. You were here for Cyclone Ofa and Cyclone Heta, so you've seen and felt the changes not only on land but in the ocean. You notice that along the coastline some of the coral has died or taken a long time to recover from cyclones.*

*You talk about how more care needs to be taken with the threat of different insects that could wipe out our talo plantations. You know of some farms that have lost crops to disease. It makes the role of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) important in keeping Niue safe.*

*You are interested in these kinds of things because you have a particular passion for flowers. You like to grow anthuriums because they are good for flower arrangements. You grow hibiscus as well and use coconut husks for mulch. In New Zealand when you make floral arrangements often you have to buy every little thing, but here you can get so much greenery and even some flowers from the bush. It's simple and it's not hard; it's knowledge that you've picked up as you've gone along.*

*You haven't noticed many changes in the way's things are grown on the island, but people from DAFF have told you that there have been some changes because the plants that were being brought in have caused some variations to the habits of local insects. Insects that used to be on the seaside have moved inland because of the introduced flowers.*

*Your neighbours do a lot of fishing off the reef. They noticed that the sharks have moved closer inland over the last couple of years. You think it might be because of the change in weather; things are getting warmer. You've noticed that days are getting hotter, particularly in summer it gets stinking hot. You know it's not your age creeping up on you. Hot used to be 28 or 29 degrees, now it's over 30 degrees.*

*When I mention climate change you talk about how we need to be careful about our rubbish and the kind of rubbish we burn. You "did climate change" with your children as part of the Pacific Climate Change Programme with 350 Pacific. It was a planting project up near Hikulagi Sculpture Park. But rubbish is your key focus when it comes to climate change. It's rubbish like old tyres and cars that build up. There was someone who came to show people how to deal with rubbish, but it wasn't consistent, so people haven't kept it up.*

*You know that Niue is known for its clear waters and clean environment but if we don't sort out our rubbish then it could have some severe impacts. "We need to be aware of what's going on, on our small island, how we [can] keep it clean". It reminds me of the old ordinances where it was a criminal offence to have rubbish on your property or an untidy house.*

*In groups you're involved in there has been a push for women to learn more about climate change. You think it's fortunate that our women are more engaged in these things whereas in New Zealand you don't see the same kind of awareness.*

*You think the impact of tourism on Niue is scary. Even though you run a motel business, you think Niue needs a quota for tourists so that our resources aren't stretched. Right*

*now, Niue is in the process of looking at waste management and this is something you are interested to learn more about where our waste goes and how it affects the coast.*

*In your motel, you haven't looked at any ways you could be more environmentally conscious but you mention how you follow the building codes. You think Niue is pretty up with how things should be. You do endorse solar heating, it's something you use in your home as well as for your motel.*

*At the moment you don't have a garden, so you rely on the local market for buying produce. But you are concerned that most of the people at the market are on the older side, 60 years or more, and that there isn't a younger generation coming to fill the gap. You don't know what will happen when our elders are gone.*

*You say that there isn't much of a push for our young people to be growers or naturalists, or anything like that. They are pushed to be lawyers and doctors. Our children need to be more broadly skilled and versatile not just academic, but able to fish and work the plantations. "You can't rely on just being an office person, you still have to go and get talo for your family you still have to fish and you still have to do other things" like supporting your family and going to church.*

*The Women's Council keeps you connected with Niue culture. It's a place of sharing and learning, it's the place where we talk. You feel honoured to be taught by the elder women here. But not all parts of Niue culture are so willingly shared. Medicine is one example. People tend to keep it in the family. If you need medicine, you have to know the family to go to and then they will give it to you. But if that family dies out then that knowledge is gone.*

*You think there are quite a few things that are already being lost. Your daughter is becoming a doctor and you wrote down all your knowledge about plant medicines on the island so she would have that knowledge. But you think there should be a general book with the knowledge that is common to a few people so that it isn't lost.*

*You think a key issue for Niue is the population on the island. Many young people are going off to study abroad but not returning, while the population on the island is ageing. Food security is also an issue because the island is isolated. If there are ever any issues with the ship [that brings most imported foods and other goods], then people will have to rely on the land. But like you said, much of that knowledge is already being lost.*

#### **T4 insights**

An important place to start for T4 were the changes she experienced in moving back to Niue with her family. An awareness of the movements of her children is encompassed in her frame of change. Early on T4 gestures towards the changes in New Zealand that are likely to have an impact on her daughters. T4 wants her children to be able to get an education, find a good job and get their own home but these aren't necessarily things that have to be in Niue. While it might not be seen as climate change, life in Niue being affected by changes abroad has some important connections to how Niue is constitutionally connected to New Zealand. Climate change may be viewed differently because of this relationship where Niue people have easy access to New Zealand through their shared citizenship. T4 compares these issues to what is available in Niue, how the land is already owned by families so that life now seems easier and cheaper in Niue than what people in New Zealand experience.

A way T4 thought about climate change was through cyclones. T4 was in Niue when Cyclone Heta hit Niue in early 2004 and Cyclone Ofa in early 1990. She talked about the changes in the ocean like coral dying or taking longer to recover and she had a clear interest in the number of insects that appeared or changed habits in response to these changes in climate. Her interest in insects is connected to her passion for plants and flowers which bring her in contact with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). Growing flowers and creating flower arrangements brought her a lot of joy. It's not just growing introduced species either,

she had a passion for using Niue flora in her creations. Flower arrangements have their own section at the national show days and often decorate church halls. Learning about Niue flora can be a way of accessing different worlds of knowledge, not just foreign, but important cultural knowledge too. T4's knowledge of Niue flora was something she was able to pass on to her daughter who is training as a medical doctor in New Zealand. While she doesn't claim to have all knowledge of Niue plants and their medicinal uses, she had a clear opinion that this knowledge should be passed down or shared and that there was a real risk in how some families were not passing their knowledge to their children, resulting in things being lost.

T4 hasn't noticed significant changes in the way things grow on the island, but she has heard through DAFF that the introduction of new plant species has influenced behaviour patterns of different insects. Insects don't often feature in mainstream climate change media, but T4's particular interest in flora meant that she was interested in these kinds of conversation. So, while flower arranging might not seem important in some climate change workshops or strategy meetings, it is a site where particular types of climate change conversation can be possible and where knowledge that records information about insect movements, for example, is valued and important. Her recognition of the information reported by DAFF is also important in thinking about how non-Niue scientific measures can be incorporated into a Niue context that has meaning for local communities. That isn't to say people don't notice insect behaviour without those measures. However, for T4, working with agencies like DAFF can be useful in bridging cultural and non-Niue scientific spaces. There may be limits to what people understand in terms of what they can visibly see, but this does not preclude people from understanding new knowledge if it is shared with them. This is also about understanding that Niue culture and knowledge isn't static, but changes and learns from the different worlds and the knowledge it comes in contact with.

T4 also talks about how her neighbours, who do a lot of fishing, had noticed that sharks were moving closer to the reef. On its own, this conversation might seem

mundane or uninteresting. However, observing the way information travels around the island can be important for thinking about where and how people access new knowledge. People aren't aware of everything all the time. But if there's one thing I've learnt from my time in Niue, it's that there's a lot of people who like to talk. T4 thought about the increasing heat as something connected to climate change. In her statement, she not only makes a point about what she has felt and observed but also pushes back against people who might just dismiss her experience as something that older people start to complain about. It's interesting then to think about how different generations talk about changes to their environment, particularly in our parents and grandparents' generations and how these might be dismissed as 'old people complaining more'. As for T4 she still trusts what she feels.

#### **Tala ke Limaaki (T5)**

*We meet in a break room at the school you work at. We talk about your daughter living overseas. She is training in computer science. You did a teaching diploma down in Wellington. You wonder if the cable cart is still going. You remember how expensive it was living in New Zealand.*

*We talk a little bit about climate change, but we don't stay on it for very long. I ask if you have to think about climate change much in your current job – you say you do. You have to teach kids about climate change, what things are affected, not only people but the environment as well. At first, I don't understand why you make the distinction about climate change not just affecting people. I think you mean that sometimes we focus on what will happen to us because of the environment, but we don't always remember that it goes both ways. Maybe saying "climate change" separates people from the environment.*

*You talk about how year 12 and year 13 high school students were invited by the Government of Japan to attend a climate change event to learn more and share their*

*experiences. I ask about the kinds of information students bring back. You talk about how they share their experiences in presentations to the school.*

*The school has to be prepared for cyclones. The old communication system wasn't very strong, but you think there are better systems in place now. The new primary school was funded by the Australian Government, which was good after cyclone Heta. But parts of the layout make it harder for emergency services to access classrooms. And even though the school is only three years old, it already needs maintenance.*

*You remember there was once a cyclone that hit during school time and caused a power outage. The NZ high commissioner loaned the school a generator so that the children would be safe. People didn't want to send kids home, especially if they lived in coastal areas. Because most of their parents would be working and they might end up on their own. It's better to stay together in times like that.*

*You show me some of the Niue books you make with students at the school. They are written, developed and published here. You're proud of them, "they have children who are familiar to you, not white children" you laugh. It's good for kids to see themselves in the tools we use for education. They need to see trees and animals that they will find here. People in New Zealand have written some Niue books. They are part of the TUPU series. But while they have the language they don't have the Niue context. You see that there is a Niue context in New Zealand but that it is different from the Niue context here.*

*We talk about your Mum, she's a relative of my Grandmother. That makes us family you tell me. Your mother helped you with a lot of things. She taught you how to survive if you didn't have electricity. How to cook the talo, that's important. You tell me how some crops are better for tunu paku (barbequing).*

*We talk about different people, where people live, places and place names. You say it's good to know these things. It makes you laugh thinking about the last time I had gone to church with my partner and how much he liked eating the uga. I think lots of*

*the people up there must have laughed when one of the ladies took the knife off him to show him how to do it properly, the Niue way.*

*You didn't fish much when you were young, your Mum didn't want any girls to go down to the sea, even for reef fishing. Those jobs were for the boys. Once you got married, though, your husband took you fishing. You still don't know how to swim though. When you were at schools in New Zealand your brother would write notes for you, so you wouldn't have to go swimming. You didn't like wearing togs. It's something a bit cultural that you grew up with, not to show so much of your body. There's quite a few on the island who don't know how to swim, even when they live close to the coast.*

*We talk about hiapo. A lady is trying to revive hiapo and grow some plants in Niue. You know that it can be made from the Ata tree. You think it is a good thing for our people to learn again. People are busy here and there with things and always in the community. They do things and share ideas. Sometimes you find that people sit on things rather than "making the ball roll". Even when people are told that something is happening, they don't do anything to make transitions easier.*

*We also talk about gender in Niue. It makes you think about gender balance or imbalance. There used to be more men dominating positions across the board. But you can see it is changing. Women are starting to get into higher positions. You think the change started with foreign programmes that pushed for more women to be in higher positions. At church women and men usually take turns at hosting. If it's the women's turn then they speak first. But men don't attend church as much anymore. Men make the excuse that they have to help with the food. You laugh and say that it's because the women talk too much.*

## **T5 insights**

One of the early themes in this story is thinking about climate change in education. As a teacher, T5 teaches climate change as part of the curriculum. It is a requirement. Initially, it was strange to me that she made the point that their education is not just about how people are affected by climate change but also how the environment is affected. The story includes my thoughts that perhaps she meant that climate change was often thought about in terms of how it affected people but not the environment. In saying 'climate change' there is then a divide between people and the environment so that it isn't people having an impact on the environment but 'climate change' as a kind of 'other'. Then again perhaps she just meant that climate change education has to focus on effects for both people and the environment. Our conversation on climate change had a strong focus on cyclones particularly with preparedness and safety and how it affected her workplace. There's a kind of tangibility in memories of cyclones because of the impacts they have on a place and the environment more broadly. Especially as a lot of the destruction from Heta is still visible for those who remember.

When I asked about climate change T5 thought of the Japan trip that Niue high school students had recently been on. A select number of students have the opportunity to contribute to conversations and learn about what climate change means for places outside of Niue. It was a trip funded by the Government of Japan and there are other countries, like the United States, that fund initiatives focussing on younger generations, encouraging them into leadership roles. For me, there's certainly an irony in having these two colonial powers encouraging Niue youth to be leaders and cynically I can't help but think that there must be another agenda. At the same time, I'm interested in Niue's growing relationships with foreign powers including China in ways that imply dissatisfaction with New Zealand and Australia.

In our talk, there is an emphasis on what our children need to learn. For T5 Niue people should be able to see themselves in the books they are reading. To be

able to see Niue examples that connect learning outside the class with things inside the class. Niue education follows the New Zealand curriculum. While there are Niue resources that have been developed in New Zealand, they still lack the specificity of the Niue context in Niue. There is an importance of knowing the faces in a book, being able to know who a person is, which family they come from, what village they live in. All of these things are integral to identity. Books are an interesting site of cultural connection and identity for Niue people. While there are many books written by outsiders about Niue people and island, the number of Niue-authored books widely accessible to Niue communities is incredibly limited. T5's answer to this problem was to create original content in Niue.

Another theme in this story is thinking about foreign aid and the role it plays in Niue. After Cyclone Heta caused such significant destruction to Niue's capital Alofi, it was decided that all schools should move inland to Paliati. Australian Aid funded the new primary school and early childhood centre complex. T5 was clear about the positive outcomes of having the new school complex. However, after only a few years of being officially opened the building already needs maintenance. It's also been designed in a way that restricts emergency access vehicles from getting to certain classrooms. T5 is grateful for the new buildings but I could see her frustrations in already having to pay for repairs. There's a sense that our people should be grateful for what they get. But what if what they get isn't that great? What happens if what they get starts falling apart or doesn't make sense in the local context? What happens when what they get is unsafe?

Family is woven into the narrative and the importance of generational knowledge. I connect strongly with stories of parents teaching their children how to cook in Niue. Like all Niue people, I love food, so unsurprisingly many stories included references to food. The ways people gather, prepare and cook food, often have a significant connection to the environment. The way T5 even briefly mentions tunu paku (barbeque) isn't about buying imported food from Swanson supermarket, it's

about food from the land and sea. Our elders lived closer to the land, not just because of what they ate and how they used natural resources, but not many people had shoes so there was a literal closeness in how the land was always underfoot; no imported barriers. While elder generations didn't have many of the luxuries and technologies that we have now, they always knew how to get enough food, even in times of scarcity. My Dad often told when we're out walking in Niue that if you had a good knowledge of the bush then there was no way you would starve if you got lost. But Niue knowledge often comes from observation and as access to imported goods has changed, so too has the knowledge of and connection to the local environment. The importance of that knowledge is not lost on most people on the island. The imparting of local environmental and cultural knowledge has significant relevance for current generations for a lot of reasons. One is that it teaches us how to survive without electricity which is a common issue after environmental disasters. Knowledge from our elders also reminds us of our responsibility to the land and sea, because in nurturing these relationships we are more open to understanding how the environment nurtures us in return.

Knowing people, where they are from, how they are connected to you and how they are connected to the land are all important ways of understanding. It's a practice of oral and visual (observation) traditions that we sometimes take for granted. Sometimes there is knowledge we carry without even knowing. Learning about where T5's daughter is studying and talking about how we are related through my grandmother might seem like digressions, but they are important cultural connections. What information is shared can be decided on based on these connections. People often share more with family and although T5 knew of me from my early visits to Niue, it wasn't until I was on the island for about four weeks that she said she would be happy to talk to me about my research. Of course, there were things we talked about that aren't in the story. It's not just about privacy, T5 was open for me to use whatever I found useful. But there is a trust that comes with people being

honest and sharing things with you, that you will honour the relationship and the trust that is given.

The last few parts of the story connect with our talk about gender. T5 talked about gender in terms of the balance between men and women. We talked about the spaces that have been the domain of women and spaces that are the domain of men and how these have been changing more recently. For T5 fishing was a male-dominated space but something she wanted to learn. It wasn't until she married that she found someone willing to show her. She makes a connection between the recent rise of women into higher positions in society as a result of a UNESCO programme that pushed for women to be in more leadership positions. But in thinking about the story of Fisigaulu and T5's desire to fish, while UNESCO may have spurred a change in the positions women have publically, I get the sense that women find ways to be in place and do things they want regardless of what barriers others interpret for them. That isn't to say that having more women in higher levels of government, for example, isn't important but that the visibility of women in these roles can be connected to the roles of Niue women throughout time. Specifically, in origin stories like Fisigaulu, or our women warriors, or even stories of women who disregarded Christian edict.

### **Tala ke Onoaki (T6)**

*You studied and lived in Australia for a while. Your study set you up for a role in government. Before you left there weren't many women in fisheries but now more women are working in that space. You see it as a good thing. Overall things are still pretty male-dominated not just in Niue but also around the region.*

*You remember working in Samoa once and your male colleague was sick, so you had to fill in at a meeting. As soon as you walked in you could feel people judging you because you were a woman. Your response was to be clear that you weren't there to tell them how to fish but that you did want to help them, and you had knowledge you knew could help them. People were more relaxed after that.*

*In Niue, people seem to be more open to women in these roles but you are aware that not all islands are the same. In Niue, you've never felt that there were restrictions based on gender.*

*We talk about climate change in relation to donor funding and requirements like gender analysis that Niue must comply with to access funding. Because Niue is such a small place you find that when people hear gender they think about women but in Niue, it is the opposite. In Niue, it's the lack of participation from men that is becoming an issue.*

*In the government, more than 50% of the senior public servants are women which is creating a gender imbalance. But we still haven't had a female Premier. And you notice that on the political side, while more women are going on the common role very few make it through to be village representatives. People still predominantly choose male candidates. You think it's often because people deal with the personal and social sides of being in politics. While there might be more women on the island, people have other motives to vote for people they are related to or people they owe a favour to or other things that come from left field.*

*You see that there is that 'top-tier' of women who can do and say what they want and then there are others that just go with the flow. To get into the top-tier you can't go into things naïve and you need a thick skin. It's never a given that just because you are educated and might be able to do a job well that you will get into higher positions. You have to work hard. It's not always about merit, or your values or what you stand for, people choose who they like.*

*There is a Niue saying that we have a kalahimu (small shell-crabs) mentality. If you have a bucket of kalahimu and one tries to climb out of the bucket the others will all pull it back down. In other places, the mentality is a little bit different. Like in New Zealand, you think people there are more willing to build a pyramid to help someone succeed who can then reach down and pull more people up to that level.*

*On the island people have more interaction with others, in places like New Zealand, people don't always live so close together. People there may only see each other once a week at church and it influences peoples' perspectives. It's harder to have a kalahimu mentality when people live further away and don't interact with each other as much.*

*We talk about my initial perception that people here didn't really care about climate change. You think it's not so much they don't care but more that people are so busy. People see changes, but they have so many other things to deal with that on the surface it might seem like people don't care when sometimes they are just trying to get by.*

*People are starting to see a lot more of the impacts of climate change. You think that "It's easy [for people] to say climate change" but knowing what that means is another thing. You think it's important to recognise a change in the models that we've used in the past. Relying on traditional knowledge or oral traditions that remember cyclones coming from the west can create a vulnerability to these new weather systems that don't conform to a pattern.*

*People can appreciate that there are things caused by climate change but recognising terminology and understanding it is different. Some people feel like they understand things and then get bored, hearing it over and over. But climate science knowledge isn't static. Things are changing and it's important that people are reminded and stay informed.*

*Back in 2016, three cyclones came through. Normally cyclones come from the north-western or western sides of the island. People on the eastern side might say there's no cyclone even when there was a blue alert and a yellow alert. But that year the cyclone came from the eastern side. It wasn't until then that people realised that the pattern that they were used to had changed. You are careful not to say that we can't be guided by the knowledge that has come before, but you think people need to be looking for*

*ways to enhance their resilience to these changes. And for you, this comes from different models and different ways of thinking.*

*I think your science background has a strong influence on how you see the world. You talk about looking at the reality of things, forming a logical approach where other more “enthusiastic” people might say that the world is going to end. But it’s hard to confine that kind of attitude to science in a non-Niue context. There’s a kind of pragmatic attitude in Niue culture that people do what needs to be done. Yet you also observe that Niue people are often reactive. People only respond to what they experience in front of them.*

*But some people recognise that upcoming changes are significant, and they are working to be more prepared and help others to do the same. There is an inevitability of future cyclones becoming more intense and you feel like people are becoming more aware of this and the implications it will have on them. People are starting to think about ways they will be able to cope with this change.*

*You think Niue has to both adapt and mitigate strategically. “Our restricting factor will be funding, we tend to wait for outside funding, so we have to start really on the mitigation”. Niue is looking at having 80% of its energy coming from renewable sources by 2025. You think it is good but there is a catch: “we can make that declaration however we need the donors coming in to help us”. It’s about changes in attitude and changes mindset.*

*What helps with changing mindsets? You think it’s about being more aware of climate science. Having early warning systems in place that everyone knows to follow. It’s also about informative communication channels.*

*An example is the Meteorological Office, sending information about weather systems and changes to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry who can then provide better information and solutions for what plants might be more suitable in the coming season. It’s about practical information that people can use. “It’s about doing*

*things more consciously... the things we can do without much". Like potholes. It's hard to get around this issue, literally and figuratively. For you, it's another example of where people could do more with what we have and be more innovative and creative in the ways we do things to make things better.*

## **T6 insights**

While many Niue stories centre around moving to New Zealand, there is an increasing number of Niue people who live in and move between Australia and Niue. People sometimes move for jobs, sometimes for family. Some Niue people who move from New Zealand to Australia have never been to Niue. It's a growing reality for a diaspora that for a few decades has been larger than the population on the island. T6 went to Australia for education. She is part of a growing group of Niue people who have completed their doctorates. In some ways, the dynamic of our conversation felt a little different because of our shared connection with tertiary studies. Towards the end of our conversation, she gave me advice and support to keep up my writing. Although I have read about many Niue scholars, I have only met and spoken with a few. I'm all too aware of the colonial systems in academia that make Niue scholars seem invisible – I didn't think there were any when I began my study. But as I engage more in this space and learn more from Pacific Studies, it becomes easier to remove the colonial lenses and (metaphorically) punch through the walls. One of my supervisors once told me that sometimes if you just assume that our people are out there, and our job is then to go and find them. Meeting T6 did turn my imagination of Niue scholars into more of a reality.

One of the very first things we talked about was how women were represented both in Niue and around the region. T6's job meant that she would often meet counterparts or representatives from around the region. In the example she gives, gender plays a clear role in how men from other parts of the Pacific responded to her when she had to lead a presentation on her own. She points out that it required some care and some cultural understanding. While climate change requires a

coordinated and unified response, there are complex underlying currents that can influence how and where information is shared and from whom people are open to receiving knowledge or information. It is in this example that T6 points to her cultural awareness that enabled her to assess that the men in the room weren't comfortable with being spoken to by a woman, but in communicating her position and where her expertise might help them she created a space where knowledge could be shared. There's a point here about how climate change information is communicated comfortably in different cultural contexts. While gender can have specific implications there is also a more general sense that communication itself can be prickly when coming from different people or places. While being Pacific can mean a deeper understanding of Pacific cultures, there are as many dissimilarities as there are similarities. And while there are things we can unite around there are other things that make people feel uncomfortable (to say the very least). A Niue person telling a Samoan how to fish, for example, can be problematic. Which is why T6 made it clear that she was not there to do that.

There is complexity in how women can move in particular regional and governing bodies and while it can be connected to colonialism and aspects of Christianity, there seem to be other factors at play. It wasn't something we went into detail about in our conversation, but we did think about the roles of women in Niue not necessarily being unaffected by patriarchy. Perhaps there is a question here around what gender balance looks like on paper and what it feels like in reality. Governments around the region are increasingly seeing female representatives in higher positions, Guam for example recently set the world record for the highest number of women in government leadership positions. In Niue, there is a slow increase in women in government leadership positions as well. However, while some might feel like there is equal opportunity for any gender when people like T6 say you have to "have a thick skin", I feel like part of that is because many people, both men and women, still carry patriarchal views. T5 highlighted how her ability to speak her mind was not something that all Niue women felt comfortable doing. So while women

in the 'top tier' may be able to speak more freely, they must also be aware that what they say can affect others. Getting into the top tier doesn't come without sacrifice.

T6 made a point that in Niue there is an increasing gender imbalance that is in favour of women. While this isn't across the board and certainly isn't the case in government representation in parliament, interestingly, there are often more women attending or participating in workshops, community consultations, or other engagements between the government or NGOs and the community. It's a reminder that Niue women aren't passive when it comes to seeking information and sharing their opinions. But it raises questions around why women are engaging in these spaces more than men, what implications this has at a familial, village and national levels, and what the implications are for women themselves. Perhaps there are other spaces in which men are talking about these issues. But if women are being represented more at community-level how could this shape how climate change information is being shared? Certainly, when talking with a group of Niue women I could feel a lot more rigour in debating and confirming the impacts and implications of climate change in Niue.

T6 brought up the "kalahimu mentality". It was the first time I had heard it of it but I understood what she meant when she explained. Kalahimu mentality has a negative connotation. Essentially when several kalahimu are put in a bucket if one tries to get out, the others in the bucket will pull it back down, thus sealing a group fate. T6 commented that if one were to reach the top it could then help pull others out of the bucket or perhaps in working together they could make a pyramid and more could escape faster. She suggested that in New Zealand people who reach the top are more likely to help others to get there too. In some ways, it can be harder to try new things in Niue. There is a kind of competitiveness but there are also a limited number of positions and at the end of the day there is only one island. People can be protective of the positions and power they have and particular knowledge that might enable others to take their place. But there are consequences from systems that favour this

kind of thinking and action. And there are aspects of climate change knowledge and information that is new or comes from outside Niue.

From her education and in the various positions she has been in T6 knows that there is specific information and data that comes from sources like the meteorological office that can help our people adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. However, utilizing that knowledge doesn't necessarily have to be at the cost of cultural knowledge. The view that our cultural knowledge is static and can only be considered "true" if it reflects a preserved state from before it is tainted by Western contact can still reflect colonial propaganda that holds our culture as stuck in time. It's a mentality some of our own people perpetuate when they see our islands and people as backward. But our ancestors met great changes and did more than survive, they adapted to them, incorporated them and made outsider things part of Niue. The introduction of Christianity to Niue was not the end of Niue people, culture or ways of being and knowing. The ways we look, the ways we see, the ways we think, the ways we do things culminate in our identity and our culture. To say these things haven't changed in hundreds and even thousands of years is naïve, to say the least.

It's difficult to think about knowledge without thinking about power. In this case, there are some divisions between outsider, scientific knowledge and cultural knowledge. In Niue, people are protective of cultural knowledge because it affords them power. But power is also associated with scientific knowledge which affords access to greater funding from outside agencies. So when a Niue woman who can walk in and speak the language of these two different spaces exists, it's interesting to see how she thinks Niue people need to look at the reality of things and form logical approaches. It certainly sounds like something a scientist would say. But perhaps there is more clarification in T6's point that on the surface seems like a dismissal of people who fear monger and catastrophize climate change as world-ending. Her point is that this is not practical and that there are things that can be done. But the space of reality and logic from a scientific sense doesn't necessarily negate Niue culture or

knowledge. While mainstream climate change rhetoric often situates scientific knowledge as separate from Indigenous knowledge, there are more points of connection between these spaces that have only recently been explored. There are also increasing conversations in literature and in other spaces of Western and colonial monopolization of what is or isn't science.

Where the other women's stories often related more personally to their family and their land, this story kept a sustained focus on politics and climate change as key aspects of T6's job. This acts as a useful challenge to a couple of things. One is the idea that Niue perspectives can be neatly categorised and labelled or that one person can be representative of all Niue people. It also challenges where climate change knowledge can come from and how it can be both connected to and made distinct from cultural knowledge. This is an important story because it also challenges this idea that Niue people as Indigenous people reject science or scientists. Apart from the fact that T6 is a scientist, she actively uses scientific approaches in conjunction with her cultural understanding to be able to do the most with what she has. The last few points in the story where she is thinking about "the things we can do without much" reflect this and have some interesting connections with how our ancestors both survived and adapted to changes in their environments, both natural and otherwise.

This story pushes this idea that climate change is not just about environmental changes but about psychological changes as well. T6 suggests greater education and awareness of climate science. Systems that people know to follow and responsive communication channels. It's difficult to see how climate science can achieve this alone. While climate science can provide information and systematic approaches, there are still kalahimu and other mentalities to contend with, not least that communication channels and education are heavily influenced by culture. And perhaps a bigger point that appears briefly earlier in the story is the connection of climate science with culture. The proposal she's making isn't necessarily climate science at the cost of cultural knowledge or understanding although the two are often

pitted against each other. Yet science is part of our culture. Our ancestors were scientists. T6 is a scientist, though perhaps trained differently to our ancestral scientists. But how do climate change narratives recognise scientists as insiders and outsiders in our Indigenous communities? What conversations are possible when we have our people as scientists?; when they know and understand climate science both from ancestral and cultural bodies of knowledge as well as western science? What happens when we think about these spaces in relationship to each other rather than in disconnection?

Lots of people in Niue have an opinion about potholes. But while many see the problem and may feel like there are simple solutions, few look at the increasing number of cars and larger vehicles on the island. T6 thinks that we can be more creative with the resources we have to find long-lasting solutions. But it's interesting to see how worked up people can be about potholes. It has an immediacy in that people drive these roads to work every day and then to get to family or church or plantations outside of work. Climate change for some Niue people has a kind of invisibility. It's not something that can be contained or simplified in a way that people are reminded of it negatively, every day. It's not something you have to avoid on the road. Niue people have diverse skills, T6's point of working more with what we have is useful in focusing more attention to resources of the land and sea rather than importing solutions from abroad which always have a cost.

### **Tala ke Fituaki (T7)**

*We meet in your office at work though we've met many times at church. You know who I am, you know my family, and you know my family land. When people talk about my research in front of you one night you announce that you will help me with it.*

*You come from a long line of strong women. Your Nana never worked but she was the force behind your Papa, "she made sure he had everything ready to the point where she put his socks on!" Your Nana never took crap from anyone. Your Mother was the*

*strong and silent type but when she spoke it came with authority. And after everything you have put your Mother through she still shows you unconditional love. It's something you treasure with your own daughters.*

*Your strength comes from your parents and the way you were brought up. Your parents would say "don't make any excuses that you're a girl and you can't do this, you've got two arms, so go!" We talk briefly about feminism, you mention that the Niue government has 29% women, one of the highest in the Pacific. We still haven't had a female Premier yet though.*

*You grew up around politics. Your father, your grandfather and your great grandfather were all politicians. Now you are in government too. Being a representative government is not just about having good ideas, you have to show commitment to the village, you have to wear lots of different hats.*

*It's not easy being in a male-dominated role. Some men would like things to stay the same, but sometimes it's the women who will try and pull other women down. They say it's something you're not supposed to be doing. But I guess it depends on where you are looking from. It seems like there have always been Niue women doing things that society says they shouldn't. Pity those who try to hold you back. You've learnt to have thick skin. It is one reason why you have made it to where you are now, both in government and in church.*

*From your particular role, you see that the government wants to change our peoples' mentality: "unless you transform the mentality of the people it's going to be very hard to change anything else". I agree in some ways, but I'm wary that minds can be colonised too and even walking into the building where you work there is both a literal and figurative sense that things are increasingly being closed off to the people. You feel like people often want the government to step in and solve all the problems. But those same people don't often give up their own money or time to help out. In some*

*ways, you think Niue people are very spoilt and complain often. You feel like you were spoilt as a child.*

*You think Niue people are lucky in relation to gender equality. Men and women get equal opportunities. But you don't think it's perfect, often it's Niue women who enforce entrenched Christian views of patriarchy. Your Nana once told you to go and cook the breakfast for your husband, you told her, "Oh hell no! He's got two arms, I will make breakfast if I want to make breakfast!"*

*You tell me to explain what my research is about and afterwards you pick out words you think are most important: climate change and identity. You make up your own questions and then set about answering them.*

*For you, language is a key aspect of Niue identity. It is a gift from our parents. Some parents don't value the language as much because "you don't use it when you go for an interview". But you think that language is the key part of who we are and unless we pass it on, we are taking something away from our kids. You say that once someone is an adult they have no excuses to learn the language. I can't help but think you mean me.*

*You remember your parents being tough on you about language. Speaking vagahau wasn't allowed in the classroom but speaking English was not allowed inside the home. Times change though, and grandparents are more lenient with grandkids who speak English most of the time.*

*You say that knowing your language is knowing who you are. You "truly believe that language is one of the major identity of being who you are, regardless of whether you are Niue, Māori or whatever, you need to learn both languages, language is a plus [laughs], language should be a plus!" Particularly for Niue people who like to gossip, knowing the language can be very important.*

*Climate change makes you think of cyclones. Heta was the last big one. The impact at the time was big, but as time goes by more impacts start to show. Like the mango trees that never seemed to recover, their leaves go black and many have died out.*

*We talk about how Niue is different compared to other places in the Pacific. For a start, Niue is much higher in comparison to other islands. You've been in meetings overseas where people talk about the impacts of rising sea levels on their homelands and you feel sad. Sometimes seeing other countries makes you feel like we don't have anything to complain about in Niue. You know that it's not islands like ours that are causing the problems. But I wonder if that makes us powerless?*

*You talk about how the ocean is really blue but that it won't stay like that forever. Rubbish and pollution are a big factor in what you think causes climate change. Niue is one of the cleanest places in the Pacific, you say. It's rare to see rubbish on the side of the road in Niue. But when I ask what you think about the rubbish dumping areas around the island and the impact they might have, you change the topic. Things might be out of sight, but does that make put them out of mind too?*

*You think that it's our children that will have to do the work to combat climate change. As a mother, you are always thinking about your children. You like being a role model for young girls so that they don't see any barriers in what they want to do. Limitations are taught, particularly through parents. But one of the biggest lessons you learnt from your grandfather was "don't ever let anybody make you feel bad, nobody can do that to you except yourself if you allow people to do it that's when it's gonna happen, if you don't let people do that to you then it won't happen. But mind you, don't you ever demand respect, you work for that, you earn that". It's a mentality you carry with you always.*

## T7 insights

It's difficult to know the full extent our women have played in the success of Niue men in positions of power. While patriarchal systems downplay the role of women, it's clear in this story that whether visible or not our women have and continue to play important roles in our communities and in the roles that on the surface only portray a Niue man. There's something in noticing the "strong and silent type", women who don't have to be loud to have power and authority. Similar to some of the written narratives of Niue women, this story talks about women in how we don't necessarily draw attention to ourselves, but we still do the work. In contrast, T7 is in a role that requires a certain level of loudness and visibility. While she might not see her gender as important in terms of determining what she can and can't do – she was raised not to see it as a weakness or a reason not to do certain things– she can see that being a woman and being in a high-level position is important for young girls to see.

There's a specific kind of strength that is passed from generation to generation in this story and particularly from mother to daughter. Being heavily involved in both politics and the church which have been predominantly led by men, T7 pushes back on the idea that women are passive and vulnerable. T7's story recognises that speaking up and putting your hand up to do these roles requires a thick skin. There are patriarchal structures that some people want to keep in place. It's a reminder that part of these challenges is in how people think and how social structures are set up to encourage or discourage certain things. T7 also has strong support and guidance from the men in her family. Her father, grandfather and great grandfather were all in politics. Particularly her father pushed her to be in politics. The focus on the impact of her family, strong female and male figures created an environment that pushed her to speak her mind and like her Nana, not take "crap from anyone". Unsurprisingly she also took control of the questions during our main conversation. She chose 'climate change' and 'identity' to be the most important points but didn't connect them

explicitly. Specifically, she talked about language as it relates to identity and it seemed like that point, in particular, was directed at me or people like me who haven't grown up on the island. She emphasised her view of language as the central tenet of a Niue identity. Without language, our children are less equipped to know themselves, to know their culture and be able to overcome the challenges they will inevitably face, not just in relation to climate change. Language is a gift, not just from our parents but from our ancestors. It creates a sense of belonging and shared identity. She went short of saying that without the language someone can't be a Niue person, but she did mention that when she went overseas and met other Niue people she would always be excited until she tried to speak vagahau with them and found that they couldn't say anything back. My conversation with T7 wasn't the first time I had been talked to about learning the language and like many others I've experienced both in Niue and in New Zealand, T7 spoke of how parents should be doing the work to teach their children the language. Conversations like this made me think about my upbringing and the reasons why I couldn't speak vagahau even though my Dad is from Niue. It's a lot more complex than people telling me I should know the language, make it sound. More than once I found myself being quite defensive of why my Dad hadn't taught me the language, not least because he largely stopped speaking it, moved to a country that didn't (and still doesn't, despite Niue still being part of the New Zealand Realm) value it either. Ultimately these conversations don't seem to move anything forward. There need to be more conversations about Niue language and how we can build resources for people who do want to learn or want to teach their children the language, particularly in, but not limited to, Aotearoa.

T7's initial points about climate change centre on Cyclone Heta, which hit Niue in early 2004 and the scale of destruction caused is still held close in many people's memories. But it wasn't just the hit that caused damage and T7 points out that many mango trees have died out since that cyclone. While mangos might not seem like they should have such importance it's useful to follow this line of thinking. What is important about mangoes when it comes to climate change? In T7's view, they are a

marker of a significant event and bear the signs of possible disease and death. Mango trees on the island can also be quite old. Some of the older mango trees are used as markers for family land boundaries. Mangoes have been relatively rare in the past few years. Mango trees are an important part of the landscape, and there is a sense of unease when they are not doing well.

The conversation then turned to Niue in comparison to other Pacific islands. There's an awareness of what rising sea levels mean for lower-lying nations. But it's not the same thing that Niue is facing. Niue is a raised atoll, which doesn't make it immune to rising sea levels but does change the context of what sea-level rise is doing to people's homes or livelihoods. While T7 could sympathise with other islands, the reality in Niue is not the same and in some ways, this seems to distance us from how Pacific islands are portrayed in relation to climate change, sea-level rise often being at the forefront of climate change discussion. Considering her role, the information she has access to, and the meetings she attends around the Pacific that include representatives from several island nations, there's a sense that perhaps the dominant conversations in these spaces enable sympathy or empathy but do not necessarily prompt action. Countries are sharing ideas and experiences, but from what T7 talked about, in her role at least, she wasn't thinking of what larger countries were doing or what Niue could or should be doing regionally or globally. Perhaps our conversation didn't naturally lead into these points, it certainly tended to have an inward focus with the exception of language. Her point that Niue people should complain less, that we don't have it as bad as others do is perhaps a reminder of her political position and the kinds of conversations and spaces she is working in when she is at home and when she attends different meetings around the region.

T7 emphasised that Niue is very clean. I found it interesting that she pointed out rubbish as being something rare to see on the side of the road. Since I started visiting Niue there have been quite a few groups targeting rubbish and particularly plastic waste from getting into the sea. And because I walked most mornings in Niue

my experience of rubbish dumps hidden in the bush or rubbish not far from the main road in particular made me think a little more carefully about what T7 was saying and the places she was comparing Niue to. It isn't the first time that I've heard Niue is much cleaner in comparison to other Pacific island nations. But it doesn't mean there aren't waste issues in Niue. A short way from the main commercial centre in Alofi is one of the largest rubbish dumping areas on the island. Even though there were signs that said, "don't dump rubbish", new rubbish appeared most of the time I was doing my fieldwork. The rubbish supported a growing number of stray dogs, chickens and lots of flies, bees, mosquitoes, and wasps. Quite a few of the inland tracks also have rubbish heaps, perhaps slightly concealed, but not difficult to access. The rubbish dump in Alofi had a strange appeal to me, not just because occasionally it was home to cute puppies. But because waste can be an interesting reflection of people and our habits. The dump in Alofi has recently been taken over and has changed a lot since the time I was doing my fieldwork. Several groups in Niue are pushing for greater environmental sustainability. A lot of the things aren't new several initiatives are about returning to methods that our grandparents and great-grandparents used, but the social uptake and promotion of these things seem to have more momentum. It was not so long ago that untidy yards or houses were a criminal offence and therefore punishable through fines or hard labour. Cleanliness has had particular importance in the past few years as outbreaks of dengue fever have hit the island. Interestingly, T7 saw that things like pollution would change the colour of the sea, perhaps also recognising that clear waters feature heavily in Niue Tourism branding.

T7 put particular importance on how parents raised their children. If children were strong in the language, strong in their identity and weren't too spoilt then they would be able to face the challenges of climate change. Particularly as a mother she had a lot to say about how she was brought up as a child and how she has brought up her children. It's important to think about the generational impacts of climate change and her particular emphasis on our children having to do the work to combat climate change is interesting. It pushes us to think about how we are preparing and educating

our children for what lies ahead. Although she doesn't connect the points explicitly, it is perhaps for parents to lead the way when it comes to climate change response.

While climate change features in this story the connections are quite varied, from cyclones and mangoes to sea level rise that affects other Pacific islanders, to rubbish and cleanliness. And yet there is this persistence of language being such an important part of Niue identity. There is a notion here that our children will have to deal with climate change but to succeed in this they need to know their language.

### **Tala ke Valuaki (T8)**

*You invite me to come to your house. Your grandkids are watching the TV in the lounge so you take me through to the kitchen. You give me a drinking coconut with dunked cream crackers in it, you call it 'famu', I try to look it up in the dictionary later - it's not there, but there are lots of things missing from the dictionary. You don't know how that name came about but you think it means "thumbs up".*

*We start talking about a few books written about Niue and people who might be good for me to talk too. You talk about how generous people are here, how as soon as you come home there will be fresh coconuts waiting at the door, or some cooked food. Food is abundant here and there's nothing more welcoming than real Niue food. Niue lifestyle and culture are rich. Maybe not in money, but in food and wellbeing.*

*People are coming home to Niue more. They find any excuse, birthdays, church celebrations. You like the parts of Niue that tourists don't go. As long as we can keep them safe then maybe we can keep our culture close. Every time you come here it feels like a retreat. But if you are asked to perform or do things in the community then it can become more hectic. There's no better place than here. We talk about my experiences of coming to Niue for the first time. You think people have to come to know more about Niue in their own way. If you come with too many expectations*

*people here can crush them. It's true that you have to go away from Niue to really appreciate what we have here.*

*Growing up you didn't learn about climate change but there were things you knew about the environment, like not to burn too much when clearing land. Burning plastic is bad for the air. Climate change for you is about the changes in the seasons. It's hotter. Australia might be hot, but here it's very humid and it takes a while to adapt to it. You move between Australia, New Zealand, the Cook Islands and Niue, the places where your family are.*

*You can sense that something is happening though. There used to be more abundance on the reefs but now there is much less. There are old fruits that we hardly see any more like the old lime or passionfruit. You weren't here for Heta, but you have been here for other cyclones. You came a week after Heta, and everything was brown. "For a small country like this the wave just... killed a lot of things". In Avatele there was heaps of sand and everywhere things were bare, even in the sea.*

*There's a big awareness of climate change at primary schools now. You have young grandchildren who tell you about it. From not burning plastic to doing more composting, and even collecting cans. People used to just chuck rubbish everywhere, but now you have to collect and recycle some things. The crushing machine has broken down so there isn't much recycling happening at the moment.*

*When people look after the land, it provides in abundance, it's like going shopping and you can get all the things you want. But with more and more imported foods available it feels like our local supplies become more and more invisible.*

*You talk about the changing of seasons and how it relates to crops. There is a season of plenty and then a season of not very much. Like the tides, abundance comes and goes. When there is a drought there are certain crops that you plant for that time. In the past, there were more crops for this, but lately, people grow them more for show. Like the wild yam that is a more stable crop during time of drought. There's a specific*

*vine called tapui that our elders would use to grow during drier periods. It is prepared like the arrowroot bulb, a kind of starch powder.*

*Growing up you often ate talo, yam, cassava, coconut, breadfruit and fish, because your Dad was a good fisherman. The best part is the fish head. You make soup with it. The rest of the fish was usually given to the pastor and the neighbours.*

*You used to get water from wells rather than a tap. It was right by the house. In your parents' time, they had to go further out towards the sea to get water. Times have changed. Things have become so convenient that we take them for granted.*

*You notice that there are a lot of things that are changing in Niue and for Niue people. "The lifestyle, the diet – it's very processed" when there are so many natural resources that we are surrounded by. We talk about how the changing culture here has flow-on effects to our communities overseas. You like the way some elders are trying different things to connect with younger people like bringing electric keyboards to church. It's a learning ground. But while we might take knowledge from the island, some things just don't make sense without the context of being here.*

*You talk about how people leave here because it's a hard life. Waking up going to work in the bush. But it's also a hard life overseas. You wake up and have to go to work. While it might not be physically hard, it can be draining. You think young career-focused Niue people often end up overseas but more and more they end up wanting to get back into the culture.*

*You have family here, in Sydney, in Auckland, and the Cook Islands. You use Facebook to keep in touch with family and you see the older people getting more involved with it too. In Sydney, you encourage people to connect with Niue culture with kids' holiday programmes. Teaching kids to make pitako, teaching Niue songs, practising Niue manners or practising vagahau Niue.*

*You feel like vagahau Niue is trending to become a performing language; you only hear it when it is performed. But some people are trying to keep it going, teaching their young kids. You find more parents are coming along to the Niue session you run, they want to find out what their kids are learning. You are careful to have healthier island foods at these sessions. Families chip in and bring food so that the cost doesn't become too much of a burden. You also encourage drinking water. There was a time when all the kid's teeth were decaying because of the fizzy drinks.*

*In Sydney, you also have a group that meets for Niue crafts. Although it's not big on numbers you think it's important to have space where people can come and speak the language. Even if they don't have any crafts to do, they can still come and feel the Niue culture. "Niue language is dying. It's dying. Unless we do something to encourage it".*

*You knew a family where the mum and dad were both Niue people but couldn't speak anything. They wanted to learn the language, but the classes had ended for the year. So, you did a few extra sessions with them to help get them started. The grandfather of the couple said joked that he couldn't speak vagahau in front of people. But when it comes to learning about Niue culture or language there is a time to joke and a time to take it seriously because when our elders are gone, and the young people don't know then it can be harder for them to learn.*

*We talked about the symbols of Christ in the last church service we went to. Instead of bread and wine, they had fizzy drink and vanilla biscuits. You think it'd be better to have used coconut water and talo. We laughed about the dog that went up to the front of the church. And if anyone tried to chase it away, the dog just went under the pews. We can be critical or even over-critical of what's happening in Niue, "but at the end of the day it is what it is". And for us, it is home. The people, the politics, it's all part of what makes us tagata Niue.*

## **T8 insights**

One of the first things to impact me from meeting T8 was how we immediately talked about books written about Niue. T8 moves between Niue, Sydney, Auckland and the Cook Islands and had a similar interest in learning about Niue. The topic of books had such a strong pull for both of us in thinking about the ways we learn more about the culture, particularly if we aren't always near to any Niue elders. Books often feel like something taken for granted in a Niue context. There's a sense that people, both Niue and non-Niue people, don't think Niue people have written very much. Which I know from my research isn't the case, but it is a reminder about access. There's perhaps something in both of us thinking about and looking for books as ways to engage with and learn more about our culture.

It's useful to include and reflect on the giving and sharing of food. Food, of course, has a significant role in Niue culture. For me, T8 took particular care in sharing common food Niue people have and talking through what she knew about where it came from, or what she didn't know. Famu is similar to something my Dad had a lot when I was little, making a cup of tea and then putting all the cabin breads or water crackers in it. He hadn't done that for quite a while, but I noticed that cabin breads and water crackers are making a comeback in my parents' house since I've talked with him about it. It's something I've noticed happening throughout my PhD, where talking with my Dad about my experiences in Niue when I got home to New Zealand was an important way to reflect on what was important. While he often says that he doesn't remember much from his time growing up in Niue or that he doesn't know much about the culture, even the things he eats are ways into practising and remembering the culture. It also brings in this idea of how Niue culture adapts. Coconuts don't grow very well, though I'm cautious to say 'can't' after hearing Manukura, Associate Professor Tom Roa speak of how his ancestors brought and grew coconuts in the Waikato region. However, to find fruiting coconut trees in New Zealand today is pretty rare and certainly, my Dad's generations didn't have much access either. So, the

necessity to replace such a staple in our island diet has led to the use of drinks like tea with milk as a substitute. Perhaps a bigger point to think about here is not just how food is such a big part of our culture but to think about the ways that climate change rhetoric connects with food. As T7 points out Niue food is part of the richness in Niue culture. It is not about the foods we import but about the foods we have on the island. Famu combines both these elements as we might have the best of both worlds but with the caution that one should not eclipse the other. There are certainly increasing conversations around the ways we can decolonise our food. Famu is an interesting example of bringing in foreign crackers or biscuits and adding them to a staple of the Niue diet, coconut. It's a reminder of how our people walk in many different worlds; that our culture changes and adapts from the ways we engage with people and places around the region and beyond. Both of these points around knowledge and food signal some interesting aspects of Niue culture particularly in how people of the diaspora can connect and share similar experiences that are uniquely Niue.

Cyclones are connected with climate change in this narrative. For T8, the changes in the environment were both land and sea-based. Cyclone Heta in particular still has a lot of lasting memories for people who experienced it or came to Niue in the wake of it. Thinking about the brownness of the Niue landscape, dying flora is incredibly evocative in thinking about the colours of the landscape literally being taken away in the devastation of the cyclone. The story builds on the idea of climate change knowledge coming from both elder and younger generations. While T7 didn't learn about climate change growing up things are happening in schools that parents are engaging with, like not burning so much plastic. Perhaps in some ways, this deals more with carbon emissions created by some of the imported food and resources brought into Niue. T7 noticed the ebb and flow of seasons, times of abundance and times of scarcity. She makes a point about climate change being a kind of list of things to do: composting, recycling, not burning plastic.

T8 notes a shift in how people have water on the island. While it's easy to turn on a tap in your house, it was only in our parents and grandparents generations where freshwater had to be fetched from the village wells or pumps or (before that) people would have to go to certain caves to be able to get water. Paying attention not just to what people eat but how they go about getting food has some important links in relating to the impacts of climate change. Both from the perspective of how our elders and ancestors gathered and prepared food and also how this has changed over time. Paying attention to these processes is useful in thinking about the costs and benefits of these changes. It makes visible some aspects of food and water sources that are often taken for granted when people have access to modern conveniences. Particularly in this story, T8 draws attentions to how getting water has changed quite significantly in the last few generations. She pushes at this idea of people not appreciating or recognising the significance of being able to turn a knob in your own home and to have water. One of the points she makes is that it took our elder generations a lot more time to get water. And while taps have the benefit of convenience, in some ways they take away from cultural knowledge of where our water comes (or came) from. It perhaps also points to how some convenience can reduce agency. While I'm sure she isn't advocating for running water to houses to be cut, it raises a need to maintain connections to the fenua, to not take for granted that water comes from taps. It's a reminder of the ways our ancestors survived.

Our discussion often turned to think about how Niue people overseas connect with Niue. While some Niue people take the tack of selling Niue to you, T8 had some perspectives that pushed at other parts of this. One point was thinking about politics here. While she always enjoyed her time in Niue, it always felt like a holiday, after a while people inevitable become attune or engaged in some of the community politics. Sometimes by proxy that also includes government politics. But in this context, we discussed the politics of village and church expectations. While it's easy to be critical of how things are done, T7 emphasised how as diaspora we are only visiting. Contributing or engaging in island matters was earned and took time. This pushes at

the insider-outsider perspective, where being from a place doesn't necessarily give you free rein. And people can be judged by this for decades. Being born and staying in Niue has an important distinction compared to Niue people who don't live in Niue. I certainly felt this every time I visited. While Niue people are very welcoming, there's a difference in being welcomed when you are thought of as a holiday-maker, only there for a visit, compared to someone who welcomed and recognised as staying for a longer time. It was something I noticed most in my time in my family village of Mutalau. Even though I stayed in Alofi (my closest relatives all reside there), I would always go to church in Mutalau – it's something my Dad said I should do. It wasn't until T7 invited me to her house and we had more discussions that I got an invite from one of the church deacons to stay after the next service and have lunch. This isn't the experience of all Niue diaspora, but it was interesting to reflect on how things I did (or didn't do) were all noticed. And while some elders, including T7, took time to guide me, I often felt the weight of not having aunties or grandmothers in these spaces. The 10 am church in Mutalau tends to be dominated by women.

In part of the story, T8 connects the abundance of food in the Niue environment to supermarkets. At one level it emphasises how people looking after the land gain a knowledge that can open their eyes to the great quantity of food and resources available to them. The metaphor also pushes back at this idea that Niue has very little on it and is entirely dependent on foreign aid and imports. In part, these ideas have roots in the colonial relationship Niue has with New Zealand. Despite New Zealand profiting from Niue produce and labour, New Zealand was and is often still viewed as the land of milk and honey. For my Dad, growing up he vividly remembers his brother coming back from New Zealand with cases of apples, oranges, boxes of biscuits, and other goodies. The ideas of abundance coming from the natural environment shifted. Where abundance was seen in the produce of Niue, abundance and convenience were found in what was coming off the boat and later, the plane. One reason the understanding of abundance seems so important in this story is that in some ways it is about re-remembering our relationships with abundance in the

literal and figurative fruits of our island and her people. And I think there is a similar connection being made by T8 about her favourite parts of Niue being the places that tourists don't go. And it's because in these places we aren't just putting things on for show, we aren't trying to sell them but instead, we are thinking about how they are connected to us, how they nourished our ancestors and how they nourish us.

### **Tala ke Hivaaki (T9)**

*We meet and have a conversation at your work. The woman I had just spoken with thought you would be great for me to talk with, so she takes me to you straight away. We hadn't met before and I explain that you can take some time to think about whether you want to be part of the research. You decide now is a good time, so I join you on the kid's chairs as you finish some artwork. The beautiful artwork around the walls is all done by you. It's the reason you're working in this school; someone noticed your talent and recommended you for this role.*

*Climate change feels almost intrusive, so we talk more about ourselves, how we are connected through family and place. You were born in New Zealand but came back here for high school. Your family is from the Alofi area, your Mum is from Tuapa. She was the best, she was firm and good at everything. "She was the best Mum, the best housewife, the best cook, the best everything. Way better than what I'm doing now". People often don't appreciate the work housewives or homemakers. It's completely underrated. I agree, your Mum sounds a lot like mine.*

*Your Mum would just do everything. You weren't spoilt, but she would make sure you knew all your jobs and you would do them without complaining. Your job was sweeping all the leaves under the mango, breadfruit and frangipani trees.*

*Your Dad was the money-maker. But every week some money would go toward a new decoration in the house, maybe a new curtain or cushion. She loved to decorate the house. The house isn't like that anymore. When your Mum left to live in New Zealand*

*no one looked after what was left. Your Dad was strong in education. He always said that with hard work you could achieve what you wanted.*

*Your parents had a strong spiritual side they were strong churchgoers. They were really good role models. You couldn't have asked for better.*

*Six of your siblings live in New Zealand, two live in New Zealand with your Mum and you live in Niue.*

*You notice that houses are better these days, with sanitary amenities, flowing water. Schools have changed too. Different technology in the class and different kinds of learning.*

*Things are good and bad at the same time. You sometimes regret bringing technology into the house especially with your kids. You promised your eldest daughter that if she worked hard at school then when she finished she could have a phone. But once she achieved her goal then the younger ones would nag you for new phones.*

*It's hard when kids see other kids who are well-off getting new iPad's or new phones or always going on holidays overseas. You don't think it's the fault of technology. It's how parents raise their kids around these things. Some kids feel like technology is the most important thing in life. You took away 5 iPads and phones from kids at church last week. They were all zoning out on Facebook, during church! They didn't complain but by the end of church, they were all so desperate to get them back.*

*You haven't gotten into Facebook. You tell me that you are "quite a behind, out-of-date person with technology; mine is just I get in play the game and thank you that's it... but maybe if I knew how to use it I would be more like them".*

*You're a Mormon and now every Sunday you try and get kids off their phones and outside to play games instead. Some people use phone time as a bribe to get their kids to do things. But you don't think it's very good. Kids just rush the jobs and then race to get back on their phones or iPads. You tell them "don't do things because you are*

*gonna get something. I mean that's not us. In the past everyone knew what they were supposed to do," like sweeping the leaves, feeding the pigs, or chopping firewood. When you were growing up parents didn't have to be on their kids' backs to do chores because everyone knew what had to be done. You always use the past with your kids "just so they can know what we're trying to teach them that you don't have to be told what to do all the time".*

*Your husband takes your girls to the bush. Even though they don't like it you know it's good for them to learn those things. A lot of kids these days do things with a sad face, that straining, agonising face and the parents say, "you'll thank me one day". You also go camping with the school kids. Some students have never made an umu (earth oven) or done any outdoor cooking. It's a good opportunity to teach them not only to survive without new technologies but some of the lessons from the ways of life of our elders.*

*It's an important job you do for our children but also the future of our language. Officially, the school you work at is monolingual. Even though you might speak some English, you wouldn't say it's bilingual, you don't want English to be the dominant language. But you do use English translations after a Niue phrase so that students who come with no vagahau Niue can still feel included. We talk about how 50 years ago speaking vagahau would get you a smack, but today more people are wanting to learn the language.*

*Your school has quite a big role in promoting and celebrating ozone day in Niue, while this isn't directly about climate change, it is about learning the interconnectedness of all people on this planet. You talk about the Montreal Protocol (on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer) and how Niue took up the call. At your school, it involves a visual education of what the ozone layer is and the ways it is depleted. So, the kids go away and tell their parents that they have to put the lotions on to protect their skin and that kind of thing. It's not exactly climate change, but it is about being aware of what is happening in the environment.*

*You promote healthy living for the kids. You get kids to bring in local fruits that their parents grow at home and then make drinks and salads. You've connected with a local businesswoman to teach composting and planting. You did some planting with the kids, but things didn't grow very well. You were told that it was because of the soil, it didn't have many nutrients. You liken it to the talo "after you harvest it you've got a leave it for a few years" so that the soils can replenish. In your view "On Niue its 50-50, 50% free food, 50% food that costs".*

*You don't think much will change because of climate change. Things might change if the population goes up. If the population went up, there would be more houses which means clearing more land and then all the natural resources would become depleted.*

*You believe "we're not lucky in not [having] enough people [on the island] but then we are lucky because there are not enough people on Niue" which means everyone can have a job. If people don't have jobs, you think it will lead to more crime. At the same time, a lot of businesses rely on more people coming so that they can make more money. You think it's not good for a country that relies heavily on another country. If it was a country that made its own money, then it might be different.*

*You remember a guy who came in years ago and did a good programme on recycling, but no one followed it up. While he was on the island he did a lot of good work separating plastics and compostable material and people learnt how to follow this. But after his contract was up he left, and it only took a little while before things had gone back to how they were before.*

*You guess that the "environment people" and the Met Office and the "water people" work together on climate change. They're the ones who do a lot of projects around the island. You explain that "on Niue, it's not the same as other big countries, [we] have lots of little groups that work with the big departments". You believe they all work together to deal with climate change.*

*I ask if you feel like there is much Niue people can do about climate change, you reply “Yeah, there would be, like what we’re doing in [our school] with our organic garden and teaching children the importance of growing your own food”. Some things may seem small or simple, but you see a bigger impact that they can have especially when they are carried by our younger generations.*

*You also think we should bring some of the old ways of doing things back. You say that “Even if your country is small you can still make a difference in your country and help out with the big countries too”. It’s one of the most expansive views about Niue’s place in the region and the world that I’ve come across in the whole time I’ve been in Niue.*

### **T9 insights**

I hadn’t met T9 before while in Niue, but she came as a recommendation from another woman I had just finished a conversation with and who showed me round to where T9 worked. As we didn’t know each other very well our introductions became important and reflect a cultural value of understanding people by their connections through family, village and land. It makes sense that the story reflects a lot of how we talked about her family, about what things were like when she was growing up and how things have changed over time and the changes she could see happening with her own kids. It’s also important for me to see how T9 was passionate about art, she had made many of the resources that were on the walls of where we were. Why does paying attention to these personal aspects of T9 and our interaction matter? For me, it’s about pushing back on the colonial and imperial systems and dominant (largely white) narratives that see wealth in economic terms and race as colour, but they don’t see people. How is it possible to have the perspectives and voices of Niue women if I cut their responses to only the parts that I think are “relevant” to climate change? Who decides what counts as relevant? Climate change is complex and impacts people in various ways, by asking questions like this these stories aren’t just contributing to new knowledge of climate change impacts for my people, they are challenging the ideas of how climate change is expressed, how it intersects and intertwines in lived

experiences and pushing us to think more deeply about how we talk about climate change in culturally respectful ways. Climate change research, in its effort to engage regionally and globally, has perhaps become separated from the local, the personal, which may impact how people see themselves in relation to affecting climate change. So, it matters that we pay attention to what people are interested in, what they are passionate about and how they are connected to different people and in lots of different places.

An immediate presence in our conversation was T9's mother and the impact she had on her life. Her Mum is from Tuapa though she lives in New Zealand now. I connected with her view that our mothers that stay at home are largely unrecognised for the work they do or the influence they have. Christianity and colonialism bred patriarchal perspectives that diminished the roles of women and confined them to the home. While colonial systems that measure value in economic terms, T9's story pushes back on what value means for our people. This isn't to say that patriarchal views don't exist in Niue. One aspect of this relationship between mother and daughter is how she had chores growing up. Coming from a working-class family I know that chores are common, though to varying extents, in most families. In this story the mother makes sure everyone knows what they have to do to contribute, and they all do these things without complaining. It's a story about growing up that I'm familiar with both from experience and from hearing my Dad talk about how he had to do the same. It's useful to reflect on how this could relate to climate change in thinking about how the burdens (and potential opportunities) of climate change are likely to require action from everyone, young and old. It has the potential to create an inclusive narrative that recognises the agency people have and also thinking about how climate change action might be broken down not just as something that governments and specific NGOs do but as something that families do.

T9 reflects on the rise of smartphones, tablets and similar electronic devices. Children are good at using this technology but at the moment it seems to separate

rather than connect them to their physical environment and their parents or grandparents. T9 notices the divisions it is creating between generations with parents feeling at a loss in being able to get their children away from certain electronic devices, some try using bribery or punishment to influence what their children do. It's something I've even heard in a church sermon where the pastor felt at a loss in being able to connect with her grandchild who would rather stay on her phone than join family prayer time. It is generational and not an uncommon issue for many other communities around the world. There are also divides between people who have money and those who don't. It extends beyond being able to afford the latest electronic devices into whether or not your family can afford to leave Niue and visit places abroad. It highlights an issue for Niue people both in Niue and out of it. Since colonial establishment in Niue, the options for travel have shifted from boat to aeroplane and both of these obscure the previous migration and movement of Niue people all around the region. Travel by boat was certainly cheaper than an aeroplane and you could take more luggage. There is currently only one flight provider in and out of the island, Air New Zealand; all flights to Niue come from or via New Zealand. It means that travel options are exclusive; prices are often hiked in-line with school and public holidays, the times when many families can travel (both to and from Niue).

There is a richness to life in Niue and T9 and her husband want to ensure that their children experience it, even if it feels like they have to force it sometimes. There is an importance in her husband taking her young girls to the bush, in recognising that there are different educations they can have outside of the education they get at school. Its cultural learning gained from the fenua and from their elders, tāoga that will serve them in their lives whether they are conscious of it or not. Language is another cultural aspect that T9 finds incredibly important both in her home and in her workplace. Her workplace is monolingual, but she is careful not to exclude children who have no understanding of the vagahau. For T9, if they can't come to school and learn the language and they aren't learning it at home then where else will they be able to learn it? It's a change from what she experienced growing up which was having

Niue essentially banned from being spoken at school and for some children it was also banned in their homes. But there has been a shift, and possibly it has come with the realisation that Niue language is often referred to as nearly extinct. Today more parents want their children to have the language, even if they themselves can't speak it. T9 gave examples of how parents and grandparents were so overjoyed to have their children and grandchildren speaking to them in the vagahau, particularly for grandparents who remember more of the times where speaking vagahau would get you physically punished. Having our younger generations learn the vagahau and speak fluently pushes back against thinking that our language doesn't have value or won't help our children find jobs or achieve their goals. Instead, it's a recognition of the richness that comes from knowing your language, and the ability to connect with our culture in complex and meaningful ways.

It's interesting to think about why climate change felt intrusive in this instance particularly as that is more of a reference to how I was feeling. In some ways talking about climate change can seem disconnected from the personal. As this was our first meeting together it seemed more important to learn about T9's family, where she came from and how she came to where she is now, literally and figuratively. It's a reflection of Niue culture that pays attention to people; it's about relationship building. And though she wanted to talk about what I was doing and what my research was on, this was something that happened later when she started asking about what I was doing. T9 gave several examples of how their school lead and participated in several different climate change initiatives. In saying this, she reflected that she didn't think much would change because of climate change. Instead, she found that more changes would come if the population started increasing. One connection she made to climate change changes was linked to development, the fact that more people would mean more land being cleared and more development. Her view that climate change wouldn't change much in Niue seems distinct from her view that people in Niue have agency in responding to and combating climate change impacts. As an educator, she saw the importance not just of the initiatives the school was taking but

also the importance of the old ways of doing things, how our elders took greater care of the land and sea. Her view pushes at a couple of different notions. One is to think about how climate change is communicated in Niue and how climate change related to Niue is communicated. In thinking about mainstream messaging that emphasises islands sinking or disappearing there is understandably a sense that that kind of change isn't going to have the same impact on Niue. A lot of climate change impacts aren't necessarily new in the scope of what people have experienced in the past. For example, cyclones are predicted to become more intense, but the outcome is still a cyclone. That isn't to say that new and more complex impacts won't happen but to point out that it can be difficult to attribute some of these things to climate change. Her view also pushes us to think about how climate change isn't the only change happening in peoples' lives. It doesn't stop development, people moving and changing, or cultures from changing. It can be complex to recognise some climate change impacts in everyday life without them being pointed out. Some impacts aren't necessarily reducible to having a daily presence. And it can be equally difficult to separate the ways people adapt to or mitigate changes in ways that don't or aren't necessarily conscious of them being related to climate change.

One of the points later in T9's story refers to a recycling plant that was established by a non-Niue person in Niue and that many people thought was a positive thing. But once this man left, no one took up the role and the recycling practice died out. While this can push us to think about how outsiders and consultants promote different initiatives in Niue, there are often issues that manifest after those people leave. There have been several other cases with similar outcomes. Some people see it as a form of laziness in Niue people, not willing to take the initiative or do any work themselves. While this may have truth in some cases, it perhaps overlooks other issues, for example, of how these things are introduced into Niue, how people can be educated out of using their initiative or showing creativity, and the lack of cultural understanding some of these consultants and contractors have. This isn't to say Niue people aren't ever lazy; it's about recognising how that view plays

into some well-established colonial views of our people and of Indigenous people of colour more generally, that come from both those within and without.

### **Tala ke Hogofuluaki (T10)**

*We meet at the Crazy Uga café, it's not far from your work. You grew up in Hakupu and know more about foods from the forest and plantations. While your partner grew up in Avatele and knows more about foods from the coast and sea. He's Samoan but he came to Niue young so he's basically tagata Niue.*

*You've lived in Aussie and New Zealand, but they really don't have anything on being at home in Niue. Sometimes living away from home can remind us why we love it so much. You talk about how the air in New Zealand is a bit heavier, there aren't as many trees as here. It's easier to breathe here. Niue is so green, and green is good! New Zealand is more polluted than Niue but it's not as bad as Australia.*

*You never liked Australia. You had your son there, a single mum at 18. People looked at you differently because you were brown. One day when you were bottle-feeding your son a woman said to you "Oh, I thought you Pacific Island people are the ones who said to breastfeed, breastfeed, and here you are bottle feeding and how old are you?" People don't do that sort of thing here, people are friendlier here.*

*It's a different lifestyle in Niue. You can get food from the sea and food from the land. You only need to do enough work to pay for power and water... and maybe a few luxuries. You can live on your own land. It's much harder to be able to live like this overseas. Your parents didn't have the opportunity to go overseas so it became something that they wanted for you.*

*You want your son to grow up with the same options, being able to move where he wants. It's easier to raise him in Niue, you can always leave him with people you know. He's 7 years old now and asks you a lot of questions. You find it hard when he asks why he can't have the kinds of foods he sees on TV. You buy him apples and chippies*

*because he won't eat pawpaw. He's starting to ask about the other places overseas too.*

*You've raised your son to mostly speak English. You feel like he can pick up vagahau anytime. If he goes to school overseas you want him to know English, so he is free to explore and meet new people. If he only speaks vagahau, people might not understand him. You grew up learning a lot of English too. You had all the Babysitter Club books. You think learning language, particularly vagahau and English, is about getting the right balance.*

*The Niue culture is strong, but perhaps not as strong as places like Samoa, where your partner is from. He says that the culture is still strong there but here you feel like people are more open but also more Westernized. You are unsure, but you don't think we're really into our culture as much as we should be.*

*We talk about many of the different projects you have been a part of. Like 'Turning the Tide on Plastic' which was with Ridge to Reef, and others with groups like Oma Tafua, helping the whales. You try and do some recycling in your office.*

*Sometimes it's hard using paper bags instead of plastic when you have wet things. People use tinfoil a lot for cooking and for wrapping their lunch because lunch paper doesn't hold things together very well. So, you end up having tinfoil and the plastic bag! It comes back to price, people want the cheapest reliable options. And there doesn't seem to be a shortage of tinfoil available at the supermarkets. Some of the supermarkets and the butchery tried to change from plastic to reusable bags but people are too used to plastic.*

*There aren't many businesses asking about climate change or about becoming more environmentally friendly and you think it's because of the costs. You say that if we were in New Zealand it would be easier, but people here are used to what they have now, "then again it is climate change, we can't really do much about it". But you notice changes that are happening around the island like how we clear land. Sometimes*

*when people use fire to clear land for planting the fires get out of control. But again, it's about costs. It's cheaper to use fire rather than paying for the bulldozers which also take a long time to get to each village.*

*Some people are using solar panels but the project of connecting them is still ongoing. Many houses seem to have a few panels fitted but there are also some where the panels are lying on the ground discarded. Perhaps like some of the water tanks where not everyone can afford the installation costs. You like the prepaid meters for electricity though. Being able to see how much electricity you are using has helped you use less.*

*We talk about climate change in the ways it affects your food sources. Your Dad plants watermelon. You used to plant like there was no tomorrow; planting all through the year. But with the unpredictable rain, it's hard to find the right seasons to plant. The winds are also becoming more of a problem. Last year you lost three plots of watermelon just because of pests. But you look for new ways to adapt to these challenges like planting in areas that are more protected from the wind. This year the rain is too unpredictable for planting watermelon.*

*You notice the talo are deteriorating faster these days. Maybe it's because of the quick changes in the weather from rain to hot sun. It means that when you harvest talo you have to eat it quickly else it will go rotten. You think this kind of thing is connected to climate change.*

*The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry introduced special seasons for pigeon and bat hunting. You understand it's for conservation and thinking of future generations. But you feel like it can be hard for people who had them as a big part of their diet.*

*Not everyone follows the rules either. Some people think that the birds have their own season and the best time is when they feed on the lei tree's fruit. But this time falls in the off-season, so the new rules don't seem to fit with the best harvest time. People*

*use guns for shooting birds, but in the past, people used slingshot. It's just what happens, the way that times change.*

*You think the conservation of birds is another way to help stop climate change. There are challenges in your food sources, but you think it's just something to live with, you tell me that "we just have to find ways to adapt."*

*You don't like going into the government, they don't seem to consult with people, even when they say they do. You see the government increasingly trying to move into the private sector to make money, but you don't think it is right. What's the use of having a private sector if the government moves in on it? Tax is a big problem in Niue and all the different fees that the government is imposing like a water licensing fee, increasing the liquor licensing fees and all the other costs that make owning a business harder.*

*In church, you have heard people talking about how because of climate change we can't have certain things happening and we can't find the seasons and it's getting colder in winter and hotter in summer. You notice that the hihi, the yellow shells common in Niue necklaces are harder to find. Less big fish being caught. Sometimes there are hardly any uga around. And sometimes even the coconuts seem to be in short supply. Others are noticing these changes too and more is being done to make sure that resources are nurtured now so that they can support generations to come.*

### **T10 insights**

Since this research began, T10 has shifted back to New Zealand. Her story of migration and movement is not uncommon for Niue people. It is interesting to think about Niue migration to different places but to remember that these movements aren't one-way. For T10 these movements are a way of getting back to Niue; not shifting for good, but exploiting our ability to move between New Zealand and Australia where we can earn more money and have access to different types of education. T10 had a keen interest that being able to speak English well, meant her

son would be better understood as he got older. There is a clear implication here that her son will also move and travel. Perhaps it is also implied that staying in Niue or focusing on learning Niue language creates barriers in being able to succeed in other places. Her view of the value of English is certainly something that my Dad's generation was well-indoctrinated in, to put it mildly. Ultimately though, for T10 Niue was home, and it seemed like the place she loved the most. My experience in Niue is that very few families want to leave the island.

It's interesting to note her particular perceptions of Australia and New Zealand in this story. That it can be harder to breathe in New Zealand doesn't match the image of how New Zealand is portrayed in dominant media. T10's specific interaction with an Australian woman is heartbreaking but not surprising. Being confronted about how you are feeding your baby based on stereotypes hints at the common every-day expressions of racism and discrimination that our women face. Being part of the diaspora brings to the fore these experiences that although the islands aren't necessarily devoid of, still speak to a particular kind of Pacific experience. For this T10, as a young Niue mother, she gave a sense of wanting to be able to protect her child from this kind of experience. Later in the story, she speaks about wanting her son to be able to speak English well so that he might be understood. While she isn't saying that her son can't or won't learn vagahau, it's interesting to think about this idea of English making life easier for our children. It's something my parents felt which is why I don't speak very much vagahau Niue. But it's not an uncommon sentiment for many parents and people in our Pacific communities. Some argue that if it can't help you get a job then it's not worth it. While it may seem that this response is cavalier about culture I would argue that it stems from and embodies a cultivated attitude that comes from experience and observation. Many of the diasporic experiences of our people who came to New Zealand in the 60s, 70s and 80s were to fill low-level, hard-labour, factory and other industry jobs. And around the region missionary education often punished and denigrated Indigenous languages and cherry-picked "suitable" aspects of culture that might be wheeled out when it suited. This idea of language as

a key to getting jobs that would get their children out of hard-labour and into comfortable office jobs or jobs with high-status (doctor or lawyer) that had high earning potential was a key mentality for that generation to ensure their children wouldn't have to work as hard as they did. Undoubtedly other factors influenced decision making in this space, but it is possible to get a sense of the complexity of what seems like a statement that is dismissive of the importance of knowing your own language or wanting your children to learn that language.

Linda Coates and Allan Wade (2007) talk about this in relation to language as part of a culture of violence, in their case for the Aboriginal people of Australia. Where the deliberate use of force and social power was used by colonial powers in the region to influence the will and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. This issue is not confined to long ago but continues to manifest. The New Zealand government's response to immigration that led to the dawn raids is within our peoples' lifetime. And while progress has been made, Pacific people outside of New Zealand and its realm countries (that have particular arrangements) are held at arms-length. In this particular case, it's interesting to think about the movement that Niue people have access to under the free association arrangement with New Zealand. And yet, more than once Niue has been accused of being a back door that allows Pacific people and "others" (with heavy implications that these "others" would be unfavourable) to take advantage of Niue's citizenship arrangement with New Zealand. While evidence of people using Niue to get to New Zealand is scarce, there are also other requirements to be able to immigrate to New Zealand, the final say rests with the Minister for Immigration in New Zealand. It's a reminder for T10 that Niue people and way of life make her feel the most at home. While New Zealand, Australia and other countries might represent short-term places to build capital or gain specific education, they aren't the end game.

T10 grew up in the village of Hakupu. It's useful to know where people are from because while others may see Niue as small, even the placement of your village

and where you live in relation to that village can have an impact on the environment you grow up in. She mentions that she has more knowledge of the forest and plantations. This is a distinction from people who live closer to the coast and therefore have easier access to source food from the sea. There's an added layer of the merging in the relationship she has with her partner in being able to provide more inland food while he can provide more food from the sea. Working together they can use these different areas of expertise to be able to provide for their family. That's not to assume that all Niue couples base their relationships on what food the other person has access to but it disrupts this idea of Pacific islands being uniform places where everyone has easy access to the sea. Many people on Niue don't know how to swim. Her reflection of her partner being Samoan raised a point about Niue culture perhaps not being as strong compared to Samoan culture. This is interesting coming from a Niue person living in Niue where we might expect Niue culture to be its strongest. We talked a little more about what kinds of things made cultures strong and part of it comes with how much people show national pride. In some ways compared to other larger Pacific countries, Niue can feel like it is only just starting to have people be visible in pride for their Pacific roots.

### **3.3 Tau tala he tau tama fifine ha tautolu** *Stories from our Daughters*

#### **Tala ke Hogofulu-ma-Tahaaki (T11)**

*Our conversation is brief but to me has a lot of importance. We see each other nearly every day around town, it feels strained to have to talk about climate change, but you want to help with my research.*

*We talk about life here. You have family here, in Samoa and Auckland. You mostly keep in touch over the phone.*

*You often go up to the bush to water plants like the vine and pick the talo and cassava. Your aunty taught you how.*

*It's fun to work at the shop, some people are funny who come in too. You think Niue would be better if more people were coming to the island. Tourism brings more people to the shop.*

*You don't go fishing but your Dad does. You sell fish in the shop too. You also sell Niue chips, honey and vanilla. Fish and talo are the most popular items in your shop.*

*Your favourite food is curry and talo. Your sister taught you how to make it.*

*When I ask about what Niue culture is for you, you talk about sports, volleyball and rugby. You love to play those as much as you can. On Sunday, your only day off, you go to a Christian church.*

*You find the weather here hot, it's the same back in Samoa. But Samoa is quite different to Niue in other ways. Most people here can work, but in Samoa, not everyone can get a job so people, especially a lot of young people end up doing nothing. It's why you like to live and work here.*

*It's cheap to live in Niue and you think you will keep working here in the future. The money here is better than what you would get in Samoa.*

*You've heard of climate change before, but you don't feel like you know much about it.*

*I don't push to talk about it more. We just enjoy our smoothies.*

### **T11 insights**

On the surface this story is short. But that doesn't limit the richness that comes from it. Not all Niue people need to say a lot and particularly here sometimes it's important to pay attention to people whose voices aren't commonly sought. A key feature of this story is the connections and comparisons to Samoa. Growing up mostly in Samoa T11 came to live with family in Niue where she could work for more money

than she could get in Samoa. She's working to support her family in Niue and Samoa. Though she is Niue, she considers Samoa to be her home, having grown up there. It's a reminder of the ethnic diversity of Niue people and again pushes at the connections of Niue to other places in the Pacific, not just Australia and New Zealand. Samoan and Tongan people had particular influence in shaping Niue identity and culture. Certainly, early missionaries arrived from Samoa and practices like hiapo, and the conversion of Niue people to Christianity was influenced by that interaction. There are also Niue communities in Samoa. A'ai o Niue in Apia celebrated 150 years of Niue people settling in Samoa. It pushes at this idea of movement not just being one way. While there is often conversation of the Samoan's bringing Christianity to Niue, there is less talk about Niue people taking Christianity to Samoa to support a growing number of Niue people who were living and working in Samoa. There are these ancestral connections where Niue people can trace to Samoa and Samoans tracing their ancestry to Niue. It isn't random to grow up in Samoa and then move to Niue. This story helps steer the conversation away from being one of Niue only interacting with New Zealand, instead, we might think about how Niue people like T11 are connected to different parts of the Pacific. How do our other Pacific connections shape our views of climate change?

Work was an important place for T11. I had seen her every week while I was in Niue, picking up a few groceries, sometimes her shop had the best variety of fruit available on the island. Her shop also had a variety of local produce too. After seeing me quite often one day we got to talking about what I was doing on the island. And I asked if she would be interested in being part of the research. She worked every day except Sunday's when she went to church so we decided to have our story in her shop when it was fairly quiet. Perhaps not surprisingly the talk turned to food quite quickly as we were surrounded, and food is very important in Niue culture, of course.

Her favourite foods of curry and talo speaks to the different connections and relationships we have in the Pacific. There's a history or genealogy that can be traced

of how curry came to the Pacific as large groups from India were brought to Fiji to work the plantations, some through indentured labour. Curry has become popular in Niue and is regularly sold at the fresh produce markets in Alofi and common at many of the village show and marine day celebrations. Often at the markets, the curry filled roti are sold by people from the Fijian community. Several Fijians came to Niue to work in construction and were gifted land to build homes. The Niue hospital is often staffed by several Fijian nurses and several Fijian teachers work at the local schools. My family in Alofi employ a Fijian woman, who has been with them for many years helping with childcare and looking after the house, but beyond this, she has become part of the family and her kindness and care are beyond the visible duties she performs. She also makes some of the best curry and roti I've had on the island. From just knowing T11's favourite food, it pushes at all these different connections, histories, and relationships. It raises questions about other kinds of relationships Niue may have had with islands in Fiji before it's focus narrowed significantly to its colonial rulers.

T11's response to climate change is important because as she explained, she has heard of it but that she doesn't feel like she knows much about it. My question then is does this mean her view has no relevance? I argue that it does because while she doesn't feel like she knows climate change, other important questions are raised by admitting this. T11's views of climate change contribute to a broader understanding of what climate change is or means in a Niue context. T11 didn't feel like she had much to do with climate change, her focus was providing for her family. That climate change could be something that you hear about but don't know much about and don't feel compelled to know more about is something that has to be acknowledged. T11 didn't have to know about climate change terminology to know that she had to board her shop up every time cyclone warning went up. But what else can she do? What expectations are there for people to "act" in the face of climate change impacts and who decides this?

While this story may seem small it contains an important reminder that not everyone in Niue necessarily feels like they have a view on climate change. This isn't a judgement on levels of education or ability to engage or respond to climate change impacts. What is being shared are experiences of life in Niue and for T11 these are straightforward. There are jobs in front of her and she does them, she has to provide for her family. The knowledge of being able to do all these things can be glossed over or obscured if we assume that only certain people in certain positions have stories worth listening to. One example is the generational knowledge of being taught how to work the plantations comes with knowledge of what to plant and when to plant it. Another example is the social knowledge and skills T11 has in running her shop. I don't mean to overstate her position or skill-set, but T11's view should be ignored or put in a lower category because she hasn't acknowledged climate change in the way we might expect. Climate change conversations don't look the same, understanding the realities that are shared in conversations like this provide a view to some of the barriers and boundaries of climate change in every-day living. This story pushes us to think about is how climate change is talked about and how people can feel included or excluded from those discussions. There is an importance in knowing that this woman calls Samoa home, that her favourite food is curry and talo and that it's cheaper living in Niue compared to Samoa. Because all of these things are part of her experience, part of her worldview. We talked about the changes in heat of Samoa compared to Niue, we talked about how she works plantations and works in a shop and the changes she sees in all these different spaces that she exists in. These things contribute to a broader view of climate change in the every-day context, it's not the word or phraseology that matter, but about understanding experience within a context.

Climate change is something T11 doesn't identify with in her lived experience. This doesn't preclude her from responding to impacts of climate change or being able to recognise that other people are doing things about climate change. We can think about how the dominant framing of climate change can lead people to resist learning

more about it or feel like it doesn't connect or relate to them in personal ways. Perhaps this conversation may have been different if we were speaking in vagahau, and different again if we were speaking in Samoan.

### **Tala ke Hogofulu-Uaaki (T12)**

*What does climate change mean to you, isn't the right question. We needed to start somewhere different. We talk about food, we talk about family, we talk about the land and the animals. But we don't say that it is climate change. Climate change is not that well known to you but you notice change. You get annoyed that more flies are coming, but apart from that, there isn't much that says climate change is happening in Niue. You grew up here, it's the place you call home.*

*The weather changes, but you have known this your whole life. Weather always changes, sometimes it's good sometimes it is bad. You hope it won't be bad though, not like last time, not like Heta. That last cyclone broke a lot of things, it broke buildings, and it broke animals, pigs and fishes died. It broke people. You don't want to hear the warning sirens again.*

*But you have more knowledge than you realise. You seem unsure of it at first, but you check with your parents and grandparents and you become more sure. You listen to your grandparents; the way they talk about how things have changed. They used to have to walk all the way to the bush in bare feet, now you see there are lots of new cars and new shoes too.*

*You love island life. Feeding pigs, working the plantations, swimming in the sea. You're good at your job, though it seems like you wear a lot of different hats for all the different tasks you end up doing.*

*To me, your current job seems like one of the most important on the island. Though not many people seem to appreciate it and probably just see it as an old room with piles of old paper. But you keep the dust off, keep them tidy, and make sure they're*

*safe from the wind or rain. Perhaps you don't realise, but you are a guardian of this knowledge. When people say tagata Niue don't write much, they haven't seen these rooms, the rooms you look after. You don't tell me about this place, but we happen to go there when I'm searching for something no one else has looked at for a long time. You lead the way.*

*Our main conversation is at a café. We talk about family, your parents, your brother, your sister, your Nena who comes over to your parents' house every Friday. You have already learnt so much from your Nena and your Mum. The way they use different leaves as medicine for when people are sick or injured. The process of mixing it with the right amount of water and using white cloths so you can check that it's the right colour.*

*Niue will always be home, but you're open to travel. Even if it's only returning to places you've been before, another island that perhaps doesn't seem like one compared to home. I wonder if land thinks about itself like this. Does it notice when we come and go? Some places seem to. Mountains and rivers where I grew up have memory, they have ancestry – not only part of the land but part of the people and vice-versa. But Niue has no mountains, it has no rivers. Your nourishment comes from beneath your feet. You say that "water is life" and that without it there can be no people.*

*It's the common theme of your story, the things you share and the places we meet. It is water that surrounds us, water that your Nena uses to dilute medicine, water your Dad goes fishing and diving in, water to boil talo, coconut water to make nane, waters that we travel over, water in the rain that we protect old paperwork and reports from, water that breaks things, water that nourishes us, water that keeps us alive.*

*I'm asking about climate change, but we keep bumping into water. Water in all its changing forms. Perhaps we are buoyed by it, it makes our conversation possible. Many of the impacts of climate change are connected to water. The lack of water, water rising, water transforming into raging storms. I ask you what happens if there*

*isn't any water, you reply that we just have to let the water supply people know and they will fix it. I wonder if that is how we view climate change sometimes too.*

## **T12 insights**

This story comes from a young Niue woman who wasn't recommended but whose path I crossed many times. In part, it was because she didn't come recommended that made her voice that required higher levels of education. I was also interested from the perspective that as an outsider, not being born on the island, the way she saw things and her experiences would have specific cultural value. The story is co-laboured in part; my collaborator was generous with her time and provided additional insight after our main talanoa via email and a few follow up conversations. I was also fortunate to meet and work with her often while I was in Niue and some of these interactions helped form what is drawn together in this story. This story captures only a part of her lived experiences and I readily admit that the outcome here is heavily shaped by my interpretation of the conversations and interactions we had. I learnt a lot from her and I'm thankful for the patience she had with me. In my lines of questioning, while I'm interested in how things connect to climate change, there is a continual pull to know more about Niue culture. In part, this is from my interest to learn more, having grown up not knowing much about what 'being Niue' could mean. While this interest in culture might seem to digress from the focus on climate change I would argue that it became a type of glue that held our conversations together. It created a dynamic where although she didn't feel like she knew that much about climate change she did know more about Niue culture. Culture became a way of reducing the distance in what I was asking and what insights could be possible if we both thought about connections through culture and lived experience. We had quite a few conversations before we did our main talanoa, but in those conversations, I felt a connection in the unsureness she had about being someone worth talking to and the unsureness I felt in terms of whether my research and by proxy my presence on the island, was worthwhile.

This story draws on partial connections (de la Cadena, 2018 who cites from Strathern, 2004) made over several months and the growth of our relationship and friendship in this time. The story comes from several talanoa as well as observations and interactions we had while I worked in the same department as her. While this in no way captures the entire lived experience of even this one person, there is a richness of meaning that can be drawn from our talanoa and shared experiences. The story represented here is only a partial distillation of key themes that I have recognised throughout the talanoa, additional quotes are used in this discussion that originates from recorded transcripts. The story is useful as an initial space to start discussions and consider the questions and considerations that come from other registries explored in this thesis. There are gaps in both of our understanding and interpretations of meaning from our shared talanoa, this doesn't take away from or diminish the talanoa and interaction in and of themselves. In some ways, it adds complexity to the relationship, for example, thinking about what ways that colonisation connects and divides us; that we used English to converse because of my lack of ability to speak Niue language. While there are questions around how climate change is talked about in vagahau Niue, there are still experiences that are distinct for Niue people, and Pasifika peoples (particularly diasporic) more generally because of a lack of language (Diaz & Kauanui, 2001).

There is a level of analysis used in producing each story based on the story distilling several interactions and observations into something collaboratively developed. More so in this case where T12 took the time to read through a transcript of our main talanoa and then added further information, particularly for things she wasn't sure of when she mentioned them at the time. An important reason for developing a story in this way is that it gives this Niue woman a unique voice within the context of this research. Not in an appendix or in isolated quotes that are threaded together in pre-determined themes but a literal space in the body of this thesis that privileges what has been shared. This process is also useful in positioning myself as a collaborator in the talanoa with the subjectivities of my interpretations and

reflections acknowledged and open for critique. In this discussion, I draw out further meaning by exploring key ideas, questions and insights that emerge from the story in connection with the discussions and thinking developed in the visual and written registries. Like the designs of hiapo, this is an iterative process where meaning develops by moving back and forth through different registries, creating spaces of both play and critique. It also reflects the travelling ideas and networks that are connected in hiapo. The ways in which the questions that can be explored in a photograph give us new ways of thinking about and engaging with different aspects of Niue culture, knowledge and ways of knowing and being. It is possible to consider not only the interactions or the talanoa alone but in conversation with broader connections and relationships in oral, written, visual and personal forms.

This process is about allowing fluid and flexible movement in the construction and conversation of what lived-experiences of climate change for Niue women means; what it looks and feels like. It's about what things are important to consider when asking these kinds of questions and recognising that these women are the experts. While common themes may emerge, there is space for ideas that are specific to an individual story that will still enrich how we engage with climate change as having distinctive impacts at all levels. Early on in the story, I reflect on my position as a researcher, grappling with this idea of experiences of climate change in Niue. Climate change isn't something T12 had thought about, she knew the words and could probably have directed me to people whose job it was to think about climate change, but she didn't see herself as someone who had much experience in that space and was even a little hesitant about whether it had any impact on her or not. And that could have been the end of the conversation. But in building this relationship and having conversations flow to different topics, particularly things relating to culture, it is interesting to reflect on what we did talk about instead of climate change and the ways that some of those topics did connect with climate change by coming from a different perspective. This discussion isn't about reducing the experience to single specific meaning but instead about exploring more meaning, adding to the questions

and perspectives already brewing in this thesis that react to cultural and gendered nuance in the Niue context of climate change.

The story reflects a shift in our conversation from climate change which is less recognisable for T12, to other forms of change that she knew about or felt confident to speak about. Though it would seem like moving away from the focus point of climate change, what happened was a more specific, emotional remembering of something connected with climate. T12 had particular memories of Cyclone Heta, what happened on the island, the damage and the loss of life. There's something about remembering loss and hardship that slows a conversation not into an awkward silence, but into a silence that comes from remembering something painful. Cyclones don't hit Niue very often, but in recent history, several have been damaging and Heta certainly became a common topic with several of the people I spoke with. My cousin once mentioned how the eerie sounds of cyclone-force winds had gotten so high-pitch you couldn't even hear them. There's a photo that was published in a New Zealand newspaper that captures some of the wreckage of houses in Niue after a cyclone. Though we know villages and countries can rebuild after cyclones, there's always a kind of hanging question of how many more times it will happen before they can't. People don't think like that on Niue. And T12 just hoped that no more cyclones would come. Even though Niue is in the band of where cyclones track through the Pacific.

Arguably more people have become engaged in disaster-readiness all around the world. Advancements in technology have meant that, for example, low-pressure systems can be tracked more accurately and island nations like Niue have more up to date information that can be made available to communities so that they can better respond to situations. While I was in Niue for fieldwork a warning came several days in advance that there was potential that Niue would be affected by tropical cyclone Gita. Houses, shops, churches and other buildings were all boarded up at a kind of leisurely pace in the days leading up to the predicted arrival of the cyclone. A flashing

sign outside the police station warned of severe weather approaching. People were stocking up at supermarkets and convenience stores. As the sea began to change people drove down to see waves crashing up and over the wharf. Some people took photos or videos, others just played in the water as it splashed up. Though these reactions aren't reflective of all Niue people, it's interesting to think about our (myself included as one of the people who went to the wharf) attraction to or fascination in the sea as it changed from its usual subdued self into barrels of destructive and loud waves. While the cyclone was downgraded by the time it reached Niue, the preparations people had made in the days leading up to it were incredible to watch. The slow build-up to almost a full shut down of the island. Though most shops closed up early, some left a window or door un-boarded, so they could still serve any customers. In many ways, these reactions or responses to an oncoming danger speak to people who have been through it before. While there was a growing sense of urgency as the cyclone got closer, things seemed almost well-rehearsed. Men in trucks with plyboard would get to a shop, board it up and then head off to do the next job. It's as if it were a second-nature, that that's just what you did when there were warnings of a cyclone approaching. Cyclones were just a part of life in Niue. So, while in the story T12 might hope that severe cyclones won't hit Niue ever again, there isn't a sense that she doesn't believe they exist or that she isn't capable of understanding the climate conditions which mean Niue has a cyclone season from around November to April that is a result of its geographic location in the Pacific. Yet there is this underlying question of how people manage to live in a place that has something like a cyclone season. How does this influence their perception of their environment and then the ways they engage with that environment? For T12 it's about a sense of place. Niue is her home and has been the home of ancestors. She doesn't want to be anywhere else. Cyclones aren't new in Niue, and where possible people exercise caution, but the possibility of a severe cyclone isn't enough of a deterrent to make people want to leave the land and the waters that metaphorically and literally have nourished them and given them life.

Mitigating the impacts of climate change in these situations is about being prepared. Though some people fear what cyclones can do it doesn't paralyse them from action and response. Preparation becomes about connecting with others to make sure they are safe and have clear communication about what is happening. It's about able-bodied people making sure those less able are going to be safe and taken care of. Communication of actual danger seems to travel relatively fast being broadcast through national radio, on the news bulletin, signage outside the police station in Alofi, and most effectively through social media and word-of-mouth. Information about cyclone Gita, for example, was being posted by many people on the island who are linked in with the Fijian Met Service feeds. Social media posts tend to have a life of their own as they get viewed and shared around the island and then get a lot of coverage in Niue diasporic communities. There are also warning sirens that sound on megaphones that are located throughout the island for things like earthquake, tsunamis and cyclones. Certain siren patterns have a specific meaning. But the system is still developing. A test-run in one village, while I was on the island, did not go very well when many people just ignored the sirens and carried on doing what they wanted. Some people were annoyed at not being warned about the testing of the sirens beforehand. But people don't only wait for the messages on social media or through the radio before they are thinking about possible bad weather, they use cultural knowledge. This can include animals, plants, or other signals that are embedded in ancestral knowledge that has been passed down, through cultural practice, or for some people it is by being attuned to their natural environment; they can sense a change coming. By cultural practice, I'm not necessarily meaning ancient ways that have been passed down through the generations, although in some instances this might be the case. Niue culture has adapted to and adapted technologies that connect both our cultural heritage and reflect a legacy of colonial impact and post-colonial relationships. An example might be reflected in the megaphone system. Although this is a technology that has developed outside of Niue, Niue had a similar system noted during the early missionary era when nafa or slit

drums were beaten to convey messages. Often used to indicate that a church service was to begin. But if the beat went on for a longer period it was a way of letting people know that something important was happening. So the megaphones aren't as displaced from what has come before. While T12 perhaps leans more to rely on the systems that have been set up, so she only has to react to those signals, there's something important in remembering cultural ways of understanding and knowing, especially in recognising when change is approaching. While this type of knowledge was used for the survival of our ancestors, for the present generation it presents an opportunity to connect with our culture in ways that are increasingly being lost as our growing diasporic community struggles to make cultural links in changing and diverse environments.

In the story there are quite a few connections to cultural knowledge is revealed. As an outsider being born in New Zealand and in some ways educated away from my cultural heritage my view of what counts as knowledge has a particular bias in wanting to know more about my culture and identity. T12 was unsure of how she could be considered knowledgeable. Because the question of lived-experience of climate change in Niue is not definitive in whose experience matters, I push back on the notion that positions and status are defining markers of people with knowledge. Epli Hau'ofa made the argument that it is important to pay attention to everyday people. What is particularly interesting in this story is that although T12 knew of certain plants that were used for medicine or used in plantations, she didn't always remember the names. So, after our main talanoa, she went to her family to clarify some of her points and then filled out a transcript I had sent here with more detail. To me, it was an important process of collaborating and a way to make sure what I had written was capturing what she had intended. Not everyone wanted to engage in the research the same way. For some, it was more important to have a big talanoa and then for me to take the information away and make sense of it. But there is power in knowledge and it's important to recognise that in a Niue context knowledge is often considered the realm of elders, people who have lived through many experiences are

more adept at 'knowing'. But there's also a part of Niue culture where people learn through observation and experimentation, they don't necessarily need others to teach them to be able to know. There are contradictions in these different values or elements of Niue culture. While I'm mindful that the knowledge of elders needs to be afforded specific respect, it's my opinion that knowledge is not a limited commodity, it is perhaps one of our most inexhaustible resources. Therefore, it makes sense that young and old will have knowledge and that their knowledge has value in both different and similar ways. T12 also is a reminder that for some knowledge, it's not necessary to know the specific names as much as it is important to know how or when to use the knowledge. Knowledge is also connected to family and this is also interesting in a time of social media and connection that, particularly in the context of Niue; our elders are more reliable sources of our culture, identity and knowledge about the local environment than external sources which may be easily accessible using the internet. In turn, this is a reminder that Niue culture and identity is largely still written and published by non-Niue researchers. The likes of Smith, Loeb, Ryan, Thode-Arora, and Pointer have all benefited from using Niue in their research. Yet, their research is also inaccessible for most Niue people. Though Tāoga Niue, the national museum has copies of most of these publications, few others on the island know about them and even many within Tāoga Niue don't know about them.

In the story, I reflect on the insight that can be gleaned in the changes that happen around us that become more apparent when we have conversations with our elder generations and think about the differences in their experiences compared to ours. As in the story, T12 makes that connection with the experiences of her Nena who remembers a time where most people didn't have shoes. That shoes are relatively new in Niue is a reminder of how fast things can change. There is a pair of woven sandals presented in a Pacific exhibit at the Otago Museum in New Zealand but I haven't seen much evidence or heard any stories of these being common. My Dad has similar stories of having no shoes when he was young and his disbelief when he went back to Niue at how sensitive his feet had become. There are also stories of

the Niue soldiers who served in World War I, who ended up in Auckland and were forced for the first time to wear shoes. The great discomfort it caused has been reported in news articles. There's an important point here that changes can happen both fast and slow. While it may seem that the introduction of shoes has been slow, relatively speaking, most people now wear something on their feet and that practice has changed our connection and literal closeness with the environment. For some, there is a discomfort in being so close with the environment and this notion lends itself to many conversations about climate change.

T12 can move to New Zealand, she has family there and travels there now and again. But largely Niue is and always will be home for her, regardless of how long she is away. Living on Niue is about being able to do the things she loves in the places that she loves. And while the actions themselves seem simple and easily replicable in other places, it is the context that makes them unique to this person in this place at this time. People don't want to leave their homelands. In thinking about lived experience, jobs and places of work is a central aspect of daily life for most Niue people. Niue people connected with the government currently work four-day weeks. But if we think about agency within the structures and systems of the government contradictory forces are working to ensure that people maintain the status quo for personal or family gain. And there is importance in recognising the responsibility, forced or willing, that people have to contribute to their family and the wider community including through church. In particular, for T12 she got her job straight out of high school and doesn't seem interested in either furthering her position or changing to a different job. When I saw her in her workplace she followed the direction of those in higher positions than her and often even by those who weren't necessarily higher but who liked to be bossy. The dynamic seemed to work but as an outsider, I also got the sense that her role and the many jobs she did weren't seen as that important. And yet, as the point is made in the story, one of her jobs was ensuring that old documents, reports and other publications made by Niue people and others were maintained and kept safe from dust, rain and pests. From my perspective what

she is doing is part of the work guardians of our culture do. And although she might not necessarily know or recognise what is kept in all those documents, her ability to lead people to it (as she did for me) and her role in protecting it for generations to come seem as important, especially considering there are few if any people who know all of the information housed in that particular place.

I think there is a misconception about importance and value in both New Zealand and Niue society, given I have experienced both (though Niue to a lesser degree), that paints people in certain positions more favourably. And yet, without people like T12 who cleans and maintains our tāoga how would we be able to return and re-remember the gahua *work* of the generations that have come before us. Because there is something important in having people like me coming in and asking questions about things that otherwise remain dormant in the recesses of knowledge. It's also important as a way of keeping record in a culture that is increasingly coming to terms with a lack of understanding through language that has traditionally been the vessel for oral traditions. And yet, oral traditions still hold an important place in how we communicate and how we think about experiences and knowledge in the face of varied change. It's important when thinking about lived experiences not to narrow the focus on only one kind of response or one area of interest because lived experiences come from a life and while you can't capture an entire life in writing, it's important to be able to gesture to the context of where these experiences are coming from.

In T12's story, it is clear that even though I'm talking to one woman, what we end up talking about includes her family and more than just a passing acknowledgement but as a way into more conversations and connections. There are several things in her story that I connect within my personal life, both our Dads are fishermen, both our grandmothers have significant knowledge of the Niue environment and natural medicines. What is interesting to me here is the divergence in paths, my grandmother moving with her family to New Zealand while T12's

grandmother and family have chosen to live in Niue and how we both are in places where we are dealing with and responsible for different archives of Niue knowledge.

The story pushes at the idea of New Zealand which compared to the landmass of Niue seems less like an island. New Zealand has a lot of conveniences that Niue does not. And yet for all its convenience, Niue does not have the same freedoms that people in Niue have. This paragraph also pushes at the idea of our people being stuck on the island, unwilling to travel and passive in response to change. There are some on the island who prefer to remain, but most Niue people end up leaving the island for a period of time; for education, work, family or other reasons. Some return, some don't. But this idea of movement that is embedded in Niue experience historically, in the present, and for the foreseeable future can obscure direct movements that are a result of climate change. At the same time, it disrupts notions of static populations that cling to the island unrelenting even in the face of risk or danger.

Niue is largely reliant on freshwater lenses of rainwater that are trapped in underground caves around the island. In these last few paragraphs of the story, we begin exploring the necessity of water on the island and the women made the connections that without water there wouldn't be people on the island. And yet, in thinking about a lack of water, she didn't feel she had the agency to be able to do something about it but would instead confer to those whose job it was to ensure water was available to the people. But if something happened to make those options unavailable, what would Niue people do? Is it possible that the ancient stories of women chanting for rain or seeking out old freshwater caves known enough by our current generations? In a time where comfort and luxury are readily available, there are still many important lessons captured in our ancestral knowledge. Water as a central element of climate change is perhaps a more culturally applicable way of framing questions. Because in understanding how people use and interact with water we can follow the routes it has in making connections between people and the environment. Water is a life-giving and nurturing essential element and the reliance

in Niue cannot be overstated. Paying attention to the varied uses of water connects lived experience with knowledge about climate change impacts. While someone might not be able to define climate change, they can be more specific and clearer about what impacts of drought, flooding, cyclones and other events exacerbated by global warming have on their daily routines, their ability to grow food. While I was conducting my fieldwork several villages' water tanks became contaminated and undrinkable. Residents were told to boil water twice before using it or use their household tanks or buy supplies from local shops. The last action, in particular, is dependent on wealth. Similarly, not all household tanks were connected because funding didn't provide for the plumbing to connect the tanks to collect rainwater or connect into the houses. Increases in the number of pests are connected with climate change. It's also one thing T12 had noticed changing within her own lifetime, that the number of flies can get quite annoying. While the increase in flies could also be connected with waste practices on the island, it is a reminder that changes are happening and that they are happening within our lifetime.



Figure 8: Grandpa Vakaafi's photographs from the '90s of Niue Photo courtesy: Cora-Allan Wickliffe

## VEVEHEAGA 4: KUMI E ALITO/KAKANO HE MATA FAKATINO

### FINDING PATTERN IN THE PRINT

This chapter offers a discussion of key themes that have emerged from the 12 stories and insights captured in *Veveheaga 3* and considers some of the narratives explored in *Veveheaga 2*. The key themes are the power of women; elders and generational knowledge; language; and land, water and weather. While these themes overlap and interconnect in different ways, each carries a distinct aspect of the knowledge that can be gleaned from these women in the context of exploring their perspectives and experiences of climate change. The final section of this chapter discusses central questions that the 12 stories push us to think about in relation to climate change in Niue and how this shifts our understanding of climate change approaches in this Indigenous context.

#### **4.1 Lukulukufeua he Tau Fifine** *The Power of Women*

There is power in privileging women's experiences, particularly in spaces that respect cultural values and principles. Teresia Teaiwa once said you can't paint the Pacific with one paintbrush stroke (Husband, 2015), and it is clear throughout that the experiences and perspectives of Niue women expressed in this thesis diverge and connect in many different ways. One thing in common was the versatility of our women. T5 talked about how her mother taught her how to survive. Being able to boil talo and tunu paku without electricity were central to being able to survive. T9 was in awe of her mother who was incredibly talented at so many different things, raising kids, cooking, making the house nice. These things aren't always seen as valuable but are incredibly important in providing rich spaces of learning and belonging. The stories of different women revealed their many connections with the land. T12 talked about the particular plants and leaves her mother and grandmother used in making special medicines. T11 knew when to pick talo and cassava and when to plant the vine because her Aunty taught her. T2 knew that lots of women were involved in planting

around the island, and in her plantation, she knew women were the best for pollinating flowers because it was a very delicate task.

While farming might be seen as a masculine space requiring brawn for hard-labour, this doesn't seem to be the case in vanilla farming. Beyond this, the stereotypes of agriculture being a place for men also doesn't hold. Women clearly work in plantations. T1 spoke about how her parents would send her out to the bush so that she knew her Niue identity, she could learn the land by working the land. T9's husband takes their daughters to the bush often because it's an important part of who we are as Niue people, and this connection is not defined or constrained by gender. These stories constantly return a focus to the land and particularly in their references to women.

Several collaborators noticed women were increasingly getting into higher positions of power. While there has not yet been a woman Niue Premier and the Members of Parliament are still mainly men, the last few decades have seen a lot of movement of women into higher-level jobs. It's interesting to note that most of these women were educated overseas. The youngest woman, T12, was educated in Niue, but the others all had education or training, for varying lengths of time, outside of Niue. T6 spoke about how there was a top tier of women getting into higher-level positions, but it wasn't without cost. Women in these positions had to have thick skin. This was reiterated by T7 who spoke of how it's not only men with entrenched patriarchal views, often women too shared these views and were willing to be vocal about it.

Yet, it is women who show up for projects or community work when things need doing. Women contribute their time, put in a lot of input but then men often make the final decision. It's difficult to know how many of the women thought this was how things had to be, or if it was holding women back. In some ways, cultural protocols require women to observe particular roles with respect to men. Some of these are based in the church, some may have had deeper roots, but even from the

few stories that are highlighted in the written registry it is possible to see women who were in high positions of power and men who respected them in those positions. T3 and T7 had some frustrations with men who held women back to protect their own power. But in the stories of Hina (Uea as cited in Loeb, 1926) Mataginifale (Smith, 1902) Hakehaketoa or Halakikula (Loeb, 1926) the narratives are about women who are game-changers and this power didn't cease even when missionaries came to the island. Niue women couldn't be contained by rules set by men in favour of men as there is no balance in this approach. Balance is something that T6 thinks is key for gender relations, not that men and women have to be equal in numbers in all spaces, but that there should be a balance in the way power is exercised.

Lukulukufeua he tau fifine relates to the power of women. As T3 says, we are keen and proactive, and increasingly we dominate positions in public and private sector jobs. T5 thought this perhaps came from a UNESCO programme that pushed for women in higher roles. It's also possible to see Niue women increasingly reclaiming positions of power in many of the stories. T7's Nena never took crap from anyone. In part, this shifts the consideration of whether jobs titles denote power. Of course, in many ways they do, but seeing job titles as the only power possible for Niue women obscures the power people like this women's Nena and her strong and silent-type mother had in their families, in their communities and perhaps even for the country as a whole. Several stories reflect an attitude of Niue women, and people, just getting on with things that need to be done. It's not about doing a 'song and dance' about things, with perhaps the exception of the Niue Youth Council's talent quest for climate change event, but about seeing the issues or opportunities and then doing something about it. While some of the information around climate change initiatives in Niue may get around the Pacific through the connections of SPREP, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), that information isn't necessarily reaching the shores of nations like New Zealand and Australia, in ways that they might recognise or pay attention to. All these different stories, stories of old stories, stories of journeys, stories of change, are all woven

within Niue culture. They speak to people, places and practices that are unique to Niue experience.

The relational dynamics of women and men in Niue is complex and power exists in more than one space and in multiple ways. There is a reminder in stories like T7's that Niue women don't often seek recognition for the work they do. There is a humbleness that is also central to Niue identity. This doesn't mean that women shouldn't be recognised or have access to higher positions based on entrenched patriarchal views. But it means recognising women and acknowledging that the power of women is inherently a connection to Niue identity and a connection to land. Whether or not Niue women came from the tī plant, these narratives talk about connections to land, and they talk about mothers and grandmothers who have a particular knowledge of how our plants can heal and nourish us. Perhaps one of the greatest images for me comes from T1's story about how she would sneak out to go and see what was happening in the town hall, but every time she tried to sneak back in, there was her mother waiting with the tafe ka niu (a kind of sweeping broom made with coconut fibres, occasionally used for physically reminding misbehaving kids to listen to their parents). It's these enduring images of mothers who always know what's going on, mothers that you can't get anything past that are unified both in my own experience as well as in the stories of several of the women I talked with. When it comes to climate change it makes sense that women would have particular knowledge in this space because mothers pay attention, they look for the things that could impact their families as T4 and T7 spoke about.

In some ways, mainstream perspectives of climate change still talk about impacts as if Indigenous people have no power or agency and no knowledge of what is happening or why it is happening. That we cannot find our own words to conceptualise a complex phenomenon perpetuates the colonial gaze that only sees "illiterate natives". But the narratives represented in this thesis are pushing a different kind of perspective, not of how these women's views should fit or confirm the

dominant narrative, but how paying attention to how our women have worked the land from time immemorial, how our elders push us to go to the bush, how it's important to tell your husband to cook his breakfast unless you want to do it (on your own terms), how caring for your home is important, how women farming can be more productive, are all important ways that our women are experiencing and responding to climate change.

## **4.2 Lotomatala he Atuhau mo e Tau Tupuna** *Elders & Generational Knowledge*

Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are specific to the culture they belong to. Indigenous knowledge is a part of the overall culture that it is situated in and it is important for the identity as well as the survival of its people (Thaman, 2006). Until recently, we have often taken our knowledge and value systems for granted (Thaman, 2006), though I would argue that this can largely be attributed to colonial legacies. All of the stories from *Veveheaga 3* connected with generational knowledge at some point. From a cultural perspective, this makes sense considering we value elders and value the knowledge that comes from them. Elders have authority, like when T12 checked with her elders after our conversation because they are a legitimate source of knowledge. She could perhaps have found the names of particular crops online or in a book, for example, but there is something more that comes from deferring to our elders who live and breathe the land. This is why in gatherings, elders are always given time to speak, and no one stops an elder in such situations.

One of the most distinct themes I picked up from the narratives was how elders and generational knowledge is so ingrained in Niue identity. There is power in our lineage, the cultural importance of respecting elders and an awareness of generational connections through time, through people and place. T1's grandmother played a central role in being the only person she could speak vagahau with while she was in New Zealand. It pushes at this idea of elders carrying place and identity; in this case, it was particularly through language, but there is a kind of gravity in thinking

about how our elders become a home site of knowledge and connection. T4, for example, was grateful to the women of the Niue Women's Council who teach and share their knowledge with her particularly because she has spent a lot of time away from Niue and being away meant she didn't have the kinds of connection that she has now with these elder women. There is also intelligence and power that is recognisable in the stories of resourceful women like Mataginifale, Fitiutouto and Kiliutomanogi (Smith, 1902), there is power in reminding ourselves of our lineage. All of the different and diverging aspects of parents, grandparents, great grandparents and long past ancestors still connect in highlighting the importance and value of generational knowledge in Niue identity.

There are clear connecting points between several of the women in talking about how elders promote knowledge or education that comes from knowing and learning about the land. T1 reflected on her own experiences growing up, the importance of her parents wanting her and her sibling to be able to walk in more than one world. Western education had its benefits, but for her parents, it wasn't more important than Niue knowledge and identity which, in her story, came from both land and language. It is within the current elder generation's memories that most families still know how important it is to have a strong focus on growing foods from the land. With the migration of most Niue people to New Zealand and Australia, there are new relationships people have with the land and, as T2 mentions, there is a significant concern that our younger generations do not want to learn this land-based knowledge that our elders believe to be precious. This was echoed by M1 who felt that younger generations didn't want to go out to the bush anymore. As a Niue person born outside of Niue, I wonder if there are more possibilities here in Niue of engaging with Niue youth in the diaspora who are keen to learn more about Niue. Creating spaces in Niue for the diaspora to come and learn how to practice the knowledge of our elders, learn how to live off the land may have more significant benefits for these issues of language retention and generational knowledge that are harder to provide for outside of Niue. That isn't to say that fuata Niue *Niue youth* in Niue aren't seeking that

connection easily evidenced in groups like Niue Language Roots which is led by young Niue keen to create more inclusive spaces of Niue learning. It is vital that more of these conversations happen because what is happening in these few Niue stories is understanding from elders and youth that there are issues and disconnection in how these issues can be resolved and also in terms of how different people experience barriers to things like generational knowledge and language.

The idea that environmental knowledge encompasses an entire world conveyed by T1 and within the narratives of the *Community Stories* is important for thinking about how climate change is conceptualised in and across these spaces. There's a sense in several of the stories that climate change can only take the story so far. While mainstream rhetoric describes climate change as global with impacts everywhere, there's a tendency to conceptualise it in only one world, but by paying attention to T1's story, it's clear that by connecting with the land she can walk in more than one world. In playing with this idea it's possible to think about climate change as complex but not bigger than all of the world's we walk in. That's not to say that climate change cannot impact these worlds, but that the worlds themselves contain their own definitions of what shape climate change has if it has any shape at all. Perhaps there is an agency in being able to play with scale particularly when Niue worlds have had very limited visibility in the past because of colonial oppression. We're coming into a time where the failure of colonial empires has many people seeking new ideas, different ways of doing things, and Indigenous peoples and Indigenous elders, in particular, have never stopped teaching but perhaps it is a time where more are willing to listen and learn.

Both T5 and T9 reflected on how their mothers taught them to be resourceful, not just to survive but to live well even when they didn't have the convenience that people often take for granted today. Knowing what jobs need doing without being asked or knowing how you're going to cook your talo even when there's no electricity, are important in a Niue context. Not just because these things are useful and mean

that family and community units can function well, but because they connect with elements of what being from Niue is or means. It's also a reminder of scale in the opposite direction, where knowing how to do what seems like relatively small or simple tasks, are still valued and integral in our interconnected ways of being and knowing. People don't live in ideal worlds, but for many of these women, they do the work that is in front of them which means that being versatile and resourceful are some of the most important skills for them to have. T2 talked about how young people get office jobs and then they no longer want to do work in the bush perhaps because the bush seems only necessary when you don't have other means to survive. But as the parents of T1 knew, and as T9 and her husband know, learning about the land, and knowing how to plant crops is more than learning how to survive. T10 made an interesting reflection of how she would hear elders from church talking about how it was difficult to find the seasons and how weather seemed to feel colder in winter and hotter in summer.

Our understanding of things often comes from a culmination of lots of different pieces of information, so when T10 thought about changes in the environment, it made sense that she drew on what she had heard elders saying. T12 talked about how her grandparents had no shoes when they were growing up and this was something my Dad had often mentioned to me when he talked about growing up in Niue. In my first trip with my Dad to Niue, he couldn't believe how sharp the rocks on the island were. As a child, he had run across them without a second thought. Interestingly for me, he once said that life in New Zealand had made his feet soft, he couldn't handle the rocks anymore. It's difficult not to see the loss in this statement. Within a lifetime the use of shoes and the relative cheapness of shoes means we take this item for granted. But what T12's story pushes at is also a question about the costs of convenience. Looking across the stories and the registries, there's a strong sense that the generations before us had a much closer connection with the land. In thinking about how T12 talked about her grandmother not having shoes growing up, there is a literal closeness to the land that has changed within a lifetime. What may seem a

small change (to some it is perhaps a small advance) is also a new kind of barrier, perhaps reflective of “civilising the native”. That’s not to say we need to get rid of our shoes, but to wonder about what literally comes between us and the land. As developed countries, we pursue more and more separation. This isn’t groundbreaking or new, thinking about changes that our elders, our grandparents and great grandparents experienced is intimately connected with thinking about the land.

From land comes food, medicine, and life. T11 talks about how her aunty taught her when it was the right time to pick the talo and cassava. T12 mentions how her mother and grandmother would use particular leaves for medicine. T4 also talked about her knowledge of flora and how important it was for her to be able to pass that on to her daughter. While a few women talked about the abundance of food from the land, I think it’s also useful to think about the knowledge of elders as a place of abundance. T8 compared the abundance of food to being in a supermarket, similar to my Dad’s comment about not ever starving if you knew about the plants in Niue. Most of this information is passed down through generations, not always through explicit directions or explanations but in being seen using plants in specific ways.

The issue of knowledge not being shared is something that worries many people. Niue culture relies on the sharing of diverse experiences and knowledge. If knowledge isn’t shared, then following generations may struggle to understand how to make the best and most sustainable use of natural resources. The stories reveal how knowledge from elders continues to bear fruit for many women, not that knowledge is static or rigid, but in how women use the knowledge both in the way it is handed down to them and in new ways that relate to their own lived experience. T2 briefly talked about how she had given her land to her children. In thinking about how elders see the land as a world in itself, the importance of the bush and of being able to see in the broadest sense what richness comes from the land, the gifting of land has significance beyond monetary value. Like many other Pacific nations, land and land ownership is a contentious issue that continues to literally sicken people on

and off the island. Though I don't go into depth about this issue it's important to recognise that while we can draw on an understanding of the importance of land and the passing of land from generation to generation, the requirement of documents to support or legitimise claims means that not every Niue person has access to land in the same way.

Evident in several of the stories is the flow of knowledge. One woman has four generations of politicians in her family (including herself). This is a reminder of the influence elders have on their children, whether they intend it or not, as is the case for T1 where even though her father was in government he didn't necessarily approve of her being in the same space. T9 talked about her mother being incredibly versatile, good at everything, so good that she never had to tell her kids what jobs they had to do because they would just do them. This kind of role modelling carries unspoken knowledge - younger generations have a front-row seat to watch and learn the resourcefulness and versatility of their elders. Careful observations are an embedded process in our Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) (Thaman, 2006). But these processes are not unaffected by changes in the environment. While we can benefit from ancestral and cultural knowledge of the environment, the processes of how we do this are susceptible to both climate and other changes. This is where climate change action can be used as a space to find solutions to underlying issues of how we communicate culturally important knowledge.

M5 had clear views about how to exploit the environment sustainably without the need of any modern technology or even the practice of laying lots of bait, we just need to remember the old ways of doing things, re-attune ourselves to the environment. M5 was equally clear that he learnt through observation and experimentation, he didn't get taught by anyone. My Dad says similar things; he was never taught any of the skills he has for fishing or growing food, he learnt by doing it himself and maybe watching a few older people doing it.

There are still flows of knowledge which can be seen from much older generations, like through the *Tohi Tala*, or the documents that are kept safe and dry by T12. It is possible to preserve aspects of knowledge so that future generations, like me, may find it one day and benefit from it. Knowledge doesn't always flow downward from generation to generation but can also flow upward. For example, the development of youth projects around climate change is encouraging greater engagement from elder generations in these spaces. As mentioned earlier, in reviving the language elders are engaging with some of the new initiatives by youth to use social media.

As a board member of the Vagahau Niue Trust (VNT), I currently run their Facebook and Instagram accounts. One project I have is "Niue word a week" which posts up a word from the *Tohi Vagahau Niue, Niue Dictionary* and encourages elders to share a sentence that uses the word in an everyday context. It's important to have these different flows of knowledge, using technologies in ways that connect rather than disconnect. T9 talked about how the way kids are educated has changed, there's more use of computers and iPads and access to information elder generations never had as they grew up. But this doesn't mean the knowledge surpasses the knowledge of our elders. While Facebook may make T9 feel "out-of-date", making kids pay attention to the present can be incredibly important, and while new technologies have their benefits, it is easily used in ways that divide rather than connect. There are reasons why T9 would say that she thinks we should bring more of the old ways back. The implications are that we are losing touch with each other and forgetting some of the important lessons that our elders taught us. Technology may change things, but there's an importance in the values that come from our elders.

Many of the women spoke about growing concerns about the knowledge of our elders being lost. T4 could see at the weekly produce markets that the people bringing the produce were over 60 and while there are younger people selling goods, it is the elders who sell the coconuts, the talo, loku and all the organic produce they

are growing from the land. T4 didn't see young people coming to take over or fill the gap that she senses will come soon. T2 discussed how elder generations are focused on growing foods, utilising or maximising the land, but younger generations pursue jobs where they won't have to get their hands dirty. The situation is complex, as I know from my own experience. Knowledge has power and our people know this. In some cases, knowledge is so precious that decisions are made so that it only stays within a family. There are even cases where it is restricted further than that with only a particular sibling being taught or shown that knowledge.

Understandably there are issues when younger generations move abroad or if they don't show interest at the right time or when people pass away before the next generation is old enough to understand. A lot of elder knowledge requires physical presence and requires time. However, as mentioned earlier this knowledge isn't static and while it is important to pay attention to elder generations on the island, there are a significant number of elders outside of the island whose knowledge is also important to understand our identity as a community and what we consider as Niue knowledge. It's certainly a space that requires further research. In the context of this research, it's a reminder that knowledge transfer is not limited to physical presence and that people are finding different and creative ways to engage in new mediums.

There's also a lot of space to engage with old knowledge in new ways and new knowledge in old ways. One example comes from the community section where a woman talked about how after Cyclone Heta her village made a plan to move inland and use their homes that are closer to the coast for tourism. Unfortunately, as time passed the motivation to move lessened. The woman moved anyway though, and in returning further inland to an area her family had been in previous generations she found the plants that they had cultivated generations before, still growing. That reconnection meant a lot to her and is a reminder of the power in newer versions of old knowledge.

There is a sweet spot of traditional and cultural knowledge engaging with new or other kinds of knowledge. T3 said that there is more work that needs to be done to realise the potential of such engagement for our people. According to T3, the indigenous knowledge of our people that relates to climate change is not being factored in our development; “it is not fully appreciated yet”. This raises one of the concerns of how climate change and related policy or projects are perceived, but it also holds out hope that with more work, it might be possible to recognise and better engage with our Indigenous knowledge, something that Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2013) calls our intellectual sovereignty.

In pulling out these central themes of flows of knowledge, the concern for the loss of the knowledge of elders and how elders push us to learn and engage more with the land, it’s clear that generational knowledge is important for Niue people. Our cultural respect of elders and their knowledge doesn’t just connect us to people but connects us to place and these stories demonstrate a significant connection between people and their land.

### **4.3 Vagahau** *Language*

Language is important in different layers of climate change impacts. We can think about how the language of climate change influences rhetoric and conceptualisation. We can also think of how language can be both inclusive and exclusive in relation to Indigenous peoples’ voices. Language is also a tool for understanding relationships to our environment and other living beings. In this section, I pay attention to how language was raised by different women and later return to how this contributes to and understanding of climate change in Niue.

Samoa Tongakilo’s (1998b) poem “What Is It To Be?” is critical of Western education and the scholarship “gifted” to Niue students that push them to think “...that graduating with a degree/Makes you the Lord of the Land” (p. 13). But it comes with a cost, Samoa asks “But...../In what shall I put the talo” (p.13) her woe is the

loss of her traditional heritage for a foreign piece of paper. T1's father's view of education wasn't that it should help her better assimilate into the Pālagi but that it would help her succeed in the different worlds which were becoming a part of Niue. But when her father does not recognise her he perhaps realised that an ability to walk in both worlds did not mean that things can't be lost. Her father was a staunch Niue person and he passed that staunchness on to her. The advice from both her father and her grandmother is a reminder that Niue people value Niue culture. Valuing our culture doesn't sound like something that should need to be emphasised, but western-based schooling in Niue had very strict rules on speaking vagahau, violence was common for those who didn't comply, my Dad got caught out more than once. But there is a difference here in being somewhere where no one else can speak vagahau and being somewhere where everyone speaks vagahau. For T1 there was always a sense of longing to return home when she was in boarding school, which was isolated not just from family but all the things that Niue had come to mean to her before she left, warmth, friendship, people who were happy to see you. The history of western-education in Niue and the violence used to instate English as a form of 'civilisation' has implications with how some of our elders view Niue language and culture. My Dad certainly thought that vagahau was not necessary for me to be successful in life, though I see now that as I learn more vagahau he is more committed to telling me more stories about Niue.

Seven of the twelve stories made a significant reference to the use and importance of language, especially how vagahau is an essential part of Niue identity. Language is often taught by women, some have reasoned that this is why language is often referred to as the mother-tongue. Indeed, several of the women from these stories had professional roles that required them to teach the language. All women spoke fluent vagahau. Language has been a central tenet of how people define Niue identity. Not knowing the language doesn't stop you from being from Niue but there is a sense that you are missing something. If you cannot engage with people in your mother-tongue, there is a disconnection with how much knowledge, understanding

and experience you can really have. Even if it's just so you know when people are gossiping about you.

T1 was adamant that we need to keep our language no matter where we are, no matter where we might go. She inherited this view from her family, namely her father and grandmother. Language in this sense is a connection to home, something that stays at the centre of personal identity regardless of where our bodies may move. Language is something that is inherited both in being able to speak the language and in terms of valuing language as a gift from our ancestors. T7 expressed knowing *vagahau* as knowing oneself. Most people, including those included in the *Community Stories* in *Veveheaga 2*, and would talk about language as having a certain Niue-ness.

Without language there are things that aren't accessible within the Niue culture, there is meaning that can't be expressed, shared or understood. T3 spoke with pride at not having English as her first language. While Niue has dual languages officially, English and *vagahau* Niue, T3 made a particular emphasis of positioning Niue ahead of the colonial language that dominates the speaking of most Niue people. T7 put similar emphasis on learning *vagahau*, particularly as the responsibility of parents to their children. She also described it as a gift, but one that must be given because in not passing on the language they are taking something away from their children. Yet, as T9 expressed, language has to be accessible. In her work, she had parents who didn't have the language but wanted their children to be able to speak *vagahau*. While the school was monolingual, she never turned children away just because they couldn't speak *vagahau*. It is another side to conversations where people say that parents need to work harder to make sure their children can speak *vagahau* but don't support parents who, for whatever reason, don't have any *vagahau* themselves. Only a few decades ago speaking Niue was a punishable act in schools and this reality has had clear impacts for many of the people who were educated during this time. As T7 mentions there's added complexity in how her parents enforced the use of *vagahau* during her childhood but no longer enforce it with her children. There is a slippage

here where the staunchness T7 remembers growing up has not continued for the next generation. T8 understood through her project work in Sydney how difficult it can be for fuata Niue who want to learn the vagahau but don't have family who can teach them.

In my own experience of trying to learn vagahau, I have seen that there are often gatekeepers who have the power to create inclusive spaces of learning but also to obstruct the sharing of knowledge. The situation is complex and in no small part due to the overbearing and ever-present colonial systems that have and continue to privilege English both in Niue and in Aotearoa and Australia, where much of the Niue diaspora reside. T10 felt that raising her child to speak English was more important for his education and his ability to be understood by others, perhaps an indication of the kinds of societies she believes her child will experience. That Niue people will travel and live outside of Niue for a time is inevitable but learning English doesn't necessarily have to be at the cost of learning vagahau. T10 knew that there needed to be a balance but her priority was for her son to learn English first. T8 was concerned that vagahau already tends to be only used in performance. While this is taken as a positive for communities where vagahau fluency is low, it also has implications for how we can use vagahau in every-day situations and contexts. T4 notes, that New Zealand-based Niue people can improve the fluency of vagahau but will always lack the context. Being in the diaspora means we are faced with environments that do not always match how language is used in Niue.

T8 talked about how language was a way to connect our people. I'm reminded of the *Tohi Tala* as a space of connection. Because it was printed in vagahau and English it remains one of the earliest instances where vagahau was written and published, outside of the translation of the Bible to Niue (though this came from non-Niue people) and contributions to *Talahau Niue* (a church publication that had Niue contributors), by tagata Niue. The *Tohi Tala* was a space where Niue people had control over some of the content and there was and is power in the narratives that

emerged from the bilingual nature of the publication. T8 wasn't referring to how vagahau connected people in Niue, but how it connected Niue people overseas.

For T3 and T7, the ability to speak the language can be a test. Niue people who can't understand the language open themselves to being gossiped about. Having the ability to check people in vagahau can be important because Niue people aren't averse to sarcasm, pretending, or "playing the fool". Gossiping in a Niue context, from my experience, can be both good and bad. It is an unavoidable aspect of the culture both in Niue and anywhere that Niue people come together. I wasn't immune to gossip and knew both my research and me were gossiped about, not all good, not all bad and most of it I'm sure I haven't been told or been able to piece together as I learn more of the language. I was aware of my naivety as I started staying in Niue for longer periods and realised that a weakness of my research was my lack of vagahau. And yet, my lack of vagahau also had benefits because people could also see that I had a genuine interest; Niue people are incredibly kind to people who try and people who work hard. For example, many of the women I became close with during my time in Niue would tell me what other people had said; Niue people can be cheeky and mischievous and always up for a laugh, but we're also very caring. Another benefit of gossip is that being talked about by the right person or being heard being talked about by someone can lead you to the right people. There was one case where someone had heard someone else talking about doing my research and so they came to find me because they wanted to have their say and they wanted to have it recorded.

While vagahau is commonly used in Niue, the language, like many Pacific languages, gets obscured in the English-dominated language landscapes of Aotearoa. And while there are a significant number of Niue people living in particular places in New Zealand, vagahau is often in competition with other larger Pacific groups. Conversations around language as an essential aspect of Niue culture and identity also marks the distinction between Niue people from the island and those from outside. Several Pacific Studies scholars have grappled with these insider and outsider

connections or disconnections (see e.g., Hau'ofa, 2008; Nabobo-Baba, 2008, Tawake, 2000). There are increasing changes in our transnational communities that are fundamentally changing our cultures and our identities in a globalised world (Diaz & Kauanui, 2001).

Some elders are making space for youth to lead the revival of vagahau Niue. The first Emerging Pasifika Writer in Residence at Victoria University of Wellington was awarded to young Niue playwright Leki Jackson-Bourke (Downs, 2019). His address to youth at the 2017 Niue Youth Network Fono was to persevere; in adversity, it is knowing our Niue identity that can make us feel like we belong and help us navigate worlds where identifying as Pasifika has long had a stigma attached. In some ways, it is the younger generations that rebel, creatively engages, break rules and resist colonially oppressive, systemic, racist, and discriminatory ways, institutions, and societies that we live in. It is worth remembering though, that the ability to rebel, to speak back to colonial oppression, racism and discrimination, in part comes from the hard-fought battles of previous generations. The Polynesian Panthers, for example, fought for the rights of Pacific peoples in New Zealand and also established rights that would benefit all New Zealanders. But the battles aren't always public, our parents, grandparents and great grandparents often fought for a better life for their children by working long hours in factories and low-paying jobs. It's important to recognise the places we have been and the places our people have worked, to recognise the lives of people who held down jobs to put meals on the table and provide kids with the materials they need for school, as a part of the narrative of Pacific success.

There are several indications that our language is dying or is on the decline (Stewart, 2016; Statistics NZ, 2014). This idea of language, along with cultural practices, being endangered or dying out is similar to the rhetoric of the negative impacts of climate change for Indigenous people. At different levels, climate change seems to exacerbate existing issues of identity and culture. There are connections between how we talk about losing language and how we view losing the battle against

climate change. There's also a sense that climate change may take away more than the physical aspects of our environment. Several earth system models predict increases in the intensity of strong storm tropical cyclones, all of which will affect the physical landscape of Niue. And yet, there is perhaps a greater loss that would be felt from the loss of language that would reverberate across generations.

While loss is often referred to in the context of climate change, Niue is grappling with loss in many different forms that seem to be less talked about in mainstream conversations about climate change. Language encompasses the meanings of climate change. On one hand, the language of climate change articulated as Western-dominated rhetoric didn't translate in many of the conversations I had with the women I spoke to. On the other hand, the conversations repeatedly emphasised the vulnerability of *vagahau*, a central part of Niue identity and culture. Concern for our language is a concern for the land and sea, it is a concern for people and place and all living beings that are interconnected in Niue cosmology. As mentioned by T1, I think there is a shared hope by most *tagata Niue* that our people won't forget the language. This hope is culturally significant because while there is a global concern for climate change, there isn't necessarily a global concern for the loss of Niue language.

#### **4.4 Fenua, Vai, Hagahaga Matagi** *Land, Water and Weather*

There were many references to land and water throughout the stories, often coinciding with how the women talked about climate change. Yet the discussion of land and water don't fit the common moulds of mainstream images of climate change such as sea-level rise and being washed away or drowning amidst sinking islands. T12 talked about her love of island life: feeding the pigs, working the plantations, swimming in the sea. The connections to land and water are about identity, culture, love and ancestral lineage.

Something that isn't lost in these stories is the numerous references to the versatility of the coconut and the value of the humble talo. T2 remarked, "[I] don't know what we'd do without the coconut". T2's view was one that was shared throughout the stories. She used the fibre of the coconut to pollinate her vanilla orchids and she used the shells for charcoal. T4 used coconut husks for mulch for her anthuriums and other speciality plants. T12 loves nane, a Niue speciality of grated coconut and arrowroot. I was given coconut water to drink in a few of my talanoa and T8 found that every time she came to Niue people would always come and leave fresh coconuts at her door.

Coconuts, which our island is named after, connect people to culture and each other. We grow coconuts, but we also gift them, they are the food my Dad remembers growing up on especially when they didn't have much money. There would always be a coconut tree you could run up and pick as many as you wanted. In one of the stories from the community section, some trees were a little easier to pick coconuts from and so long as the owner never caught you stealing them, then life was good. T8 even thought it would be better to use coconut water in place of wine for communion. The coconut permeates cultural spaces, and this wonder-nut is valuable as food, drink, housing material, pollination tool, fertiliser, and many things besides.

The value of the talo seems to be second only to the coconut. Talo are one of the major plantation crops on the island, and it would be incredibly rare to have a feast in Niue without any talo. T11 talked about how she often went up to the bush to water plants and to pick the talo. Her favourite food is curry and talo which her sister taught her to make. There are so many stories that can be built just from knowing T11's favourite food, a hybrid of a staple in Niue diet with something that perhaps found its way into Niue diet as more Fijians came to Niue for work. The talo of Niue is considered by every Niue person I've met to be the best in the Pacific. As a staple it makes sense that many of the stories would connect with thinking about what happens to this crop; knowledge of which varieties grow best, how being an

office person is not enough, you still need to be able to provide talo for your family. T10 noticed how talo were deteriorating faster these days, that maybe the rapid changes in the cycles of rain and hot sun meant that the talo didn't stay fresh very long after it was pulled up. She talked about how fresh talo is the best, but these days you have to freeze a lot of it because it won't last. But if your freezer is full or if there are problems with the electricity, it's useful to remember some of the old ways of how the food was kept. Frozen talo and drinking coconuts are two of the most common items that fill the white polystyrene boxes that are an indicator of people heading to or returning from the islands. To people away from the island, they are a reminder of home and a reaffirmation that nothing tastes as good as things grown in Niue soil.

In all of the tau tala, there are stories of the past, cultural practices and histories woven through the conversation. Niue culture is embedded in storytelling. Thinking about climate change in this context requires education of greater changes that have happened for our people over time. Considering why this broader education is important hits several aspects of Niue understanding, experience and identity. There's a pull at the difference of convenience, things that we take for granted now that our parents, grandparents and great grandparents had to work hard for. One example is water. While Niue currently has problems with contaminated water and people have to boil water before they drink it, not so long ago water was not as easily available.

The land, the bush, plantations and the forest are central to the Niue lifestyle and are an important place of learning and connection. For T12, working the plantations was something she loved about island life. While T1 didn't like bush work and would rather play golf instead (even though she didn't like that much either), she could see the importance of why her parents had wanted her to learn how to look after the land. Plantations are sites of abundance in locally grown foods, it isn't a barren land with nothing on it, and it's not that difficult to grow a great variety of food as long as you know how and where to plant. T8 talked about how growing up she ate

talo, yam, cassava, coconut, and breadfruit, all things easily grown in Niue soils, and have been for generations – particularly talo, coconuts, and yams. T10 talked about how watermelon plantations have become more popular and her Dad plants them most years. Plantations are an important aspect of Niue identity, but crops often require hard labour although families often share the work. One of the reasons so many families have left Niue is that their hard labour in the plantations couldn't match the money that could be made overseas. Those who returned home after several years overseas found that their access to land had changed. T4 admits that she relies on what local farmers sell at the markets, but as they get older there doesn't seem to be young people willing to take up farming or plantation work.

Common to a few of the stories were references to birds, bees, uga and insects. On the one hand, there is growing attention to the changing impacts on fauna. There are now seasons for shooting the lupe, for example, so that populations may increase. But for T10, the chosen times of the shooting season don't always fall when it's the best time for hunting, like after certain fruit trees ripen so that the birds are fat. Some people ignore the restrictions anyway. I remember talking to her about how hunting practices had changed with the introduction of guns. Captured in Loeb (1926) are illustrations copied from a Niue person who drew pictures of how they would lure lupe to a particular area of trees and catch them with nets or by throwing rocks. It's a reminder that Niue people have pretty good aim, as Cook and his crew were quickly made aware as they trespassed onto our island.

The number of birds isn't the only concern. Niue's cultural icon, the uga (land crab) has also been put under restrictions. Uga can no longer be exported to New Zealand. While T10 noticed that there are times when there are hardly any uga around, others from the community section talk about how if you know when and where to look, there are always lots of uga, you just have to be careful not to take them when they are heading to the coast to lay their eggs. Bees are also of concern for T2, but not for the same reason. She believes that since the introduction of bees,

our local crops have suffered. Niue had an abundance of foods before bees were introduced but now some fruits are struggling, things that used to be common in the wild are becoming rare.

While some people find benefit in introduced species, technologies or tools for agriculture, there seems to be a growing recognition that there are consequences for our ecosystems. There have been outbreaks of dengue fever as stale water and growing areas of rubbish become perfect breeding grounds for mosquitoes. There are other pests that women are concerned about too. T10 talked about the increase of pests that meant significant amounts of crops were being lost. Thinking about loss, she also noticed that it was harder to find hihi, whose small yellow-shells are commonly used in making kahoā, necklaces. T2 also had concerns about introduced chemicals used to kill weeds. She saw that they were destroying the ecology of Niue. This is possibly a reason why the Niue Island Organic Farmers Association has had so much traction as others also see the problems associated with chemical pesticides. T4 had also heard about the change of behaviours for insects in coming in from the coast to feed on the introduced species of flowers.

In thinking about issues for animals and insects there are wider issues of the exploitation of land that a few of the stories picked up on. The exploitation of land has roots throughout the Pacific. Colonial interests from New Zealand, Australia and Great Britain approved the mining of phosphate in Nauru and Banaba in the early 1900s (Teaiwa, 2015). The people of Banaba were forced to move to Rabi in Fiji while the mining and dispersal of their ancestors and ancestral home meant that within 80 years their homeland had been destroyed (Teaiwa, 2015). Mining in West Papua sanctioned by its occupying colonial power, Indonesia, continues today with major foreign companies continuing to profit from one of the largest mining clusters in the world, all while the people of West Papua continue to face persecution (Schulman, 2016). The Marind people of West Papua are also faced with a lack of access to their own lands as Indonesia clears Indigenous lands for plantations to produce sugar,

timber and palm oil (Chao, 2019). While politicians and uninformed pundits may grizzle over aid programmes that are argued to “keep the islands afloat” less are willing to look at the profits that continue to be made through the exploitation of our land, resources and people. But the exploitation of our land does not always rest with colonial powers, current Niue Premier, Toke Talagi, has openly sought commercial arrangements to explore for copper and gold (Migone, 2012). There are clear transparency issues in the current Niue government (Smith, 2018) and while this erodes public trust there are likely to be larger consequences in the long term. Shifts to increasingly unsustainable methods for income and relationships that are premised on short-term economic gain raise questions about what the real costs are, who will have to bear them and how Niue has come to be in a position where it would seek gold and copper prospecting or be in favour of Indonesia seeking to improve its tourism profile while it still occupies the Indigenous lands of West Papua. While political issues are not uncommon in any government and I don’t suspect many changes of tactics from current political leaders, I do think there is a much larger group of concerned Niue people who strive for the prosperity of Niue that is shared rather than funnelled.

M1’s story pushes back on things that we see as part of our culture but have changed in ways that don’t necessarily serve our best interests. Here it is about making colonial systems visible in things that are traditionally considered part of our culture. Two key examples are how we fish and our approaches to agriculture. Fishing has a long and stable history in Niue culture. The point here is that fishing has come to mean different things. Artisanal or traditional fishing in Niue has diminished in favour of the use of boats and charter services, although there is continued interest in fishing from the *vaka canoe*. Fishing has become a significant drawcard in tourism marketing. Fishing has also come to mean commercial licences. And while fish in the past have come from our waters, there has been an increase in sourcing fish from further afield. In 2018 while I was in Niue for fieldwork, a comment was made that a local restaurant was sourcing some of its fish from Fiji. There are both incremental

and significant shifts of change in thinking about fishing in Niue. And while climate change is recognised as an impact on the fishing industry at all levels, there are these other issues of change resulting from economic systems that create a murkiness in why and how certain decisions, affecting the kinds of food we eat, are being made. Agriculture is another area of change. The increasing pursuit of development in terms of both commercial and residential development is changing the land and seascape in ways that seem to outstrip signals of climate change. Like fishing, agriculture has a long history in Niue, though its marked rise during colonial era contact that continues today has seen incredible shifts in what is produced in and from Niue soil.

In our history, we have customs of drawing on knowledge not just from one elder but from many. What we can prioritise and think more carefully about is how we pay attention to elders' knowledge. One of the difficult things particularly for older generations is noticing seasonal changes that don't fit with how things have been in the past. T1 talked about how the weather is more unsettled now compared to what she experienced growing up -- you never know what weather you might get in a day. T3 noticed how the pink lilies that bloom all around the island tend to coincide with when the kaloama come in closer to the reef. The flowers were out in January and February, now they are still around in March and even into April. A few of the people in the *Community Stories* had similar experiences where seasons were changing. Many elders had felt the weather going to more extremes, colder in winter and hotter in summer. T10 noticed that those were the kinds of conversations people were having at church. For T4 she was able to reflect on her own experience of "stinking hot" days.

The unpredictability of seasons also had an impact on how people were planting. While T10's Dad often planted watermelon, the changeable weather and increased impacts of winds, along with increases in pests, meant that getting a good harvest was harder to predict or plan for. But people maintain a sharp focus on mitigating and adapting as best they can. When winds impact their crops, they try and

move to areas where there is less likely impact. But as more lands are cleared the environment is increasingly affected by human impacts. T6 believes that climate change adaptation could be effective if government agencies provided relevant and timely information to people. Collaboration between the meteorological office and the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries would be useful in providing information on the best crops to plant for upcoming weather patterns. Acknowledging there is a benefit to using technology to access information, so people can make informed decisions, she calls for a balance. It's not about disregarding cultural knowledge but finding ways to connect with other ways of thinking and seeing the land, and its interconnectedness to what happens beyond the horizon that is also important. T8 already has a clear knowledge of the changing seasons and of how to adapt to it by growing particular crops such as the tapui, which grows well during drier periods. While it may be possible to balance cultural knowledge with other knowledge, it doesn't always seem as though cultural knowledge has the same standing. International agencies concentrate more on educating people about climate change impacts from a western-scientific perspective rather than recognising how people already engage in these spaces, or even thinking about the issues that people are engaging with and seeing the connections to climate change in different ways.

A common feature of the stories are references to cyclones. T8 remembered returning to the island not long after Cyclone Heta had hit. What stood out in her mind was how everything had gone brown. T10 talked about how Niue is green, because of all the trees and how it is easier to breathe on the island, compared to places like New Zealand or Australia, which are interesting comparisons considering how pro-nature both of those countries are in their tourism advertising. Niue's green image gets a battering whenever a devastating cyclone turns the landscape brown. That imagery has a lasting effect not just because of the visible damage that cyclones cause but also because they have lasting impacts beyond the news cycles that get the island noticed. T7 still sees the black mould that is affecting mango trees. Others noticed how there are still parts of the reef where coral hasn't come back. People in Niue are not ignorant

of their geographical position which puts them at greater risk of cyclones but in some of the conversations, people showed awareness of doing what they could and carrying on with all of the other things that drew their attention in the meantime. Many women had fearful memories of the most recent cyclones. T12 didn't even want to hear the warning sirens again, because while they indicate the need for people to take cover, they are a reminder of trauma and loss. Some women reflected on the experiences of cyclones by noticing how animals reacted. In the community section, a woman had noticed that her pigs had taken off inland before a cyclone hit. T2 noticed that there had been a significant increase in her flowers blooming before bad weather.

Learning through observation is common to faka Niue *the Niue way*. People aren't told what to do but they may be allowed to watch and learn from what others do. In some ways, this follows in the mindset of T2. She sometimes burns rubbish and notices that the plants nearby aren't affected, they seem to be less affected by aphids as well. Her husband who has had contracts to plant areas near mines has seen good growth despite being so close to open mines. I didn't know how to ask what she thought of the mines themselves, but her point is interesting. She doesn't believe in climate change and didn't see any impact in the weather beyond the changes that she has seen in the past. Sometimes the weather was good, sometimes it was bad and sometimes Niue got hit by a cyclone. She didn't see anything out of that norm. In some ways, Niue being a raised atoll means that impacts like rising sea level may not have as much influence for people who live much higher up. I asked about other things she may have noticed but her particular perspective is one of trusting what she can see and trusting what she knows based on previous experiences not just in Niue but in Australia as well. I wouldn't go so far as to say she denied climate change because I think her responses are more complex than that. She is a woman who pays close attention to the environment. She could see those flotation devices buoyed just off the reef were attracting fish away from the coastline, something that impacted whales, with which she had a particular connection to as part of a local whale NGO

that seeks to protect whales from destructive tourism operators. She's also very religious which she made clear in her story.

A few of the other women and some people from the *Community Stories* seemed unsure about whether climate change was something happening in Niue or not. It can be quite difficult to tell a researcher that their topic doesn't exist in Niue and I got that sense from T12 and a few of the people in the community section. I think what adds to the complexity is that lots of people from government agencies, NGOs, and other community groups are all working on climate change issues. The words are common, and people are willing to do things in the name of those words, it helps that there is sometimes money involved. But there are still people who are unsure of what climate change means in Niue. Not in terms of a translation, but what it looks like, what it feels like in the Niue context. T5 makes a point about how her school needs to have books where kids can see the Niue environment; students need to see trees, animals, and faces that they recognise. I think for some of these women, and people from the community, there is a common problem where the meaning of climate change in Niue isn't visible to them in how they perceive their environment and from what they have experienced here and overseas.

There's also the issue of researchers and consultants coming in with new technology, new ideas and new ways of doing things that have a distinct lack of understanding for the context of Niue, which is what T2 points out. There are also issues around how outsider knowledge is brought in to supplant cultural knowledge or ways of doing things. Perhaps the biggest issue is that most approaches to climate change in Niue seem to not see the multi-dimensional ways people perceive and experience life. Setting up water tanks is great but if you can't afford the plumbing to join it to your house then you're left with a big piece of plastic in your garden. Particularly in the second group conversation in the community section, it's clear that climate change projects are common in their communities but often seem to come

and go. People get excited in the beginning but after a while, they move on to something else.

#### **4.5 Tau Talahauaga ke he Hikihikiaga he Matagi i Niue** *Climate change conversations in Niue*

It is clear from these women's narratives that climate change in a Niue context is diverse and complex. There is no single answer to the question of what climate change even is. What these narratives do is add to the stories that are already coming from places like the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and others which show that there isn't a single story about climate change in our region. There isn't even a single story that comes from one person on the same island, even the same village. From this discussion and the connections and divergences, each narrative possesses it's possible to see climate change not from its western-centric parameters but through the lenses of several different Niue women whose lives are much more complex than the narrow confines of colonially rooted, mainstream views of climate change and Niue.

There are climate change conversations within these women's stories that connect with tangible and physical impacts of climate change. T1 talked about how things like the weather were "...just different. One minute it is quiet and still, next minute [you] don't know where the wind is coming from [or] the rain. It's changed, the climate". But it's not just a change of climate she talks about, it's the changes she sees happening to other countries and how the uncertainty spreads not just in what impacts there are but people more generally seem more uncertain. She was adamant though that the best place for her to weather changes was in Niue. It's where her heart is. No one that I met expressed any interest in leaving Niue because of climate change. One of the only enticements to leave was money, and even then leaving was always done with a view to return.

For T4, climate change was a connection to her children and the work they did through a 350 Pacific programme planting trees. She also mentioned how we should be careful with our rubbish and particularly the kinds of rubbish we burnt. She wasn't the only person to bring up rubbish. T7 referred to how clean Niue was compared to other countries. I'm not sure if this was a blindness to the rubbish that isn't hard to find along the roadside, and it certainly wasn't a reference to the dumping grounds hidden around the island. But it is something that comes from comparisons to other countries and creates limitations in what responsibilities people feel they have in making changes. While I was in Niue, a local high school teacher had set up a rubbish-picking event for students on holiday to come out and help clean up the roadsides. I've also seen similar work by DAFF working groups trying to tidy up the area above Sir Roberts Wharf. This group was disappointed when their hard work seemed to be quickly undone by a whole lot of new rubbish dumped in the area.

Niue is a relatively clean country but focusing on whether rubbish is visible can conveniently obscure what happens to our waste and also can avoid questions about what we are doing (or not doing) that creates waste. When T10 talked about how people tried to use lunch paper and paper bags instead of tin foil and plastic bags the shift didn't last long as paper disintegrated with cold, wet or hot things and people got fed and went back to using tin foil and plastic. As long as rubbish is collected every week, or can be burnt, the problem shifts to someone or to somewhere else. While T7 is proud that Niue is such a clean and tidy island and on a global scale Niue has relatively small emissions, but the invisibility of waste or the lack of waste in comparison to other countries raises questions about how we view ourselves and how comparisons to other countries can influence our actions.

T5 talked about climate change as part of the curriculum for students. She made the point that climate change is not just about the impacts there are for people but the environment as a whole. T5 talked about Niue high school students going to Japan to talk about climate change in Niue to students from other countries. It's

important to think about why Niue students would be funded by the Government of Japan to attend climate change workshops or conferences. Japan has continued interest in the region, but the connection Japan has with Niue is not so clear. Niue has one of the top 20 sushi restaurants outside of Japan, but perhaps cynically, I doubt this is why Japan funded the trip. A cursory search on Google finds that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Japan has a few pages for their diplomatic relationship with Niue which was established in August 2015. In the same year, Japan acknowledged Niue as a country by including us on their map of the world (AFP as cited by The Straits Times, 2015). Niue also has a multi-million-dollar trade deal with Japan and Japan is looking to boost its profile in the Pacific in the wake of China's increasing presence. There is also a website run by a group of Niue people called the Japan Niue Friendship, established in March 2016 to build Japan-Niue cultural exchanges and friendships (Japan Niue Friendship Association, 2019).

T6 highlighted that it is important to recognise changes in the models that we've used in the past in being able to respond to climate change impacts. From her perspective, as people see more of the impacts of climate change, they do more to respond. While a lot of her work means she focuses on climate change, she doesn't think that other people who don't actively focus on climate change in their work don't care about climate change. While people love the island lifestyle and holiday-makers revel in the laidback vibe and friendliness of people, the reality is that people in Niue are still incredibly busy, sometimes people are just trying to get by. T7 sees climate change as being related to cyclones, the amounts of rubbish and pollution we make and finding ways to keep Niue clean and keep our ocean blue as long as possible. She feels that ultimately it will be up to our children to "combat" climate change. It's a reminder that climate change impacts are set to accelerate and it is important to connect with younger generations with as much useful knowledge as we have. This isn't to privilege one knowledge over another, but to recognise that all knowledge is relevant because all things living and non-living have value. T8 sees how she can be part of the learning journey with her young grandchildren. But for her, the changes

aren't limited to the climate. We need to pay attention to our changing diets, changes in our culture and finding ways to be connected to culture and nature like our elder generations and our ancestors before them. Solutions in this space might be as simple as encouraging our kids to drink water instead of fizzy or using coconut water instead of flat Pepsi for communion. T10 talked about climate change impacts on food sources, how the weather affected her family's crops. Food is a really important value in Niue culture but also every-day life. Being able to provide for your family is important so people pay attention to where their food comes from and any changes they can see that might affect those food sources. The diet of most of the women includes food from plantations, so they all had a clear interest in what happened in those spaces. Water is a significant part of T12's story. T12 had clear knowledge and connection with water in lots of different forms. Similar to T11, T12 didn't feel like she had much knowledge about climate change but perhaps in a similar way to T2, there was a disconnection with the words 'climate change'.

In her own words, T2 was pretty clear that she sees climate change as a kind of bandwagon that has been set up by outsiders who don't understand the Niue context and perhaps natural environments more broadly. There are specific connotations that come with climate change and for T2 none of them is positive. It's not as simple as renaming climate change because the phrase comes with baggage and not believing in it doesn't necessarily mean she is disconnected from their environment nor does it mean she promotes harmful environmental practices. I think in essence she values what she sees and what she experiences over what outsiders may present as a singular truth and what they demand we should all be doing something about. The view that climate change requires the action of all people obscures the reality that there are class and wealth imbalances that mean the inaction of the powerful and wealthy disproportionately affects less wealthy and marginalised communities. It also obscures how Indigenous people and practices that have been around for thousands of years, often centre on the sustainable use of protection of the environment. While future research needs to recognise and value Indigenous

environmental practices there we have to be careful that this knowledge is not mined for the benefit of outsiders who seek the security of the status quo. There are underlying issues here of how we, the global we, are in a position of climate crisis. In highlighting Niue women's narratives of climate change I see the value of this thesis is not limited to how we identify issues and opportunities in how we respond to climate change but also in how we can decolonise research so that we claim our intellectual sovereignty in these spaces.

T3 she saw climate change as a kind of promotion. Something people couldn't escape from not because of environmental impacts but because there were so many projects, consultants, and researchers coming to Niue because of climate change, which, of course, included me. People like me wanted to talk about climate change but were less interested in actually learning the culture, getting to know the people and realising that climate change wasn't the only change that was happening that was having a big impact on the people. T3 also talked about climate change as a changing understanding of the environment. I don't think this is limited to Niue people but can have a broader reach. The change doesn't have to be new as many of the stories allude to, there is power in learning from the old ways of doing things. As T8 mentioned, not everyone has grown up learning about climate change, but people know about the environment and that knowledge shouldn't be discounted.

Perhaps the most optimistic responses about climate change came from T9, who saw climate as being in the realm of government agencies like the Meteorology Office, the "environment people" and the "water people". After I asked whether Niue people could do anything about climate change she said yes and referred to how her school was teaching children to grow food organically. When she says "Even if your country is small you can still make a difference in your country and help out with the big countries too," she is making a statement about Niue having a responsibility to "help out" with bigger countries in the context of climate change. This is aspirational

not just in outlook but also in how it places Niue within a regional and a global narrative.

#### **4.6 Magafaoa *Family***

One of the patterns that appear consistently through the different registries and in the women's narratives is genealogy. While the importance of family is well recognised from a cultural perspective, viewing this across space and time through different mediums of knowledge and culture highlights and reinforces the prioritisation of family both as an immediate and ongoing concern. Family is an important thread in how this thesis came together for me as a researcher; thinking about the photograph of my grandmother that I'd never seen until I began this research and the stories that my Dad would spontaneously tell me throughout. These connections extend to the genealogies that stretch to the women warriors recorded by the Niue scholars that informed Loeb (1926), to the genealogies expressed in the narratives of women who, when thinking about climate change, think about their families. These genealogical connections are similarly reflected and perhaps enhanced by the use of hiapo as a guiding metaphor for this research. Hiapo making was a practice passed through generations; each generation, and each person it has passed to, has interpreted and used it in different ways. The use of actual dyes and patterns on hiapo may have only arisen in the late 1800s but the use of hiapo has much deeper roots. To see and trace these roots alongside the patterns of particular dyes, particular movements of a person's hand, particular thoughts that are influenced by different factors is about being open to more complex connections. The vantage points made possible by acknowledging and thinking carefully about Niue written work as a critical foundation for an academic thesis shifts the boundaries of where Management Communication can see itself, and what can be claimed or made visible as part of a critical Management Communication library. To recognise the genealogy of Niue literature similarly pushes at important questions of how Niue voice is recognised, prioritised and valued.

In the visual narratives, the genealogical thread present through imagery and the resulting narratives creates spaces that can better acknowledge and respect cultural values. Visually connecting with family and genealogy, for example in the photograph of my Grandmother and Aunt, to create spaces of love and care that enables hold the stories of other women's family members with the same kind of value. This is something particular to me as a Niue researcher doing research in Niue; my analysis of the women's narratives in this section connects to my ability to reflect and be influenced by genealogical and familial connections from the different registries. The link is clear when looking at the emphasis of family relationships in narratives such as T7 where she has strong bonds with her Papa and the line of politically-engaged members of her family. Similarly, the images of hiapo making that precede each chapter speak to the physical nature of hiapo and, along with the photographs in the section on visual narratives, foreground a different kind of tangibility within the written spaces of the thesis. The visual nature of the hiapo and photographs both demand and invite different interpretations, different kinds of viewing and thinking in order to process meaning, and these, in turn, produce particular ways of thinking about the women's narratives, particularly in the context of family and genealogy. Insights drawn from the photographs were not limited to literal representation but included the stories that come from memories connected to the images, the stories within stories that can be drawn from seeing something at a particular time or in a particular place. The photographs also draw our attention to the visual imagery evoked in storytelling, such as T12 where water becomes a prominent feature of the narrative though it wasn't necessarily laboured on in our conversations. These different aspects of Niue culture and knowledge are multifaceted and complex, and thinking about them in different dimensions, just as the hiapo can be viewed, creates different land and seascapes of questioning and understanding. The stories that come from these Niue women thinking about climate change are complex. When the weight of foreign lenses and frameworks are removed, climate change becomes a body within the narratives of Niue women rather than the

other way around. Climate change may be overwhelming in some senses, but within the spaces created through these Niue-specific registries, control and framing of the narrative remain with Niue people.

The different visual, written and oral registries add depth and detail to the context that these women's narratives are printed upon. Rather than creating a canvas that is foreign to Niue women's voices, these different forms of Niue knowledge that spread across and envelop the first three chapters make the argument that Niue research can and should use Niue sources of knowledge.

## **Conclusion**

In "Lo(o)sing the Edge," Teresia Teaiwa makes the point that "The native is personal. The personal is essential. For the Edge . . . . The native is hybrid. Hybridity is essential. For the Edge" (as cited in Diaz & Kauanui, 2001, p. 326). I want to draw on this idea of what it means to be focusing on the personal stories within the hybridity embodied in a hiapo. There are continuing notions of hybridity in the mixing and blending of land and the knowledge of our elders; the shifting of identities and culture with the introduction of new species, new technologies; the straddling of Niue and Aotearoa-Niue or Australian-Niue cultures; the mixing of the vagahau within this predominantly English thesis. Many of these stories have grappled with hybridity in the sense that they are negotiating boundaries and assumed binaries that frame our identities and culture (Sharrad, 2005). Climate change is not a binary belief in these narratives but a shifting and complex notion reflected in the way different women connect with the land, each other, other living things, other countries, and even how they talk about climate change in their every-day live experiences.

Embedded in these stories is a theme of uniqueness in the places and spaces where our conversations go. While understanding climate change is an important aspect of this research paying attention to personal stories adds nuance to the

realities of climate change in ways that disrupt notions of fixity or essentiality of identity. Because these stories, while some contain similar ideas, do not portray Niue culture in the same way. What is possible from viewing these stories independently is that while we can draw out key themes there are particular reactions these women have when thinking about climate change. T11's identity is shaped by her connection to Samoa and while she may work plantations and know the land, she's also part of a business that does better when there are more tourists around. Each story is marked by instances like this where the reality of climate change in Niue is unique and specific in ways that vary considerably given even a few more aspects of their lifeworld.

Including each woman's story as a stand-alone section in *Veveheaga 3* challenges the notion that women's voices are in any way generalisable even when they belong to the same village or generation. The women who collaborated on this research are not representative of all Niue women nor did they pretend to be; T3, T4, T7 and T8 were aware that their views were not necessarily shared by others and made a point of saying this. These women frame climate change within their life-stories rather than focusing on a particular type of climatic event or timeframe or even discussing whether they did or did not believe in climate change. M2's vanilla farm provides her with in-depth knowledge of the local environment, but this would not be noticed if her view of not believing climate change was a barrier discounting her knowledge or experience.

T6 points out how people in Niue are busy. They have lots of things calling for attention in their lives and it makes it hard to stop and have conversations about climate change. But this doesn't mean that those conversations aren't happening within other spaces. It's the things that have a certain urgency and immediacy in terms of the impact that people want to deal with first. It's perhaps easy then to see how people disengage from politics with the view that they can't affect change, that those in power do all they can to keep it and that the resulting lack of transparency causes people to lose faith in the government. This kind of issue is not unique to Niue.

There's a saying that everything is political in our communities. From church to the government to our family land. Adding climate change as a political responsibility comes with its own trappings. So how can individuals of a nation that has comparatively tiny emissions have agency in determining how larger countries act? There is not a straightforward or easy answer, but that doesn't mean that there is nothing Niue people can do or nothing that Niue voices can offer to regional and global conversations on climate change. Perhaps the question can be reframed to consider how our voice may support or empower the voices of others, in doing so we raise more questions about what other voices are missing from these conversations.

It is tagata Niue who *know* Niue, not just the land but the surrounding seas, the people, the ancestral connections and embodiment of our entire Niue cosmology. Knowing these things has power. Knowing and engaging with ancestral connections around the region and even around the world has power, not just in disrupting notions that Niue people only exist in Niue and South Auckland, but in reaffirming those ancestral ties, and recognising the spaces our people have gone and are going.



Figure 9: Lafaiki (2018) first piece of hiapo made Photo courtesy: Cora-Allan Wickliffe

## **VEVEHEAGA 5: FAKAMAALI E HIAPO**

### **MAKING THE HIAPO VISIBLE**

The hiapo of this research is ready to be revealed in its entirety. Each veveheaga has contributed to what is now visible as a great sheet of hiapo covered with intricate, personal and culturally imbued patterns, symbols and motifs. In stepping back to view this hiapo we can discuss purpose and contribution in this context and think about future research pathways that are visible within and beyond the circulation of this hiapo. From beating the bark and joining the pieces, making the dyes, printing new and old designs and making patterns, we are now in a position to view the hiapo in its entirety. A hiapo is valuable but it is always made for a purpose.

Climate change is having dramatic effects in the Pacific. As a Niue person, I have a vested interest in learning about the impacts of climate change on my homeland. Such learning has involved several conversations with people on the island and paying particular attention to Niue women's experiences and perspectives, acknowledging their specific cultural and gendered knowledge of climate change. To foreground Niue women's voices, it is critical to centre Niue culture, identity and worldview. Using hiapo methodology helped me to continually push for Niue thinking and Niue culture to be at the centre of every veveheaga in this thesis. In many ways, the methodology helped build the solid foundation of rock that Samoa Tongakilo (1998) reminds us is the magnificent and unique place we call home. Paying attention to the ancestral herstories of women like Fisigaulu (Patutaue, 1956), Mataginifale (Pulekula as cited in Smith, 1902) and Hakehakehetoa (Loeb, 1926) strengthens the place and power of Niue women and lifts the narrative of and on Niue way above narrow assumptions about Niue literature.

I have often been reluctant to own my voice in academia despite being urged to do so by my supervisors and many others whom I highly esteem. Sometimes I just

feel incredibly young to be writing and talking about my elders and ancestors and their knowledge when there are so many who have much greater wisdom than me. Other times I feel unsure about my right as a Niue person who has spent such a small amount of time in Niue to be able to claim any space in these conversations - I've only paddled a small way into the vast sea of knowledge of our Niue writers and thinkers. As a young Indigenous researcher who is part of the diaspora, I think it is important to pay attention to these feelings not to disavow my capability of doing research but to understand and unpack some of the difficulties of the research process. There has to be space to express doubts and to be honest about the realities of what it means to pour so much of ourselves into our work, without the fear that in doing so we risk diminishing its value. Some of the answers to difficult questions are made visible, for me anyway, by being able to put these feelings onto the page. Others can and will write in this space. But like many of the stories note, tagata Niue often learn through observation, we watch what others do before we try it ourselves.

My voice is important precisely because of the positioning that I have discussed in earlier chapters. Sandra Tawake (2000) asks: "Who possesses a real world island voice? Who is insider?" (p. 160), and there are no straightforward answers. While there are Niue people out there who will disagree with what I write, I would encourage them to write their responses in whatever form makes sense for them. As long as it means that as Niue people we are having more robust conversations and engaging our vast visual, oral, written and other archives, there will be benefits for our communities, wherever they may be.

In writing this thesis, I have learnt to trust my metaphor. Hiapo acknowledges *lukulukufeua he tau fifine* not as a theme but as an ethos of who we are as Niue women. I can and have drawn confidence from surrounding myself with the voices of strong Niue women. I do not speak for them, instead, I draw from their stories to have particular conversations in this academic setting which is where I can add value and contribute to the collective spaces of Niue knowledge and extend the visibility of Niue

women within and beyond spaces of Pacific Studies and regional and global narratives of climate change. By claiming my voice and my position I do not create barriers for future Niue thinkers to enter this space because there is such a vast sea of research that is yet to be done. Instead, I am clearly marking the places where I have been and where I have ended up so that future researchers can follow or diverge from this path.

To understand the complexity of climate change we must engage with our people in our own ways. We need to have spaces and, if necessary, force our way into spaces so we can continue to build the platform for our voices to be heard so that we can have greater control of our narrative regionally and globally. This is critical in the face of climate change which can have sudden and dramatic impacts on our ability to live and practise our culture in our homeland. It is also critical to have control of our narrative to be able to stand in solidarity with other island nations and to be able to hold larger-emitting nations accountable. Because there is power in solidarity and while I can see that more research needs to be done with and for Niue women, this research strengthens and supports the many Indigenous calls for global action against climate change. There is a clear wealth of Niue knowledge in written, visual and oral forms that can be used for the benefit of Niue communities both for and beyond the threats of climate change.

Centring women's voices by using the metaphor of hiapo shows how Niue women are engaging with climate change in much more creative and cultural ways than is currently reflected upon or even imagined in dominant discourse that focuses on the inaction of governments and large corporations (Birch, 2017). Making visible Niue women's narratives pushes us to consider other marginalised voices that aren't being heard in climate change conversations. The recent case of the Indigenous peoples of Kalaallit Nunaat *Greenland*, having to deal with the ignorance of the President of the United States who offered to buy their land from their former coloniser, Denmark (Niviâna, 2019), is a case in point. Kalaallit Nunaat is self-governing but their invisibility to colonial powers highlights the importance of

solidarity for Indigenous peoples. While the case of offering to buy Kalaallit Nunaat may be framed in economic terms, there are clear climate implications for the kind of resources the U.S. is looking to extract. Closer to home, thinking about how we connect with Aboriginal peoples of Australia can be important in instigating larger political and economic changes throughout Oceania. In a recent workshop, I attended at the Sydney Environment Institute, the ability to connect with and learn from Indigenous women such as Anne Poelina and Mary Graham broadened my perspective of the kinds of conversations that are possible when Indigenous people come together (Pasisi, 2019). This thesis affirms something Pacific Studies and Indigenous Studies scholars often argue: the very specific emphasis on Niue, through a Niue methodology, actually provides opportunities to connect globally.

Narratives developed with groups of Niue women and individual men provide insights that help shape the context and connections that emerge from individual Niue women's narratives on climate change in a Niue-specific context. Even in the final week of submitting this thesis, I have grappled with finding the 'right' place for the stories that were shared with me by men. The focus of this thesis is clearly on women which made the place of these men's stories less intuitive for me. But this raises the question of how we think about men's voices in relation to a clear focus on women. It's a question that we think about in Indigenous Studies and Pacific Studies, of how in many cases relationships aren't defined by distinctions in gender but by the "complementarity between genders as well as between human beings and nature" (Hernández Castillo, 2010, p. 540). Ultimately I placed the men's stories in the *Community Stories* section with the insights I drew from talanoa with groups of Niue women. This created a space where another layer of Niue knowledge could be drawn on in understanding individual women's responses in a contemporary context.

Each space of this thesis carries a distinct design that adds to the beauty of the final hiapo. This research does not seek to offer a definitive and conclusive exposition of what climate change means for all Niue women. Rather, it contributes to a broader

conversation on climate change. Exploring climate change through the everyday voices of women on the island, it centres the rich narratives of Niue women in both academic and non-academic spaces. Like the hiapo, this thesis is asymmetric. The stories of the women are not uniform, nor are the insights that accompany them. Furthermore, there were twelve women particularly featured in this thesis and even with two focus groups of women, there are many other personal narratives of Niue women that could contribute to this story, both in Niue and overseas. I noted in *Veveheaga 1* that to my knowledge, none of the women who contributed to this research had links to the smaller villages of Vaiea, Namukulu or Toi, in Niue. Just because they are small does not mean that their stories don't matter, but it is a space where future research, and ideally researchers from those villages, may contribute to these conversations.

The women featured in this thesis did not all agree on what climate change is or even whether it exists or not. There is no easy answer of how to discuss people who do not believe in climate change in a project like this. While climate change denial in dominant culture can be framed as anti-scientific or backwards (see e.g., van der Ploeg & Rezai 2019; Fisher, 2019), these charges have a familiarity with representations of Indigenous people. How do we understand or analyse those women who say they do not believe in climate change? Do we suggest they are ill-informed or influenced by an intellectually inferior culture? Clearly, these would all be colonial framing, but what is the ethical stance for analysis that seeks to centre their perspectives?

Education provides one space where we can challenge these notions and engage in more critical discussions of whose voices are visible in dominant climate change conversations and how we might approach making them visible. In the last year of completing my thesis, I have been teaching in Pacific and Indigenous Studies and this research has raised questions of how we can teach climate change in the Pacific and how we can pay attention to other Indigenous voices that are less visible

in the current scope of climate change narratives. In one class where all the students were Pacific women, I brought in a photo printer and had students find or select photos online or from their personal libraries that they connected with climate change. Some of the photos chosen included a kalo plantation in Hawai'i, two sisters in a natural pool in Aotearoa, and a coastline in Aotearoa. While the photos provided a tangible aspect to reflect on in the conversations, it was the storytelling aspect that emerged as each woman talked about what climate change meant for her, her family and those around her that shifted the focus of what others think climate change is to what it literally looks like for these students. Extending the boundaries of climate change conversations lends itself to more engaged learning, critique and action in these contexts.

What is too often missing in wider climate change conversations is the understanding that climate change experiences differ at a personal level and as such engaging with people about climate change issues needs to pay attention to social, cultural, historical and personal factors that are interconnected in lived experience and manifest in particular ways for women. For some of the women adapting to climate change is about engaging with old knowledge in new ways, planting gardens with their children, noticing that animals have a better sense of oncoming threats than we do, engaging in climate change data and science in culturally respectful ways, teaching scientists and researchers Niue ways, noticing changes in the mango trees, and celebrating the versatility and many educational stories that centre around staple foods such as talo and the coconut. Many of the women who shared their stories in *Veveheaga 2* and *Veveheaga 3* actively participate in a range of climate change initiatives including developing village adaptation plans, creating awareness about climate change issues, setting up education sessions for learning weather-related technology, organising workshops for the dissemination of climate data, and sharing ideas about cultural methods of mitigation and adaptation. Climate change is an active conversation for many of these women, but not for all of them. Some women felt they had very little knowledge about climate change and some questioned its

existence in Niue. Our ancestral relationships and connections to land and earth, sea and water, sky and heavens, plant, food and feasting, and to other human beings are important stories to tell and foreground a space where more productive and innovative solutions and responses may be born.

As evidenced in these stories, Niue women's experiences and perspectives of climate change are largely concerned with issues connected with key cultural and social factors that need to be prioritised in order to develop key strategies for resilience. While strategies may engage creatively and innovatively with new technology, as T8 notes, it is the mixing of both old and new knowledge that can create the best short- and long-term strategies for mitigation and adaptation. The practices of using old and new knowledge are part of Niue culture and expressed within the narratives of our ancestors. While issues around language and generational knowledge may seem like digressions in the context of conventional analysis of climate change impacts, these issues point to vital knowledge for how our people can adapt to significant changes in their environments. But to access these knowledge spaces, we have to think carefully about the approaches we use. As a cultural symbol, art form and practice, hiapo provides a space that disrupts notions of linearity, because the conversations I had with the women were not linear. It is important to have flexibility in how stories, particularly life stories, can be shared. Hiapo is beneficial in creating a space that is both personal and collective, which is valuable when thinking about climate change.

I don't pretend to be unbiased in the kinds of things I was interested in hearing people talk about. I wanted to learn about my family and my culture. I am drawn to notions of migration and diaspora in the individual women's narratives because they have personal meaning for me. In my first trip to Australia only a few months ago, I was half expecting at any moment to have a woman come up to me as one had done to T10 and berate me for not fulfilling a Pacific stereotype. I was not prepared for the experience I did have which was entirely the opposite; a much deeper connection to

Indigenous land and people (Pasisi, 2019). While we often think of Niue people in Aotearoa, specifically in Auckland, there are growing populations of Niue people in Australia, particularly Sydney. There are also growing populations in other regions of Aotearoa. T1 spoke of her education in New Zealand, to Palmerston North and then down to the South Island. M1 talked about his shift to Northland for teaching education, it is where he found himself a Māori girlfriend. My Dad's family all shifted to Kirikiriroa, Waikato. These different stories of migration and diaspora are important because they are a reminder that the citizenship status of Niue means our people have been able to move more freely to New Zealand and Australia and are unlikely to be categorised as climate refugees. In thinking about climate change for Niue people, we need to think about where Niue communities are and the dynamic of different geographic climate-related impacts on the kinds of experiences of climate change. Future research may also pay attention to the large number of tau tupuna *elders* living outside of Niue and ways in which their specific knowledge may contribute to these conversations on climate change in Niue.

A key theme in this research is the place of language in Niue narratives and research. The conversations I had would certainly have been different and raised different issues if they were in vagahau and as discussed in *Veveheaga 4* language is a key area where different aspects of climate change experiences can be explored. Further research that centres and uses vagahau may also be able to unpack the implications of the dominance of English in Niue in understanding and communicating climate change. The Lili Model put forward by Nogiata Tukimata (2017) could be extended to this space as a way of centring vagahau. Future research may also address how to bridge the spaces between non-speaking Niue people and those who are fluent. Are there spaces within climate change conversations that would promote learning vagahau? Future research should also consider how climate change affects the perspectives of Niue diaspora in prioritising language, culture or other connections to being Niue people. Are there possibilities and opportunities in

addressing the lack of language fluency that would also contribute to climate change action?

I am the first of my Dad's children to go to Niue with him but from the very first trip (and every trip since) my Dad always says that there is nothing in Niue, why do I even want to go there? But without fail, every time we get off the plane in Niue he won't stop talking about everything he can remember: where his family is from, what bush tracks he would go down to get to his family's plantations, his school, what food you can get for free in the bush, times when he missed the bus, times when he threw rocks at a man from another village who was trying to get a lady from his village. At every stage of this thesis I have been presented with and at times confronted by stories of my family. It has clearly awoken something in my Dad who I often sit with and record our conversations as he remembers something from his childhood, tries to trace his family lineage, or remembers the precious words his mother told him or things he would watch her doing. He has a lot of questions; at times I feel helpless as he grapples with the loss he feels in not being able to answer the questions I have and the confusion he has in not being able to find answers to his own questions. What this thesis has enabled me to do is connect with stories of my Dad's heritage in ways where I don't always need to know the right questions to ask, I just have to be present in the process of looking for them.

While a hiapo may end up in a particular place, its creation makes possible certain types of circulation. One level of circulation is how hiapo is a way of affirming and nurturing family connections and cultural connections. As I mentioned earlier in this thesis I have started projects with my Dad to find out more about his family. Being able to acknowledge my Dad as a cultural advisor went some way to helping him to value his heritage and the knowledge he has as a Niue person; his western education certainly didn't promote this mindset. Our conversations have permeated different parts of this thesis and often challenged me to be more fluid in how I think. I may not have children yet, for example, but through my Dad's stories about his mother and

growing up on the island, I've been able to better understand and imagine the stories different women talked about in their narratives. While I'm not suggesting that future researchers should have more conversations with my Dad, though I'm sure he would be up for it, there is something important in thinking about the place of our family in these conversations. Whether they liked it or not, my siblings all got front row seats to me and my Dad having debates about different Niue sources, whether hiapo was from Niue or not, why there haven't been more Niue writers, or what climate change meant for Niue. I argue in the visual registry that there is an importance of considering the place of family within our written narratives as researchers. This is supported throughout the thesis. Sharing information about my family often helped the women who collaborated with me to feel comfortable about sharing things about their families too. As I mention in *Ata 1*, and as I was told by Anne Poelina after presenting at a workshop in Sydney (Pasisi, 2019), all human stories are important and have power. Climate change is a human story, there are good bits and not so good bits, but when we come closer to the personal aspects of human stories, like the stories of these Niue women, we engage with climate change in ways that see entire bodies rather than just circumstance. While Pacific studies scholars are no strangers to using personal narratives in scholarly work, there's an interesting space for further research in how we do academic work with our families.

A different level of circulation for this hiapo relates to the notions of travelling ideas and interpretations that journey with hiapo as they are traded, gifted and taken beyond the Niue context. With this notion, we can consider new questions that this hiapo raises and how it may connect with thinking in other spaces. Future research may consider the questions of who else, and where else, in relation to marginalised voices in climate change conversations. Thinking about Indigenous perspectives around Oceania, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders of Australia, could cut across the imposed colonial lines of disconnection in the region. A group of Torres Strait Islanders recently lodged a complaint, with the United Nations Human Rights Committee, against the climate inaction of the Australian government (Murphy,

2019); what possibilities are there when the voices of Niue women are used in support of these movements; women's family networks stretch far, so what might be possible if Niue people in Australia, Niue and Aotearoa were mobilised in this space? First Peoples in Australia are leading the conversations on Indigenous water rights, environmental changes embedded in cultural practices and narratives (Taylor, Moggridge & Poelina, 2017). What kinds of conversations about climate change and the environment are possible in Niue, if we engage with First Peoples and Indigenous science?

Yet another kind of circulation is my own mobility around and between different disciplinary and institutional spaces. As mentioned earlier I have a background in Management Communication studies. When I started this research, the University of Waikato did not have a Pacific and Indigenous Studies programme. In five years of study from undergraduate to master's level, I never had any Pacific lecturers or scholars. I did have a Māori tutor for one semester; his kaupapa approach changed my view of feeling like a product on a conveyor belt and also the possibilities of student engagement when Indigenous values were centred. While I could connect in his tutorials with Māori concepts of whanaungatanga and manakitanga I still couldn't see myself as an important part of the picture. Why would being a Niue person in management and communication really matter? Even as I began my doctoral research focusing on climate change and climate refugees, my two Pālagi supervisors at that time seemed only to want to push my Niue-ness as a rarity factor, I was being exoticised and I carried that thinking home to Niue. As one might imagine, trying to ask Niue people if they were worried about becoming climate change refugees is rather problematic, not least because Niue people have New Zealand citizenship. The wheels of my doctoral research began falling off in the very first trip I had home. What I found harder was being able to articulate this to my supervisors. I struggled to write things in the areas they were suggesting because it wasn't the reality that I had seen. My supervisors struggled to direct me because they didn't have experience in Niue and perhaps even in the broader Pacific despite both having lived

in Aotearoa for over a decade. By the end of my first year, I had three Pālagi supervisors. In my second year, I lost a supervisor to divisional restructures, I gained a Tongan supervisor for about one month before restructuring led to his departure, and then I lost the two Pālagi supervisors before I gained my current supervisory team. I am not the only doctoral student to have had numerous supervisory changes and I'm incredibly thankful for the supervisory team I have and the privilege of being able to write in this space. However, I reflect on these experiences because they have significantly affected my thinking and writing (some of it good, some of it not so good) and they draw attention to the consequences of the lack of Pacific and Māori academics in New Zealand universities (Naepi, 2019; McAllister, Kidman, Rowley & Theodore, 2019). An important lesson from my experiences is understanding how disciplinary boundaries are often informed by the climates and changes in institutions and that greater interdisciplinarity can help transcend those boundaries. Ending up with one Indigenous and two non-Pālagi supervisors has pushed me to see the wealth of Pacific and Indigenous literature in and beyond the disciplines of Management, Communication and Pacific Studies.

Pacific Studies has a long history with edges. Albert Wendt, Epeli Hau'ofa, Vernice Wineera, Teresia Teaiwa and many others have bumped into, challenged and made visible some of the edges of this discipline. Like many interdisciplinary fields, Pacific Studies largely reflects the range of disciplines represented by its key scholars; history, anthropology, literary and cultural studies, linguistics and so on. While there are many disciplines that are commonly linked with Pacific Studies, then, Management Communication has not been one of them. A contribution of this thesis is to draw attention to Management Communication as a space where Pacific scholars can connect with and raise questions about being in and of the Pacific. One of the consequences of bringing these two disciplines together is that there are aspects of this project and this thesis that may be methodologically new, innovative and maybe even uncomfortable for conventional scholars of Management Communication. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the configuration of chapters in the thesis

and my decision to represent the talanoa through a series of anonymised second person narratives.

This thesis contributes to the critical literature of Management Communication. While I am not the first Pacific student to complete masters or doctoral work in this field, this thesis provides an opportunity to rethink some of the boundaries of how Management Communication is defined, who it is defined by, how it engages in Pacific and Indigenous spaces, and who is visible and can be made visible when Management Communication is viewed with and from different disciplinary boundaries and intersections. What is made visible and what questions emerge when Management Communication is more self-aware of where its scholars come from? What happens when the educational genealogy of the researcher is considered alongside their personal genealogy? A key point in this process is to think about the Pacific scholars who already exist in the Management Communication space and to avoid the 'Narrative of First Encounter' that Te Punga Somerville (2007) has acutely challenged in the context of Media Studies. It is possible then for Management Communication theses on the Pacific to be full of Pacific scholarship, literature and thinking from the vast archives that pertain Pacific knowledge.

This thesis demonstrates how, from a Management Communication perspective, more work must be done about how researchers are engaged in Pacific spaces, how Pacific communities are determining the outcomes of relevant Management Communication research and how this might be fostered and grown moving forward. In doing so, Indigenous peoples have greater ability to control their own narratives and to claim visibility in ways that aren't about a Narrative of First Encounter, but about the complex connections that inevitably arise when disciplinary borders are challenged or removed. Undoubtedly climate change calls for trans-disciplinary approaches to which Management Communication has a lot to contribute. However, to move beyond consultancy and provide meaningful research, particularly in the Pacific, requires greater engagement with Pacific thinking in the

broadest sense possible. By drawing attention to an intersection where Management Communication is in conversation with Pacific Studies, there may be better outcomes for context-specific and meaningful research.

This thesis demonstrates the case for Niue-specific research methodologies that pay attention to the vast literary, visual and oral resources of our people. I have argued in this thesis that listening to the voices of Niue women is vital for better communication and understanding of the climate change context in Niue. Focusing on Niue knowledge and thinking in this way strengthens Indigenous voices about climate change in ways that are attuned to specific and cultural contexts. By highlighting these personal stories of climate change it is possible to address more than just climate change because women's experiences are not limited to this space. Instead, when listening to whole conversations we can see how other issues such as language retention and the loss of generational knowledge are connected to and compounded by climate change. It is widely understood that climate change is complex, but mainstream responses to climate change remain fairly narrow. The stories in this thesis highlight that there is more than one story of climate change in the Pacific or Niue.

In highlighting the specific voices of Niue women in this thesis, there is still a large scope for future research to include more women in these conversations and including the narratives of the many Niue women who grew up in Niue but now live abroad. Research in this space may pick up on the connections between tivaivai, masi and ngatu as particular women's crafts in the Pacific that have been used to conceptualise and frame Indigenous stories, perspectives and approaches that centre Indigenous women. As a connection to the asymmetry of hiapo, we can view the perspectives of Indigenous women from around the region in ways that privilege their specificity but also to see the patterns of where women's narratives can uplift and support positive action in and beyond climate change issues.

Each of the women's stories has unique insight into the complex relationships of women to their families, communities, environment, religion and culture. It is particularly clear from these women's stories that caring for our culture, language, ancestral knowledge and the power of women means caring for our natural environment and therefore its protection and sustainable use. These stories also provide a platform for how we can approach Niue women's knowledge and experience in ways that honour and respect the vibrancy and complexity of a diverse Niue cosmology. Within these spaces, we can also explore the non-linearity of Niue narratives. It is possible to see distinctive life-stories through time and space in the narratives of individual women that are not bound by a linear interpretation of time but appear and move as the topics of conversations manifest.

Our stories are unique and they offer new and old ways of approaching complex issues such as climate change. There's a clear argument for Niue women's voices to be more visible in climate change conversations. But there is also an importance in being able to share these kinds of Niue narratives. Of course, there is knowledge that is special and sacred to families, but there are cultural experiences and practices embodied in these twelve women's narratives that they were open to sharing. While there is a clear benefit for me as a young Niue woman, these stories have a wider benefit for our geographically dispersed population.

Hiapo is a reminder that what ends up on the blank canvas is one interpretation. The symbols, motifs, and writing may come from one hand or one brush, but they are experienced by the eyes and minds of others; hiapo always has a purpose. The patterns and design are marked by time but they will also travel through time as the hiapo circulates beyond the lines and boundaries of my sight. So, while I use the hiapo to frame conversations about climate change in Niue, there are other interpretations of this thesis that will extend this thinking. These stories are partial connections (de la Cadena, 2018) into the rich complexity of Niue women's experiences and worldviews. These stories provide a space to influence the diversity

of narratives for climate change in Niue. We can draw from our ancestral narratives, literature, visual archives and the work of tagata Niue in such diverse disciplines because our culture is rich and unique. We can question and be critical of how we go about accessing and using Niue sources of knowledge and academia is not the only space where these conversations can or should happen. But academia is a space where work like this thesis contributes to the development of better ways of engaging with Niue people and knowledge for the benefit of our communities.

Fakaaue lahi.

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