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HUMANITIES AND COMMUNITIES: A DIALOGUE IN PACIFIC STUDIES

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Teresia K. Teaiwa: On the eve of our tenth anniversary as a program in Pacific studies, we sought an opportunity to document and tease out some of the issues we have been grappling with in our work at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. We have been particularly interested in the challenges of articulating productive relationships between the university-based humanities traditions within which we work and our sense of communities or constituencies as teachers and researchers.

My academic background includes an undergraduate degree with a major in history, and double minors in political science and Spanish language; a master's degree in history—majoring in Pacific history with a minor in European intellectual history; and a PhD from an interdisciplinary program called history of consciousness. As a consequence I feel quite steeped in the humanities.

April K. Henderson: I completed an undergraduate degree in anthropology, technically a social science but one heavily influenced by the humanities and, as James Clifford and George Marcus emphasize with regard to ethnography (Clifford and Marcus 1986), strong literary underpinnings. I went on to get a master's degree in an interdisciplinary Pacific islands studies program, which included significant lashings of pacific history, and a PhD in the same interdisciplinary doctoral program as Teresia, history of consciousness. So while my academic trajectory began from a

different sort of point, it significantly converges with Teresia's at later stages, which I think provides us with a shared literacy in a broad range of material. Although we each have our research specialties, particular areas of interest, and quite different backgrounds and experiential contexts, I have always felt that we speak a mutually intelligible language with regard to our work and our program. Perhaps it could be called a shared cultural studies, or humanities, approach. This becomes patently clear to me when I speak to others who engage in more strictly quantitative methodologies; their language for discussing "identity," for instance, is quite different to mine.

TKT: Yet, it is often difficult to specify what exactly constitutes a "humanities approach." Universities don't help when they create arbitrary divisions among disciplines for the purposes of administration. The Pacific studies program is administered through the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) at Victoria University. A few years ago when Pacific studies underwent an administrative review there were discussions about possibly amalgamating our program with development studies, which is housed in the Faculty of Sciences by virtue of its association with geography and other Earth sciences, or incorporating us with Pacific nations education in the Faculty of Education. The pro–vice chancellor of our faculty expressed firm opposition to such proposals and stressed the importance of keeping Pacific studies within the FHSS. Of course, our location in FHSS makes sense to us. But what hasn't been worked out is exactly how our program is supposed to reflect what is actually a bifurcated location.

In a commentary on the state of the humanities in the United States, Rey Chow notes how it's been typical in the Anglo-American university tradition for "studies"—that is, programs such as film studies, gender studies, ethnic studies, cultural studies, etc.—to be framed as humanities projects. However, she goes on to note that it's precisely these "studies" that are blurring the boundaries of the humanities by intersecting with both the social sciences and the hard sciences. Chow suggests that what's going on in these "studies" might therefore be better understood as engaging in the more European tradition of "human sciences" rather than the strict "humanities" (Chow 2005: 47–48). This gives us a way to think about where we've come from in terms of our particular heritage of Pacific studies and where we might go with it in the future.

The humanities have laid a strong foundation for Pacific studies as we've inherited it and as we've developed it so far at Victoria University Wellington (VUW). In terms of the institutional development of Pacific studies internationally, the most prominent contributing disciplines have been history and anthropology (Wesley-Smith 1995), with political science and sociology

following closely on their heels—especially in New Zealand. But, as part of what Wesley-Smith would describe as an outcome of the "empowerment" rationale for Pacific studies, there has emerged a strong movement in what I would call "Pasifika research" in New Zealand. This is research that both uses and critiques much of the standard methodologies of social science while also asserting the emergence of distinct indigenous methods and theories (cf. Anae et al. 2001; Smith 1999). What the precise relationship between Pacific studies and Pasifika research is hasn't been worked out yet, and there's a lot of slippage between the two in New Zealand. But whether one takes a humanities approach, a social sciences approach, or a "human sciences" approach, it does make a difference.

In New Zealand at the moment, the government has made a significant financial commitment to boosting research capacity in the social sciences (see BRCSS 2009). By contrast, the New Zealand Council for the Humanities is far less generously patronized (see NZCH 2009).

AKH: As mentioned, my bachelor's degree was in a discipline generally construed as a social science, though many have written insightfully of anthropology's struggle to balance its humanistic, literary bent with the pressures of being taken seriously as an "objective science." Pungent critiques of anthropology over the past few decades have, of course, shown such objectivity to be a product of carefully manufactured artifice, but I think there yet persists in anthropology an ideal of objective distance between researcher and researched. And that's precisely why I joke that, after completing my bachelor's degree, I fled, a "refugee from anthropology," into an interdisciplinary program with a strong humanities foundation: I am so deeply implicated in the communities I work in and among that I can't even pretend objective distance. Even the now-acceptable moment of self-reflexivity in more recent ethnography (and credit goes to those anthropologists, particularly feminist ethnographers, who do it well) would not be enough for me, I think. While I am cautious about any search for objective "truths," though, I nevertheless still aspire to craft work that is resonant and useful. I am sympathetic to those theorists, like Albert Wendt, who resent scholarship that reduces Pacific peoples to the sum of the aggregated data collected about them (Wendt 1976); the texture of lived experience cannot be captured in a seemingly endless stream of statistics. As he and other Pacific scholars have pointed out (Hereniko 2000), sometimes an artfully told story better speaks to the complex and contested qualities of life. While my work retains strong ethnographic aspects, involving many years of what Renato Rosaldo might call "deep hanging out" (cited in Clifford 1997, 56) with the artists I write about, I think that what is allowed by my move into interdisciplinarity is more freedom to tell stories differently in the final product.

Part of what I construe as freedom is probably due to the fact that work in the humanities has no single definable approach, as you note above. And perhaps this contributes to why governmental emphasis (read: funding) for the humanities currently lags behind social sciences in New Zealand. Arjun Appadurai writes of the changing nature, and increasing importance, of "research" (academic or otherwise) in the era of globalization (Appadurai 2001). Governments and corporations now absolutely require documentation of "research" to inform policy. But the definition of what constitutes "research" in this frame is sometimes very narrow, generally reducible to easily analyzable sets of quantified, verifiable data, which are presumed to be value free. In this respect, those social sciences that deal in quantitative methodologies appear more useful to administrative and corporate projects. Government requires policy advisors who can unequivocally make statements like "data indicate that *x* percentage of Pacific migrants will become well-adjusted, productive citizens"; corporations require policy advisors who can say, unequivocally, "data indicate that *x* percentage of the Pacific demographic will buy your product." (And if data predictions prove incorrect, and policy fails, it's almost as if the decision makers can absolve themselves of responsibility, "but the *research* said . . . .") Neither governments nor corporations have much use for someone who instead tells a complex but deeply resonant story of migration, identity, and ambivalent desire! Unless of course that story is told in a hugely successful hit movie that the government can claim as an example of its tolerant benevolence toward minorities, and corporations can successfully market—but then that's why funding emphasis in New Zealand has also recently been placed on "creative industries." But in terms of pragmatic, applied, usefulness to government and corporate sectors, humanities seem to fall into a gap somewhere between the social sciences and creative industries. It's as if, in order to receive attention and funding, scholars in the humanities need to pitch their work to one side or the other. Processes of globalization are structuring societies in particular ways, and the corporatization of universities is one obvious example of this. The language of corporate efficiency requires that everything has to have an apparent usefulness, and be productive in obvious ways that can be quantified in terms of market value. In this climate, the humanities are the item in the wardrobe that they can't figure out how to wear: not practical enough for daily labor, not flash enough for a party.

TKT: The 1965 U.S. legislation establishing the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities provides a useful starting point for a definition of the humanities, including but not limited to, the study of the following:

language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life. (see NEH 2009).

That the legislation makes special mention of "those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods," suggests that there are other aspects of social sciences that do not have humanistic content or do not employ humanistic methods. Where the social sciences converge with science is where they diverge from the humanities. The New Zealand Council for the Humanities puts it this way:

> In the Western tradition, the humanities have been identified with literacy and with value-laden knowledge, the core requirements for establishing and maintaining a civil society. They connect the texts of the law with those of religion, philosophy, ethics, economics, history, science, technology, the arts and architecture. (see NZCH 2009)

I find it useful to think of the distinction between the humanities and social sciences as having something to do with text. The humanities draw on a long tradition of Western philosophy and thought. In this way, the humanities have a textual foundation. The social sciences share this intellectual heritage, but emphasize the production of new information via research, often with human subjects. An example of how the social sciences might "employ humanistic methods" is in the use of narratives or oral histories as research tools. By contrast, research with human subjects that does not seek those humans' own meaning-making is less humanistic in my opinion.

AKH: This comment about the "textual foundation" of humanities work is interesting, and I'm inclined to both agree but also to push this emphasis on text in a further direction. Humanities might once have been based on texts in the sense that there was a narrowly conscribed body of Western canonical tests believed to contain eternal truths about justice, beauty, and the human condition. The body of theory called poststructuralism has consistently challenged such "master narratives" of progress, however. A focus on texts persists, but in a different sort of way where there is the ever-present recognition of the fact that texts are *produced* and *constructed*

and the contextually specific and historically bound work that went into their production is foregrounded. Analyzing texts in this vein requires a level of remove; rather than eternal truths (*the real*), texts contain truth claims (*representations of the real*). This approach to texts has been very influential in my work, particularly if we widen the scope of what we might consider "texts" to also include oral narratives and other forms, in addition to literary texts.

My version of our Special Topic Course, PASI 302, is called Engaging Narratives: Hip Hop, Diaspora, and Imagination in the Pacific. It focuses on migration, diaspora, and identity, and in it I encourage students to analyze written histories, published interviews, oral narratives, and audio-visual materials such as films and recorded music, all as texts that have been produced under contextually specific conditions. I ask them to treat these texts as narratives that convey *a* version of events (not the only version possible), and to be aware of the multiple levels on which they work as narratives: for instance, what information is presented, what is excluded, how the way in which the information is presented affects our reception of it. My point is that the way someone might narrate a particular set of events, or even their conception of their own identity, will shift depending on when they are doing the narrating, where, how, for what purpose, and to and for who. Texts are contingent, relational, shifting. As an extreme example, I might pose the case of one particular artist who has figured quite significantly in my research over the years. Because he leads a public existence as a performer, there is a wealth of material available in books, magazine articles, and in the self-authored promotional material on his Web site, describing his background. Additionally, I have formally interviewed this artist several times over the past ten years, informally spent time with him on over a dozen occasions, and privately discussed his genealogy and upbringing with members of his family and people who knew him as a child. The curious predicament I have faced as a researcher is that few of the narratives of this artist's ancestry and identity—including his own at different times—precisely match up. These multiple articulations defy attempts to get at "the real" story of his background and cast into relief the problem of taking any particular version as representative of some eternal truth. From the perspective of a certain kind of social science research, which would seek to locate this artist in neatly defined ethnic, racial, and national categories in order to render him part of an analyzable data set, his case poses major challenges. If the dominant Western research ethic, as Appadurai notes, relies on replicability and verifiability, what do you do with information that continually shifts and changes? Another researcher probably won't be able to verify the story I got—I can't even verify it!

And that's really part of my point about narratives. Rather than a problem, I choose to read in his shifting biography an illustrative allegory about both the physical mobility of some Pacific peoples and the discursive mobility of their ways of narrating themselves.

TKT: You're absolutely right about needing to problematize both text and narrative—and this is perhaps where the humanities tradition of Pacific studies and the social sciences tradition of Pasifika research can productively inform one another.

But I'd like pick up on the point you made earlier when referring to Appadurai's analysis of research in the age of globalization. What is actually most essential for me about the Humanities tradition is what Rey Chow describes as "reflective delay" (Chow 2005, 52). As she observes, our academic endeavors take place in the era of the neoliberalization of university education, and in the age of the informationalization of knowledge. Remember how in the last round of consultations on the new Tertiary Education Strategy for New Zealand we were asked to make submissions on how Pacific people would contribute to the nation's exciting new "knowledge economy"? (See Tertiary Education Commission 2008.) What a humanities approach offers in the context of relentless processes of commodification is "reflective delay." It's an approach that doesn't rush to turn thought into information or data, or as Chow would term it, so many consumable, and therefore disposable "factoids" (Chow 2005, 50). Amplifying a call by Bill Readings in his book *The University in Ruins* (Readings 1996), Chow agrees that the proper role of the university in our time is the preservation of thought and thinking. But when most of our universities are careering down the path of instrumentalizing knowledge—and in New Zealand, quantifying knowledge through the Performance Based Research Fund regime—it becomes the task of the humanities to "press pause." That's what I would say Pacific studies at VUW has been offering up to this point: the space and time for students—and academic staff—to engage in thought before they rush off to produce information and other goods or services for the economy!

AKH: Absolutely! I find these comments of Chow's extremely resonant. I feel like I experience "press pause" moments on a daily basis. For example, upon learning that a report on the impact of domestic violence in a Pacific island country had to quantify that impact in terms of "lost productivity" in order to render domestic violence a meaningful issue at the level of national government. That is a moment where I want to scream, "WAIT!" There's something wrong with a scenario where violence, usually against women, must be shown to have a quantifiable (literally, in terms of

dollars) negative economic impact before policymakers are willing to register it as a problem. Pursuing that logic offers an appalling scenario where, at the level of an individual worker, domestic violence is only a problem from the perspective of the State if she can't show up to work the next day.

Now, I doubt that the researchers producing this particular report felt this way. Either they were asked by those who contracted their work to produce such a figure, or perhaps they viewed such data as another tool in their kit to really drive home to policymakers the seriousness of domestic violence as a social issue. Either way, I think this example gets to a niggling concern regarding such contracted research: producing such reports *disciplines* the researcher, in the Foucauldian sense. It is those contracting the work who have the power to set out which categories will have meaning, and the researcher fulfills a secondary role of plugging information into the categories provided. Even if they are not the categories that might initially be meaningful to the researcher, she or he uses them because they are the ones that speak to those who've contracted them. And perhaps, after a time, those *do* become the categories that are meaningful to the researcher, too.

Now, I recognize that we work in a university environment where our work is *always* situated in, conscribed by, and disciplined by the power matrices we are beholden to, in one way or another. Yet, I have a strong hope that Pacific studies at VUW *is*, as you've described, a place where we and our students can "press pause" and critically reflect on these power matrices, and critique the categories given to us, rather than simply supply data on request.

TKT: This is both the responsibility and the privilege that we have as inhabitants of the university, isn't it? And, at times, we are resented for it. A common knee-jerk reaction among academics to the question of communities is to invoke the "town and gown" divide, and images of the "ivory tower"—and there's always a rush to assert that our education hasn't changed us. In my travels around the Pacific to universities and colleges of higher education or polytechnics in New Zealand, Fiji, the USP region, Guam, and Hawai'i, and in discussions with colleagues from around the Pacific, it seems we are all a little bit insecure about how our participation in higher education may seem to distance us from our natal, ethnic, or local communities. I've managed to avoid this hang-up myself for the most part. My birth family, my extended families, my in-laws, and the various civic groups I've been involved with over the years have always helped me feel grounded as an academic. As the child of two parents who both have university degrees, and who have always been actively involved in various

kinds of communities—a community of faith, a community based on ethnicity, a community of taste, a community of shared principles, etc.—I've really been encouraged to see higher education as a worthwhile endeavor and not something to disavow.

AKH: There's so much to say on the topic of "communities"! I agree that a presumed ivory tower/community divide is often invoked in both the type of Pacific institutional environments you describe and, with regard to my particular area of research, also among those studying hip hop and other popular culture forms in the U.S. and elsewhere. Sometimes this recourse to "*the* community" (a problematic term that naturalizes, reifies, and subsumes a whole lot of differences into a presumed sameness) becomes a part of academic politicking: scholars trying to one-up each other by claiming that their ties to "the community" are stronger than someone else's, etc. (I am tempted to draw an analogy between this phenomenon and the type of leftist academic one-up-manship Meaghan Morris critiques in "Politics Now," 1988.) I think particularly in Pacific studies, given our field's self-conscious valorization of a postcolonial "empowerment rationale" (Wesley-Smith 1995)—the idea that we are committed to the betterment of Pacific peoples' lives, and that community support is part of our mandate for continued existence—accusing other scholars of having lost touch with "the people" is quite a serious charge indeed. This is not to say that people making such charges are necessarily self-serving, or that they don't have genuinely good intentions. I can certainly recall my first fledgling years as a graduate student in Pacific islands studies, our heady cries to "decolonize the field!," and our outright rejection of any literature that we deemed "academic obscurantism" that "the people" would not be able to understand. We had the best of intentions, to be sure, but I think we were nevertheless naïve and simplistic in our construction of an idealized community "out there" somewhere, and our reactionary belief that anything smelling of "theory" was somehow of no relevance to them.

Some years removed now from those impassioned seminar discussions, my outlook is, I think, a bit more nuanced. And here I suppose I'm pursuing a tangential conversational trajectory regarding our need to *value* the intellectual work that we do in the academy (bear with me, I'll return to the topic of community more explicitly in a moment). Yes, of course there is a monumental historic power imbalance where Western knowledge, associated with academia, was and is consistently valorized over indigenous knowledge as part of colonial and neocolonial projects. It's our recognition of that fact, and, let's face it, our implicatedness in it, that contribute to the insecurities you reference among academic colleagues in the region. Yet, even while I recognize this, and actively work to highlight

and value indigenous knowledge in my teaching, it doesn't mean that I will foreclose possibilities for learning from Western texts. And really, making any hard and fast binary distinction between Western and non-Western is rather difficult anyway in a world where even the most anti-Western indigenous rights discourse, like other discourses of "rights," is genealogically linked to the European Enlightenment. The imbrication of West and non-West is an undeniable product of colonialism. As a researcher and teacher, my task is to recognize that complexity while maintaining a clear picture of the unequal power relations that produced, and are produced by, those relationships.

To return more explicitly to the topic of community, my small intervention regards how "the community" is often conceptualized. Whether people admit it or not, they generally have very clear images of what "the community" means in Pacific contexts: what it looks like, where to find it, or, most specifically, where it goes to church. My research has been with Pacific hip hop artists who often don't fit those expectations, so I've continually had to remind others (and even myself, at times!) that I work very closely with *a* community of Pacific (and other) people. It may not look, sound, or act like "*the* community" as most people envision it, but it is nevertheless a group of Pacific people who very much feel themselves to be part of an established community and use that term often (even while recognizing internal differences and divisions). Popular culture theorist Simon Frith elaborates how communities of style and taste cohere around shared interests and began to do, and see, and feel things together (Frith 1988). Pacific participants in hip hop feel palpable degrees of connection with others involved in hip hop, forming what Appadurai might call "communities of sentiment" (Appadurai 1996). So one of the consistent themes in my research is that ethnic and/or national identity does not necessarily trump other components of identity in the way people tend to assume. Thus, when writing about Samoan hip hop artists, for instance, I feel a very compelling need to do justice in my work both to "Samoan culture" *and* to "hip hop culture," because they both play a significant role in producing the community I am trying to describe and analyze.

TKT: That idea of "communities of sentiment" is really productive, and I'd like to return to it in a moment. But what I was thinking of initially, in terms of the communities I feel accountable to is this: as a teacher and researcher in higher education, the most immediate community or constituency for my work is actually at the university. Students and colleagues, therefore, constitute crucial communities for us in Pacific studies. Our students, moreover, are direct conduits between us and the communities that they come from—and they do come from a diverse range of

communities. Typically, our 100-level class is about 50%–60% of Pacific heritage, with Pakeha (European), Maori, Asian, and American exchange students making up the other half or third of the class. Of the students who trace their ancestry to Pacific islands other than New Zealand, the majority will be Samoan. We have consistent, but small numbers of Cook Islands, Tokelauan, Niuean, and Tongan students coming through our courses. And of course, we have a number of students of mixed heritage—inter-Pacific, hula-haka (mixed Maori and Pacific heritage), or Maori–Pacific mixes, and the Afakasi (usually mixed Pacific and European heritage) or part-European students. By the time we get to 300 level, though, our proportions are much more dramatic, with as high as 99% of the class being of Pacific heritage. We are teaching in a context in which Pacific students constitute around 5% of enrollments in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, but 28% of students who are exiting (i.e., failing to complete) courses at the 100 and 200 levels (see VUW 2007: 37–8). What this means for us is that we carry a heavy burden in terms of ensuring the educational achievement of Pacific students at our university—and this is another area where Pacific studies and Pasifika research necessarily intersect.

The educational and public sector environments in New Zealand put a lot of emphasis on community consultation and community liaison. As a result, Victoria University has some pretty well-institutionalized mechanisms for facilitating our relationships as academics with communities. For example, we have our Pacific liaison officer, based in the student recruitment and course advice office, who organizes school visits for academics and who also coordinates Pacific-focused events during the Vic Open Day and runs Junior Pasefika Day and Senior Pasefika Day, when students of Pacific islands ethnicity from different secondary schools in the Wellington region come to the campus for customized visits. As Pacific studies staff, we've participated in the full range of the Pacific liaison officer's community outreach activities over the years. But in some ways, these aren't purely altruistic outreach ventures, as the overarching goal is to recruit Pacific students to the university!

We have also developed our own autonomous outreach programs as Pacific studies to various communities and constituencies, and wherever possible, we've tried to dovetail these with our teaching. So, for example, with PASI 101 The Pacific Heritage, our first year introductory core course for the Pacific studies major, we have an optional component in which students are able to create a work of art or perform an item based on research they have done in the course. Those students who select this option present their work at an evening event, called "Akamai," to which their family and friends are all invited, and which is also open to the public.

For the last three or four years, we have typically attracted audiences of between 250 and 300 to Akamai—and that's to see 15–25 students present their work. So on average, each student attracts 10 or more audience members. Akamai, which means smart or clever in Hawaiian, has become a nice bridge between the learning community we foster at the university and the other communities our students belong to. It really touches me when I see our students' parents and siblings and friends in the audience at Akamai. It's heartening to know that our students have support for their learning from their communities. We've even had successive siblings and cousins go through PASI 101 and Akamai—so we get to know certain parents and families quite well!

I couldn't imagine doing Pacific studies in a Pacific island nation (like New Zealand!) without some kind of early outreach to families and communities in this way. And we do variations on outreach with our students at different levels. PASI 201 Comparative Histories in Polynesia takes students out on field trips to our own marae Te Tumu Te Herenga Waka, Archives New Zealand, the Turnbull Library in the National Library of New Zealand, and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. These trips introduce our students to different institutions that support Pacific studies research and introduce our students to different resource people within those institutions, with the intention of helping them gain a sense of a wider intellectual community for Pacific studies. PASI 301 Framing the Pacific: Theorizing Culture and Society students have in the past been required to present their research papers in community venues such as the nongovernmental organization (NGO) meeting rooms at James Smiths Arcade in Wellington Central, the Pacific Islands Network Centre in Newtown, Pataka meeting rooms in Porirua City, and to sixth and seventh form Pacific studies students at Porirua College and St. Bernard's Secondary School in the Hutt. Once, our PASI 301 students even presented their papers from the pulpit of an EFKS church in Porirua—at the invitation of the Reverend Minister, of course!

Part of the rationale for undertaking these activities in the community was to broaden the public perception of what Pacific studies was or should be. I remember our first PASI 301 seminar series out in Porirua in 2001, when an audience member berated me as the students' lecturer for not speaking in my own language to introduce the seminars. His expectation of Pacific studies was that we should be promoting "traditional" cultures and languages. I explained to him that if I spoke my own indigenous Pacific language (Kiribati) it was unlikely that he or my students or others in the audience would understand me, and that if our task in Pacific studies was to promote traditional cultures and languages, we would have an impossible

task on our hands with the 1200 or more indigenous languages and cultures of our region. But his confrontation allowed me to address misconceptions about Pacific studies, and also provided me and my students with an opportunity to highlight what we found valuable about the ideas we had been able to explore (in the English language) with a Pacific focus. My exchange with this gentleman (who I eventually became related to when I married into his extended family, ha ha!) also highlighted for me the importance of using indigenous Pacific languages as a sign of respect. There's something of a mantra that's developed in New Zealand in terms of the ritual string of Pacific greetings that are used to open Pacific events. It's tempting to see this as an empty gesture, but, in fact, communities find them useful gauges for assessing a speaker's confidence, competence, and openness. Of course, English does limit our understanding of indigenous Pacific cultures in many ways, but as a medium for critically analyzing contemporary economic, social, cultural, and political phenomena we can't get around English.

AKH: These last comments of yours dovetail with my earlier confession regarding my first years of graduate school. When I hear challenges made to the fact that English is our primary language of instruction, or even to the particular *types* of English we use, which draw on certain critical vocabularies, I have to smile and remember that that was once me metaphorically pumping my fist and wanting to label anyone using terminology I didn't understand "The Oppressor." I have a couple further comments to make on that topic, both of which surface from time to time in my classroom lectures and will be familiar to my students. My first comment actually draws from one of your lectures, Teresia, "Learning the Hard Way," which I encountered when I first arrived at Victoria as a teaching fellow some seven years ago and tutored your introductory Pacific studies course, The Pacific Heritage. Among the other themes of that lecture is the salient point that some of the most powerful and important lessons in life are those that are the hardest to learn. Acquiring new knowledge is not always, and should not always be, easy. Learning is *struggle*, often. When I discuss this with my students, it's usually in terms of their difficulty reading, and comprehending, academic writing. Some of this difficulty owes to basic academic literacy skills, which our students may or may not come equipped with when they enter our classrooms. We are keenly aware of this, and in our practice at Victoria we are continually working to give our students the tools they need in this respect, drawing upon the support of our excellent colleagues in Student Learning Support Services. But even for those whose tool kits are good, there is still an element of struggle and challenge in terms of what we ask them to do as processors and creators of original,

creative, intellectual work. But for me, that's the point: if there is no struggle, no challenge, I'm not actually sure that we are teaching them anything. Sometimes it helps to make this point by highlighting the intensely disciplined, rigorous, processes for acquiring new knowledge in indigenous Pacific contexts, outside the university. No one would expect to sit down with Satawalese navigator Mau Piailug and be able to "get" the science of interisland navigation instantly. No one should expect to dance hula like a kumu on their first try. No, skill is acquired through years of intense, disciplined effort and engagement.

There's another comment I make to my students regarding language, generally, and academic language, specifically. Just as it was for my peers and I as fresh young graduate students so many years ago, much of their immediate discomfort with, even rejection of, some of their assigned reading is simply about vocabulary. So I have a little speech I give, asking them,

> What if the *only* word available to you to describe a feeling of happiness is *happy*? So no matter the scenario or context, or degree of happiness, that's the only word you've got. Thus, the All Blacks finally win the Rugby World Cup—fans are . . . *happy*. A couple desperate for children finally conceives after ten years of trying—they're . . . *happy*. You win ten million in the lotto—you're, yes, . . . *happy*. Think of how impoverished we'd be without all those other splendid words and vernacular phrases that add texture and nuance to the English language; delighted, joyful, ecstatic, over the moon, rapt, *chuffed*.

When students encounter a lot of unfamiliar vocabulary, they often express resentment, as if the author is *deliberately* trying to sound "smart" (or, in Samoanglish slang, *fiapots*), and *deliberately* attempting to exclude them from a community of understanding, when in fact writers are simply trying to choose terms with the degree of precision required to convey their argument. It's just that, after years of reading and writing, they have a much broader sense of the vocabulary available to them than our undergraduate students. Again, an island analogy is sometimes useful: a skilled orator draws from a much deeper well of language than the average village inhabitant. Of course, there are bad writers in academia, just as in other genres of literature! But sometimes even bad writers have something important to say, so we must struggle to read and reread and figure out what it is. Apart from sometimes lacking the skill sets to do this, another problem our students face are the myriad competing demands on their time. Our students often have work, family, church, and/or sporting commitments. They often

don't have time to read and reread and wrestle with their reading, even if they were hypothetically willing to do so. And that is another very pressing challenge we face as educators, and continue to try and address.

TKT: I like your "happy" exercise. That's such a good way of addressing what really is an antiintellectual strain in both Pacific and broader New Zealand communities. I do an exercise in PASI 301 that I had initially developed when I taught at the University of the South Pacific, around the question of "what is an intellectual?" Our communities—and not surprisingly, our students—are so ambivalent about education. We want our children to be smart but not act smart. We want our youth to get an education but we don't want them to be changed by their education. There's some serious research begging to be done on that ambivalence!

AKH: I agree. Many of my students are keenly aware of how that ambivalence translates into their daily lived experience. Their parents want to be able to hang their children's degrees on a wall, highlight their educational success at church or the family reunion, but in their domestic context, they will read the type of behavior rewarded at university—such as arguing a differing opinion on a topic—as a sign of impertinence. So yes, there is a conundrum where some Pacific parents want their children to go through three or more years of education but emerge essentially unchanged.

TKT: I had an early experience at Vic that really seemed to go to the heart of this tension between humanities and communities. A student in PASI 301 did a research project on the infamous period of dawn raids on Pacific communities in New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s. I had encouraged the student to get a handle on the secondary material on the period first and source as much "official" information as she could on the period—using newspaper and film resources from the National Library, Archives New Zealand, and the Film Archives. My worry was that there was a lot of "hype" about the dawn raids in New Zealand popular culture, and I wanted to make sure she grounded her research on the period with reliable sources. So, for example, rather than just referring to the racist anti-Pacific Islander animated television advertisement that Muldoon's national party put out in the 1970s (which she'd never seen because she wasn't born until the 1980s), the student sourced the actual clip from the Film Archives and played it as part of her final seminar presentation, and referenced it in her bibliography. She got official information on numbers of Pacific Islanders deported as a result of dawn raids, and referenced newspaper clippings from the period. I thought she had done very well. But when she presented her work to family members, they said she should have talked to "real people" to get a better understanding of the dawn raids. Now, there are some ethical constraints around us sending our undergraduate students off

into the world to interview "real people." I felt that I had done the responsible thing by encouraging the student to ground her research in texts. And yes, I do recognize the irony of texts being a humanist's first resort! But the student's community felt that they should have been her first resort. Now, normally I'd agree with the community on that point, but if a community doesn't make its own versions of historical events accessible to its youth, I don't think it's fair that they should dismiss what a student picks up from alternative—say, academic—sources. Of course, from a humanities point of view, a good researcher must eventually try to make connections between texts and communities. But given our ethics requirements at Victoria University, I wouldn't be inclined to send too many students out to do research with human subjects until they were postgraduate students. We provide our undergraduate students with other ways of making connections between their communities and the humanities-based learning we promote in Pacific studies.

AKH: You noted earlier our outreach to various communities and constituencies, and I think we should mention the work we've engaged in with artistic communities locally, nationally, and internationally. The fine arts and performing arts are also key contributors to what we think of as the humanities tradition and are very important to both of us in our work and teaching. At every level, our courses encourage students to consider the important contributions of creative work to Pacific studies and to Pacific societies. Further, we have explicitly engaged practicing artists at many points in our nine-year history at VUW. This includes bringing artists into classrooms, organizing guest seminars, facilitating a retreat for artists and academics to engage in dialogue about art and society, formulating panels of artists to contribute their insights at academic conferences, and, most dramatically, coorganizing (along with the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawai'i and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa) an entire Pacific studies conference on dance in Oceania that brought together academics, choreographers, dancers, fine artists, filmmakers, documentarians, and many others on equal footing. The suspicions and resentments of the university and academics that circulate in Pacific communities at large certainly permeate Pacific artistic communities, so I think our consistent efforts over the years have been very important in demonstrating to artists that we value what they do, and in fostering among artists a greater understanding and sense of value for what we do.

TKT: We've covered a lot of territory in this conversation, and it's been good to be able to "take stock" of what we've been able to accomplish in Pacific studies, as well as what challenges lie ahead for us in our work at Victoria University. In a way, this dialogue has been an example of our own "press pause" moment! The conversation we've recorded here is a

reconstruction and renovation, so to speak, of a variety of reflections and exchanges we've had individually and together over a number of years. I'm really thankful for the collegiality we share, April, and I look forward to continuing this dialogue with you, perhaps in other forums. Over my years at Vic I've been intent on fostering a sense of intellectual community among students in our program and with our colleagues from across the university who are also engaged in teaching about or researching the Pacific. My emphasis on the "intellectual" comes from a belief that claiming our intellectual heritage and capacities is a means to empowerment in a culture of commodification, and a mode of resistance within dehumanizing economies. Especially in New Zealand, where sports and entertainment are the most likely fields for Pacific people to find acceptance and success, the Enlightenment dictum, "I think, therefore I am" becomes a radical statement. But the phrase you introduced earlier, April—"communities of sentiment"—is a necessary reminder that communities are made up of both ideas and feelings. A Pacific studies program that is framed as a humanities project can't help but engage at both those levels, too.

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