# Pacific Studies

Vol. 40, No. 3—Dec. 2017

# PACIFIC STUDIES

A multidisciplinary journal devoted to the study of the peoples of the Pacific Islands

DECEMBER 2017

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY HAWAIʻI
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This publication is printed on acid-free paper and meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Council on Library Resources.

ISSN 0275-3596
ISBN 0-939154-77-3

Volume 40 December 2017 Number 3

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PUBLISHED 12/2017

# GENDERED IMPACTS OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC SHOCKS: FINDINGS FROM HOUSEHOLDS IN MELANESIA

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This paper examines the gendered impacts of multiple severe global economic shocks in two Melanesian countries: Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. It focuses on the sharp food and fuel price hikes in 2007 and 2008 and the subsequent Global Financial Crisis, which quickly turned into a broader economic crisis. Using gender-disaggregated data, it examines the impacts on women across three economic spheres: financial, productive, and reproductive. Findings indicate that that a disproportionate burden of the adjustment to these shocks was borne by women. Without gender-disaggregation and a focus on gender norms, policies risk being at best incomplete and at worst harmful to women. Therefore, formal social protection schemes must account for gender norms, focusing on practical and achievable measures to advance women's economic empowerment within

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existing institutional structures. Possible policies include financial inclusion, developing better and safer informal markets, lifting agricultural production, and devising more family-friendly labor-migration schemes.

Since the turn of the new millennium, the global economy has been beset by a number of important global financial and macroeconomic shocks. In 2007 and 2008, the international prices of both food and fuel rose sharply, comparable with the inflationary spikes associated with the oil price shocks of the early 1970s. These rises were then dramatically reversed with the onset of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and the subsequent Global Economic Crisis (GEC) in mid-2008, in which global production contracted sharply and the volume of trade between countries fell for the first time since World War II.

Empirical evidence points to the considerable consequences of these severe shocks. Spikes in imported inflation undermined real household disposable incomes and stretched households' reserves and resilience (Brinkman et al. 2010; Gibson and Kim 2013). The subsequent shock weakened demand for goods, services, and labor. In the Asia-Pacific region alone, almost twenty-five million workers were affected by labor shedding in trade-exposed industries (UNESCAP 2009). The ensuing recession may have prevented sixty-four million people in Asia from emerging out of poverty and pushed 50,000 additional people into poverty in the Pacific (Chatterjee and Kumar 2010).

Often neglected in the orthodox economics literature on macroeconomic shocks is how women and men are affected differently, as well as the transmission of shocks to broader, nonmonetary aspects of well-being, such as unpaid work (Fukuda-Parr, Heintz, and Seguino 2013). Thus, although income and employment impacts of crises are generally well documented, often masked is the dynamics at the intrahousehold level. Social protection policies, thus, risk being gender blind, disregarding the particular and unique vulnerabilities of women. Policies may also be less effective than might otherwise be the case, because intrahousehold dynamics are critical to understanding the vulnerability and resilience of households (Moser 1998). Therefore, access to gendered data, and attention to gender norms, are needed to reveal the different experiences of women and men.

This paper focuses on the gendered impacts of the aforementioned shocks. It contributes to the existing literature by disaggregating the impacts by gender and exploring the impacts beyond employment. It does so for two Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in which the gendered impacts of shocks are rarely explored and where, for some dimensions, the highest rates of gender inequality in the world prevail: Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

To a large extent these countries are emblematic of PICs more broadly: comprising small populations scattered on islands across vast tracts of ocean; with undiversified economies reliant on world markets; entrenched inequalities

between women and men; and with dualistic economic structures, consisting of traditional economic systems in rural areas coexisting alongside a market economy in fast-growing urban areas. These urban areas, in turn, are increasingly becoming centers of wealth, employment, politics, and service provision as well as hubs of poverty and inequality (Storey 2006).

Further, both countries are also renowned for their acute vulnerability to economic and natural shocks, often ranking among the world's most vulnerable countries on international league tables (Feeny et al. 2013). This heightened vulnerability makes Solomon Islands and Vanuatu important contexts for studying the gendered effects of the crises. The broad structural similarities with other countries across the region means that findings may well have implications for the design of social protection policies in PICs more broadly to strengthen the resilience of women to future shocks.

Drawing on extensive empirical quantitative and qualitative data collected in six geographically and economically distinct locations in each country, this paper focuses on the different experiences of women and men during and after the shocks in question. It considers the effects of the shocks across three economic spheres: financial; productive; and reproductive, in line with the conceptual framework of Elson (2010). In each sphere it brings together the empirical quantitative data and the results of participatory exercises on possible policy options. To the author's knowledge this is the first time that such a detailed gender-disaggregated analysis of economic shocks has been undertaken in either country or in the region more broadly. The findings show that food and fuel price shocks rather than the GFC/GEC had the greatest gendered impacts in these countries and that women bore a disproportionate burden of the adjustment.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: a literature review followed by the data and methodology and the findings across three economic spheres; next a discussion of a number of policy implications raised by the findings of the paper and finally the conclusion.

## Literature Review

Elson (2010) argues that economic shocks are inherently gendered. Financial crises emanate from gendered economic processes, whereas the impacts of shocks are also gendered because they affect women and men differently. Impacts manifest differently for women and men across a number of economic spheres and result from both differences in the way women and men respond to various policies as well as the influence of gender norms and institutions. In many developing countries, women experience inequality and subjugation within their households, communities, and societies. These preexisting inequities can be reinforced during a shock, both via the specific trajectory of the

shock, as well as via the way that people respond, especially because vulnerabilities based on gender are generally both multidimensional and relational (Harper, Jones, McKay, and Epsey 2009; King and Sweetman 2010). For example, women in many countries face institutional constraints that limit their ability to develop their own human capital and to access labor market opportunities or credit, in turn making it significantly more difficult for women to respond to shocks (Ezemenari, Chaudhury, and Owens 2002). These constraints can be worsened by widespread economic shocks, which often affect labor markets, leading men to migrate or remain unemployed and leaving women to fill gaps in both the labor market and the household (Chant 2007).

A main focus of empirical studies into the gendered impacts of macroeconomic shocks has centered on how the shock affected employment opportunities for women and men. For example, in the aftermath of the GFC/GEC women's labor market vulnerabilities were reflected by their disproportionate representation in badly hit export sectors during the contraction in global trade, such as garment, textile, and clothing industries (Silva 2009; Gaerlan, Cabrera, Samia, and Santoalla 2010; Otobe 2011; Pearson and Sweetman 2011; Espino 2013). It has been repeatedly observed that women were more likely to lose their jobs because of employment in unstable sectors as well as discriminatory firing practices (Parks, Abbott, and Wilkinson 2009; Green, King, and Miller-Dawkins 2010; King and Sweetman 2010; Seguino 2010). Pollock and Aung (2010) highlight the particular vulnerabilities of migrant women in Thailand, who experienced decreases in wages, lay-offs, increased restrictions on reproductive rights, and increased risks of harassment and extortion as a result of the economic downturn. Ortiz and Cummins (2013) also find that the subsequent austerity measures, commonly carried out from 2010 in response to the GFC/GEC, are likely to have had a disproportionately negative impact on women and children.

The experiences of women in developing countries following economic shocks stand in contrast to those of women in developed countries like the United States and most of Western Europe. In developed countries, male unemployment typically increased more than female unemployment because male-dominated sectors, such as finance, manufacturing, and construction, were hardest hit by the GFC/GEC (Otobe 2011; Berik and Kongar 2013). Cho and Newhouse (2013) also confirmed this finding for 17 middle-income countries. In middle-income economies, however, women were often the ones undertaking the extra work burden to compensate for the loss of household income (KayaBahçe and Memiş 2013).

These findings echo evidence from previous crises where there were disproportionate gendered impacts at both the macro and microeconomic levels. For example, the Asian Crisis of 1997, which was the last widespread adverse macroeconomic shock in the region prior to the GFC/GEC, resulted in women bearing

a disproportionate burden of the fall in employment, as well as in education with a larger reduction in school attendance for girls (Aslanbeigui and Summerfield 2000). Women were also more prone to deteriorating in health (attributable to higher costs of medicine and health care). The aforementioned study also found an increased incidence of violence against women as well as increasing religious tensions. Aslanbeigui and Summerfield (2000) confirmed an increase in the rate of domestic violence as well as prostitution as a result of the crisis.

### *Economic Shocks and Gender in PICs*

What is clear from the existing literature is that gendered impacts not only vary across income level and region but also across individual countries depending on the preexisting economic, social, and cultural relationships (Green, King, and Miller-Dawkins 2010).

At a national level, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are known for their vulnerability to natural disasters, such as cyclones, earthquakes, and the occasional tsunami (Kelman and Khan 2013). In addition, the unique combination of remoteness and smallness of Pacific Island countries, coupled with a predominance of non-tradable and subsistence production, low rates of formal employment, a dependence on imports of higher value-added goods, and fixed exchange rate regimes, suggests that they are also highly vulnerable to economic shocks (Bertram 1999; Easterley and Kraay 2000; Gibson and Nero 2008; Jayasuriya and Suri 2012). It is not surprising, therefore, that Solomon Islands and Vanuatu rank relatively low by international standards, according to a number of development indicators. For example, the average GDP per capita (2005 USD) for Solomon Islands and Vanuatu from 2004 to 2014 is $986 and $2,047, respectively. Similarly, their ranking in the Human Development Index places Solomon Islands and Vanuatu at 156 and 134 (out of 188), respectively (United Nations Development Program 2015).

The unique geographic and economic characteristics of PICs such as Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, underscore a key point of difference with other developing countries in how global macroeconomic shocks were likely to have affected women and men. The relative lack of a manufacturing base and the low levels of formal sector employment meant that women were not likely to have been directly exposed to the adverse labor market effects of the GFC/GEC. Further, the food and fuel price shocks that preceded the GFC/GEC were considered to be generally experienced universally in developing countries, rather than exhibiting significant differences between women and men. Therefore, the shocks were unlikely to have been gendered, per se.

However, similar to other developing country settings, households' reactions to the shocks and the effects on women and men were often a function of gender roles, responsibilities, and inequalities. Moreover, according to the World Bank

(2008), increased food and fuel prices tended to make already poor and disenfranchised households poorer, while exacerbating intrahousehold inequalities.

Across PICs, gender inequality is fueled by a veritable laundry list of factors, including, the dominance of patriarchy, women's lack of access to decision making, a sexual division of labor that delegates unpaid household responsibilities mainly to women, violence against women, and weak formal institutions (Holmes and Slater 2012). Working women in the Pacific also have multiple roles in sustaining the household and face greater burdens on their time relative to men (Waring and Sumeo 2010). During both idiosyncratic and covariate shocks, women often act as "shock absorbers" by increasing their workload, causing time poverty and health issues (Mendoza 2009; Parks, Abbott, and Wilkinson 2009; Horn 2011). Therefore, policies that can address issues related to women's resilience during times of economic shocks, in particular through increased agency and economic empowerment, merit special consideration.

## Data and Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative empirical data. Such an approach has been shown to be valuable in empirical economic analyses as a way to mutually validate results (Blin and Siegmann 2006). Fieldwork was undertaken in two separate tranches: the initial research undertaken in 2011 shortly after the effects of the shocks in question had been felt by households; and a follow-up two years later. Local teams of women and men within each country were recruited to work with researchers to collect quantitative and qualitative data on households.

In discussions with key research stakeholders during initial scoping visits to each country in late 2010, a broad set of criteria were adopted for the selection of the sampling units. It was decided that six geographically distinct communities would be chosen in each country to provide the research with a sufficiently rich data set on the different ways that households, and individuals within households, were vulnerable and resilient to the effects of global macroeconomic shocks. It was intended that the aggregate distribution of communities be not too dissimilar to census data in terms of the distribution of urban and rural households. Therefore, it was decided to target four rural and two urban communities in each country.

An additional imperative was that the six locations chosen in each respective country should be broadly comparable so as to facilitate cross-country comparisons. Therefore, individual communities were selected according to a number of conditions. For rural areas, these included at least one geographically remote location in each country; regions that were renowned for growing cash crops; and regions that had known links to the programming activities of Oxfam Australia—a key stakeholder in the research. For urban areas, the intention was

to survey communities in the respective capital cities and the second largest city in each country. A strong focus of the research in urban areas was on households in squatter settlements. These communities were known for their low levels of well-being, which provided insight for research into household vulnerability and the implications for social protection policy. Moreover, squatter settlements are often overlooked in nationwide surveys because of their often informal habitation. In addition, to capture the breadth of experiences in towns, we visited two squatter settlements in each of the four urban communities (see Table 1). The aim of this exercise was to test whether different communities characterized by varied proximity to main urban markets and services, such as schools and hospitals, differ in terms of their various responses to shocks.

*Research Tools—Household Survey*

Overall, 955 household surveys were conducted in the first tranche of fieldwork in early 2011. Surveys were split broadly evenly between the twelve sample locations.

Because households' vulnerability to an economic shock is, fundamentally, a function of the shock itself as well as the ability to cope with its effects (Heitzmann, Canagarajah, and Siegel 2002), the survey captured self-reported information on shock experience as well as the various ways that households coped with shocks.[1] The survey also gathered detailed information on each household and its occupants, including demographic makeup, migratory behavior, productive assets, income and expenditure, social assets, water and sanitation, and respondents' perceptions of their own well-being. In addition, the survey captured information on key local considerations, including land tenure, use of food gardens, contributions at custom ceremonies, tithes to the church, and the extent of support provided to and received from the broad social network (including the informal social protection mechanism in Melanesia, known as the *wantok* system). The survey also included a number of questions about whether women or men bore primary responsibility for various types of work and had access to particular household resources.

Importantly, the sampling method was specifically designed to identify the range of experiences of both women and men. First, in a departure from many empirical analyses of households' well-being, the survey was not focused on the characteristics of the household head but rather on "the people living in this house". This meant that any adult (female or male) could participate in the survey. The difficulty with household head surveys is that they provide little insight into intrahousehold dynamics. Furthermore, a focus on the household head tends to treat that person's perspective as reflecting that of the entire household (see Monk and Hansen 1982). The emphasis on those living in the house was also practical, because it was revealed during the pilot phase that nominated

Table 1. **Communities Surveyed and Their Characteristics.**

| Region | Vanuatu | Solomon Islands | Characteristics |
|---|---|---|---|
| Urban | Port Vila split between:<br>Ohlen<br>Blacksands | Honiara split between:<br>Burns Creek<br>White River | Squatter settlements in the capital city |
| | Luganville (Santo Is.) split between:<br>Sarakata<br>Pepsi | Auki (Malaita Is.) split between:<br>Lililsiana<br>Ambu | Squatter settlements in the second largest city |
| Rural | Baravet (Pentecost Is.) | Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Limited (GPPOL) Villages (Guadalcanal Is.) | Rural communities heavily involved in commercial agriculture |
| | Hog Harbour (Santo Is.) | Malu'u (Malaita Is.) | Rural communities separated from the respective second city by a direct road |
| | Mangalilu (Efate Is.) | Weather Coast (Guadalcanal Is.) | Communities on the same island as the respective capital city with known links to Oxfam Australia. |
| | Banks Islands (Mota Lava Is.) | Vella Lavella Is. (Western Province) | Remote communities a significant distance from the respective capital cities |

Notes: Urban and rural distinctions mirror, to the extent possible, the regional distinctions outlined in the respective national census. They are also a convenient approximation of the respective features of the dualistic economy structure in each country, described above.

"head" of the house in both countries was typically indicated as the oldest male in a family (irrespective of whether that person resided in the house or not).

Second, the survey teams aimed to maintain a gender balance in survey respondents (this was achieved: 51 percent were women and 49 percent were men). Therefore, the data from the surveys can be analyzed and compared between the gender of the reported head of the household and, separately, between respondents of different genders.

*Research Tools—Focus Groups*

Fifty-two focus group discussions were also held across the project—approximately four per visited community. These were split evenly between women and men. Each focus group included between eight and twelve people and, although individuals were asked to volunteer their time, an attempt was made to gather a broad cross-section of representation from each community by working with community leaders (both women and men) to select among willing participants.

Each focus group was structured similarly. The rationale of the research and the factors influencing vulnerability and resilience to economic shocks was introduced to the group using a metaphor familiar to the participants: the plight of a coconut tree in a cyclone (see McDonald 2014). Three activities then followed. First, participants were asked to explore a timeline of their own past experiences of "good and difficult times". These times were listed on pieces of card and arranged chronologically. Second, the groups were asked to focus on the "bad times" and then collectively rank each event from most to least difficult. Discussions then focused on participants' views on why these events happened, what caused them, who was affected, and what different people did as a result.

An additional objective of the focus groups, and a key output for the research, was to explore participants' thoughts on ways that they can strengthen their resilience to the effects of similar economic shocks in the future. Accordingly, the third activity centered on the metaphor of picking fruit off a tree to draw out various activities and policy responses that can be enacted. Three levels were used: lowest-hanging fruit represented activities requiring no outside assistance; fruit in the middle of the tree represented activities that require some community/village level support; and fruit on the very top branches of the tree represented policy responses that require significant institutional and policy support. The results from this participatory exercise form the basis of policy recommendations.

To gain an understanding of any sustained and dynamic impacts of the shocks in question, research teams returned to half of the communities—three in each country chosen to retain a broadly similar urban–rural profile as the initial fieldwork—to undertake follow-up research at the end of 2012 and in early 2013. A similar mixed-methods approach was used, comprising 660

household surveys and sixteen focus group discussions. Importantly, this process included resurveying 147 of the original households. The household survey was largely replicated in an attempt to record differences in the economic situation of households. The focus group discussions provided an opportunity to deepen understanding of findings from the initial round of fieldwork. Focus groups were introduced to a fictional family, a married couple with children, who were experiencing and responding to economic and other shocks. Focus groups were invited to comment on the family's situation, allowing them to speak about potentially sensitive topics that may otherwise be difficult to articulate in a focus group setting within a tight-knit community. In a link to the initial low-hanging fruit activity, focus groups in the second tranche of fieldwork were also asked to prioritize a list of development projects that they perceived as most pressing for their communities.

All focus group discussions were held in the most widely used languages in each country—Solomon Islands (Pidgin) and Vanuatu (Bislama)—and then translated and transcribed into English by the focus group facilitators. After translation, the focus groups were analyzed systematically using NVivo software. The timeline and ranking exercises were coded, and a frequency analysis done by gender and geographic location, with the information triangulated across survey data and key informant interviews. Data from the low hanging fruit exercise were left largely as case studies.

## Findings

This section presents the results on shock experiences and responses, adopting the conceptual framework of Elson (2010) in examining the gendered nature of economic shocks in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Specifically, it examines the impacts of shocks across three economic spheres: (1) the financial sphere, which includes all financial institutions and intermediaries as well as government ministries of finance; (2) the productive sphere, in which goods are produced and income is earned in both the formal and informal sectors; and (3) the reproductive sphere, concerned with nonmarket production and social provisioning. This human-development centered conceptual approach, summarized by Fukuda-Parr, Heintz, and Seguino (2013), goes beyond an examination of income measures to looking at broader impacts of shocks on well-being and on unpaid work in families and communities.

### *The Financial Sphere*

Potential transmission mechanisms of food and fuel price hikes and the GFC/GEC in the financial sphere include financial instability and a banking crisis, a

loss of government revenue leading to austerity measures and a fall in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). However, rates of monetization are relatively low in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, whereas the banking systems in each country have very limited exposure to complex financial instruments and the US subprime mortgage market. Formal labor markets are very small and FDI is often heavily focused in the capital-intensive extractive industries and construction sectors. In contrast, the narrow domestic production base in each country means there is a dependence on imports for higher value added goods, including processed food and fuel (Jayaraman and Ward, 2006). It is for these reasons that the large price hikes for food and fuel preceding the GFC/GEC are likely to have had a far greater impact on these countries than the global economic downturn.

Table 2 confirms this observation—86 percent of the sample reported that they had experienced either an inflation or labor market shock, with most of these (82 percent of the sample) indicating they had experienced local inflationary effects associated with the sharp rise in international commodity prices. In contrast, a much smaller share of households (16 percent) experienced adverse labor market shocks. This included both an unexpected job loss and a reduction in hours worked or wages paid, which are assumed to be, at least in part, a manifestation of the GFC/GEC in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Overall, urban and rural communities were equally likely to experience a price shock. This high proportion of households exposed to price volatility confirms, in large part, the near-universal penetration of imported foods and fuels across each country. Women respondents were statistically more likely to report experiencing a price shock than men (87 percent vs. 77 percent). This may be a reflection that purchasing goods for the household is usually within the domain of women in these countries.

Table 3 limits the sample to those households that experienced either an inflation or a labor market shock and provides the most common household coping responses. It also disaggregates the data by the sex of the respondent. Using environmental resources was the most common response, with the vast majority of households sourcing more food from their garden as well as more marine resources from the reef/sea. It was also common for households to reduce and alter their expenditure patterns as well as increase their labor supply. These different responses are discussed in greater detail in the sections below together with differences in these coping mechanisms between men and women.

In the financial sphere, focus group participants identified a number of policy recommendations. To effectively respond to price hikes, households articulated a strong desire to improve their financial competence and access to financial services. Financial literacy is important to enhancing individuals' abilities to budget, manage cash flow, and increase the scale of their activities. Both female

TABLE 2. **Global Macroeconomic Shock Experiences of Households in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Percentage of Sample in Parentheses), by Gender.**

| Shock Type | Description | Total (n = 955) | Male (n = 467) | Female (n = 488) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inflation | Respondent reported that purchasing food and/or fuel had become "harder" or "a lot harder". | 784 (82.1%) | 360 (77.1%) | 424 (86.9%) |
| Labor market | Respondent noted that household experienced reduced employment (job loss or reduced hours) or wages were cut. | 149 (15.6%) | 76 (16.3%) | 73 (15.0%) |

Note: Price shocks are determined using a five-point Lickert scale in which households nominated whether purchasing food and/or fuel had become easier or harder in the two years preceding the survey, with the midpoint representing no change. If the household nominated either the fourth or fifth item on the scale (i.e., that purchasing food/fuel had become "harder" or "a lot harder" over the relevant timeframe), then that was considered evidence of an inflation shock.

**Table 3. Most Common Household Coping Responses to Global Macroeconomic Shocks in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Percentage of Households That Experienced a Global Macroeconomic Shock).**

| Coping Response | Total (n = 816) | Female Respondent (n = 441) | Male Respondent (n = 375) | Female : Male Respondent Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Use environmental resources | 83.9 | 83.9 | 84.0 | 1.00 |
| Including: Use garden[a] | 94.5 | 95.1 | 88.9 | 1.07 |
| Reduce spending on nonessential items | 77.5 | 71.9 | 84.0 | 0.86 |
| Increase labor supply | 73.8 | 66.2 | 82.7 | 0.80 |
| Use traditional support systems[b] | 34.7 | 37.4 | 31.5 | 1.19 |
| Switch to cheaper meals or meals of lower quality | 73.7 | 71.7 | 76.0 | 0.94 |
| Jettison traditional support[b] | 35.8 | 28.3 | 44.5 | 0.64 |
| Reduce spending on utilities | 65.9 | 58.3 | 74.9 | 0.78 |
| Reduce spending on health | 50.1 | 42.0 | 59.7 | 0.70 |
| Reduce spending on demerit goods[c] | 40.8 | 33.3 | 49.6 | 0.67 |
| Reduce spending on education | 33.2 | 29.5 | 37.6 | 0.78 |
| Reduce food intake | 26.6 | 28.1 | 24.8 | 1.13 |
| Draw down on savings | 11.2 | 11.6 | 10.7 | 1.08 |
| Sold livestock | 13.4 | 14.5 | 12.0 | 1.21 |
| Migrate to find more work | 15.8 | 16.3 | 15.2 | 1.07 |
| Borrow money | 2.8 | 2.5 | 3.2 | 0.78 |

Notes: Global macroeconomic shocks include an inflation shock and a labor market shock. Coping responses are not mutually exclusive. [a]Use garden is calculated as a proportion of those that used the environment. [b]Traditional support systems refer to family, friends, neighbors, and/or the church. [c]Demerit goods refer to consumer products that are generally perceived as bad for one's health or well-being, such as alcohol, cigarettes, betel nut, and kava.

and male focus group participants stated the need for assistance (from government or nongovernment organizations) such that they can learn to better budget and save and, therefore, leverage loans to invest in income-generating activities. The limited reach of financial services into rural areas, in particular, means that financial literacy is also a skill set sorely lacking in rural areas—a fact that was repeatedly identified by focus group participants. Women, in particular, commented on how increased access to financial services and a better understanding of budgeting practices would make them "happy" because it would help deter immediate spending and potentially increase savings. That women's focus groups related their need for financial literacy as a response to rising food prices and school fees is perhaps indicative of their responsibilities in managing expenditure in these areas.

*The Productive Sphere*

There is a sharp contrast in livelihoods in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu relative to many other developing countries. A relatively small share of households rely on wages and salaries for their income, whereas the majority depend on smallholder agriculture—a mixture of cash crops and subsistence farming (Government of Vanuatu 2012; Government of Solomon Islands 2015). The "dualistic economy" in Vanuatu has been observed as largely determined along urban–rural lines, with income generated through the formal economy in mostly urban areas and the informal economy in rural areas (McGregor, Watas, and Tora 2009). Furthermore, numerous studies have shown that informal markets are also prevalent in urban centers, as households occasionally sell surplus crops and marine resources to meet their financial needs (Cox etal. 2007; Gibson and Nero 2008). As a result, while the GFC/GEC led to a fall in employment in some sectors, a substantial share of the population in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu were cushioned from these impacts. A common response to shocks was for women (80 percent) to peddle food, kava (in Vanuatu) and betel nut (in Solomon Islands) in local markets for extra income. Only 47 percent of men responded in this way.

Nevertheless, societies where a majority of the population depends on informal employment can often find it more difficult to generate additional income following economic shocks. Thus, for example, following increments in the prices of food and fuel, Solomon Islanders and ni-Vanuatu in our sample indicated that they coped with the effects of shocks by adjusting expenditure patterns, suggesting that, whereas they did look toward the labor market for new opportunities, this did not reveal itself to be an effective coping mechanism. In fact, 74 percent of respondents said they increased labor supply, looking for new work opportunities, but few were actually able to find new work. Further,

around three-quarters of households coped with shocks by consuming cheaper, as well as lower quality, food. The shift to cheaper food is consistent with both the observed increased use of food gardens and international evidence that households attempted to preserve their caloric intake during the 2008 spike in food prices by downgrading the quality of their food (Skoufias, Tiwari, and Zaman 2012; Gibson and Kim 2013). These responses did not vary greatly by the gender of the respondent.

Household-level responses to shocks as summarized by the quantitative analysis do not reveal significant divergence in behavior between men and women. However, our qualitative data indicates that in adopting different coping strategies, women within households faced added difficulties. In essence, both women and men were pressed to generate income; however, women also felt pressured to adjust their individual spending and consumption behavior as well as maintain responsibility for housework and care work within their households. Further, participants in women's focus groups commented that it was common for women to sacrifice their food intake to ensure that other members of the household had sufficient food to eat (Donahue, Eccles, and Miller-Dawkins 2014). This is consistent with empirical evidence from other developing countries that women consume less when food is scarce and when the marginal value of food is high (Behrman and Deolalikar 1990; Behrman 1997). Compounding these responses, focus groups revealed that women also faced issues related to domestic violence, a lack of security, and increased stress (Donahue, Eccles, and Miller-Dawkins 2014).

Across the sample, both female and male focus group respondents viewed the potential establishment, and improvement, of local markets as a straightforward way to improve their resilience to shocks. In particular, policymakers should consider investing in the number of quality marketplaces. Fostering the development of markets by increasing their number and locating them closer to population centers would have multiple benefits. It would provide women and men with additional opportunities for informal peddling and income generation, and allow people to take home more income by reducing the costs of transport. This is particularly important given that women identified that they sought to reduce household costs by traveling less following a shock (Donahue, Eccles, and Miller-Dawkins 2014).

Focus groups discussed ways to overcome a number of the challenges of generating income within the informal economy. Across the communities, male and female focus group participants identified that additional agricultural assistance (largely in the form of tools, fertilizer and better planting techniques) would have positive impacts on their lives by providing greater food security as well as increasing households' volume of saleable goods. Participants in urban areas also viewed agricultural productivity as a potential way to mitigate some of the

"pull" factors enticing the youth to migrate to urban areas. A male participant in Honiara suggested that "agricultural tools to [better] cultivate . . . gardens . . . might convince young people to stay back in their [rural] communities." In both urban and rural communities, there was a stated desire to expand and diversify the range of produce that households could produce so as to strengthen their resilience to the effects of shocks. This was articulated by a woman on the remote Weather Coast who said that "because in communities we are not well educated, I [would] ask [policymakers] to do some training on how to plant vegetables so that I know the techniques to grow more vegetables."

### *The Reproductive Sphere*

Elson (2010) suggests that the transmission of the crisis in the reproductive sphere in developing countries is likely to be through a fall in the value of remittances and the return home of migrants. Again Solomon Islands and Vanuatu were not significantly affected through this mechanism because of their limited diasporas and limited access to other countries' labor markets.

Other mechanisms of economic shocks relate to a tightening household budget leading to malnourishment, children dropping out of school, and mental health and depression leading to drug and alcohol abuse among men and a rise in domestic violence (Marcus and Gavrilovic, 2010). In the aftermath of the price shocks, households reduced their consumption of a range of goods. One-third of households, for example, reduced their expenditure on education (mainly via switching children to a cheaper school). However, reassuringly, girls were no more likely than boys to be pulled out of educational activities. Similarly, about half of households reduced their spending on health (mainly medicines). Moreover, and contrary to a priori expectations, approximately 41 percent of households decreased their spending on demerit goods, such as alcohol, cigarettes, betel nut, and kava.

Communities in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu enjoy additional coping mechanisms within the reproductive sphere because of strong ties to the traditional economic system. The informal social protection mechanism in Melanesia, sometimes referred to as the wantok system, is a key characteristic of the region with antecedents stretching back millennia (Oliver 1967). The system provides reciprocal flow of numerous goods (including cash) and services and includes gift giving on special feast days and cultural norms of social obligation.[2] Reliance on these informal mechanisms is a common feature in developing countries where formal insurance markets are missing and public safety nets are unavailable (Fafchamps and Lund 2003; Dimova and Gbakou 2013). Table 3 shows that slightly more than one-third of households indicated that they increased their reliance on traditional support systems, in particular

drawing on family and friends/neighbors. At the same time, however, it appears that traditional economic systems are also coming under strain from economic shocks. It was reported by 36 percent of households that they had jettisoned a cultural obligation as too onerous because of financial pressures. For example, it has become difficult to care for and financially support extended family members, especially as such support increasingly requires cash.

A further element of importance to the reproductive sphere is how employment programs instituted to alleviate poverty interact with family obligations. Focus groups focused on the useful role of overseas labor migration schemes in supporting incomes, However, concerns were raised about the adverse effects that these had on family cohesion the unintended consequences for those family members left behind. There were also discussions of increased financial stress and work requirements on women if funds are not sent home. To cope with the negative impacts, focus groups suggested program design improvements including that money be sent home regularly, communication among family members be maintained, or only single people participate. A woman from Hog Harbor, Vanuatu, articulated:

> I think the husband's decision [to participate in a seasonal worker program] will affect his family because, if he goes, then the mother will have to work extra hard to look after the house and the children and make products to earn money for their daily needs, their school fees. But if the husband sends money to his family fortnightly or monthly then the wife will not struggle a lot to earn money for their household needs.

Underlying the concerns expressed by the focus groups is a concern about access to and control over income earned in migrant programs. If women are better able to participate in these programs, they may have more control over how the money is used. This will increase women's financial agency.

## Discussion

This section draws on the empirical findings to suggest the implications for policymakers.

### *Financial Inclusion*

Financial literacy training for women has benefits for both the individual participant and their household. Approximately 70 percent of Pacific Island peoples are without regular access to financial services, and women's absence from

formal banking is recognized as a global issue (Sibley 2010). Findings from rural Fiji emphasize the importance of women's financial inclusion and providing training in financial literacy for women. Fijian women were reported to be mostly responsible for managing household finances and expenditure, including keeping records and budgeting, whereas a minority of men were uncertain of how their households coped with their financial commitments (Sibley 2010). On account of women's prominent role in managing household finances, their abilities in financial management impact the entire household (McCaffrey 2010). In addition, women more often than men put financial planning measures in place after participation in financial literacy training (McCaffrey 2010).

### *Better and Safer Informal Markets*

Because women are more heavily represented than men in the informal economy, investment in marketplaces is a targeted investment in increasing women's income and a way to address structural gendered inequities. Put another way, it is a pro-poor strategy that makes improvements in the productive sphere in a way that complements, rather than contradicts, the existing sexual division of labor in the reproductive sphere. Moreover, equally important for women's well-being is investment in the quality of marketplace facilities. Recognizing the role of women as caregivers in the home and community, marketplaces should be equipped with facilities that allow women to continue to care for their children in a safe environment. Pooled childcare in a safe place within the marketplace will ensure that women also need not choose between their productive and reproductive responsibilities. In addition, markets are not always safe for women. A U.N. Women survey of Papua New Guinea markets found that 55 percent of women and girls interviewed have experienced violence at the markets, including rape, gang rape, and verbal abuse (Commonwealth of Australia, AusAID 2013). The provision of sanitation facilities, lighting, and security will increase women's safety at markets—in particular, because women sometimes travel from outer islands and sleep in marketplaces.

### *Lifting Agricultural Production*

A policy focus on increasing agricultural production would have clear benefits for women. This research confirms the findings of other studies that women play a central role in the food economy (Jolly 1994). This includes the maintenance of gardens, harvesting crops and selling surplus produce. In the context of strengthening resilience, increased agricultural production can lead to increased food security as well as increased income generating opportunities for women and their families.

Therefore, policies and programs that raise agricultural productivity of households within Melanesian communities should be central to the design of social protection programs. Improving cropping techniques and better understanding the science of farming locally can also help ensure against the risks posed by declining soil fertility. This is likely to be relatively more important in urban areas where space for gardening is more limited. Indeed, women in the squatter settlement of White River in Honiara suggested that "in Solomon Islands we do gardening a lot but then the soil can get less fertile with less produce so [people] might want to ask for techniques to get soil fertile."

### *More Family-Friendly Labor Migration Schemes*

Pacific Island workers have been targeted for participation in the Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) program with the New Zealand Government. The RSE program allows for the temporary entry of mainly low-skilled Pacific Islander workers to the horticulture and viticulture industries in New Zealand (International Labor Organization 2014). Participants from Vanuatu are usually married men with children and between their late twenties and early forties in age (McKenzie, Garcia Martinez, and Winters 2008). Although women have participated, their participation has been inhibited by community decision making that is based on traditional gender roles (Bowman, Cutura, Ellis, and Manuel 2009). The final evaluation report of the RSE program found that some participants used earnings to pay school fees, support family members, purchase equipment, vehicles, and land, build homes, and invest in income-generating activities among other uses (Evalue Research 2010).

Similarly, Australia operates the Seasonal Worker Programme, which commenced on July 1, 2012. It is a Pacific-focused program, which provides eligible citizens from certain countries with an opportunity to undertake low and unskilled seasonal work in Australia. From July 1, 2015, the annual cap on the number of workers participating in the Seasonal Worker Programme was removed such that employers could more easily access seasonal labor when they are unable to source labor locally for particular sectors. Removing the annual cap on program places means that the number of seasonal workers who can enter Australia is determined through employers' unmet need for labor as demonstrated through labor market testing. A formal and independent evaluation of this program has not been undertaken. However, the present study found evidence from focus groups that details that such programs provide households with cash injections, which result in increased savings and a greater ability to invest in income generating activities or items for the household.

In line with the results of this study, research has found the negative impact on families and communities left behind in terms of foregone labor income and

food production for the period duration while prime working age men were unavailable (Rohorua, Gibson, McKenzie, and Garcia Martinez 2009). Such effects can be compounded when workers do not return to their villages. After participation in the RSE program, some ni-Vanuatu workers stayed in Port Vila instead of returning home (Evalue Research 2010).

## Conclusion

Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are geographically, socially, and economically akin to PICs. Yet, they are uniquely renowned in the region for their very high vulnerability to shocks. Using unique data, specifically tailored to understand how international price and demand shocks affected Melanesian households, we find that there is strong evidence that the brunt of the adjustment to these shocks was borne by women. This result is consistent with international evidence.

The acute country-level vulnerability, coupled with the institutional constraints women often face in attempting to manage risk, mean that a specific focus on the gendered impacts of shocks is critical to effective social protection policymaking. Even more important is that women's own voices guide this process. Without gender-disaggregation and a focus on gender norms, policy risks are, at best, incomplete and, at worst, harmful to women. Across the globe, women's economic empowerment is hindered by a combination of poverty, entrenched patriarchy, unequal access to education and participation in decision making, and balancing paid and unpaid work, including household maintenance, water provision, food provision, and care work. The expectations on women to maintain these responsibilities, without assistance or formal social protection, contribute to women's time-poverty and limits income-generating opportunities.

The findings of this study point toward a number of forms of social protection that could be improved in these countries. Social protection mechanisms require interventions that enable both income generation as well as access to savings at the community level. These policies must be practical and achievable and are adapted to existing institutional structures. For example, because of the limited formal employment opportunities available in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, peddling agricultural goods at the market is a reliable source of income that can double as a safety net in times of crisis. Given traditional Melanesian social structures, women are more likely to sell products at these markets, and access to transport and infrastructure that facilitates this is important. However, increased access to markets will only translate to increased resilience against shocks if households have access to financial services and know how to use them. Financial literacy programs can, therefore, go a long way in building resilience.

Although improving income earning opportunities and financial services can assist households in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in ameliorating the

effects of future shocks, formal social protection schemes are required given the innate vulnerability of these countries. Given the strength and prominence of informal social protection mechanisms, there is some anecdotal resistance to implementing formal social protection schemes in these countries. However, there are a number of strong cases for formal social protection. First, traditional economic systems cannot comprehensively ensure households against shocks. Second, even where households do benefit from traditional social support, there is evidence that it is weakening at the margins, both in urban and rural areas, with increasing urbanization and monetization (Feeny et al. 2013; McDonald, Naidu, and Mohanty 2014). Third, traditional forms of social support tend to be less effective during covariate shocks that affect entire communities or countries (Dercon 2006).

To protect women and men from future shocks, policymakers will need to experiment and pilot different types of social protection schemes. This needs to be based on empirical evidence. The unique vulnerabilities and structural disadvantages faced by women means that gender-disaggregated data and participatory analyses that incorporate women's voices are critical. This paper makes a contribution to building this body of evidence that we can hope will inform better, more complete, social protection policymaking in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, as well as across PICs more broadly.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is part of a project funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) through its Australian Development Research Award (ADRA) scheme. These views expressed in the paper are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Commonwealth of Australia. The Commonwealth of Australia accepts no responsibility for any loss, damage, or injury resulting from reliance on any of the information or views contained in the publication.

## NOTES

1. Self-reported experiences of shocks are captured because retrospective surveys are unable to observe the actual experience of a shock. For example, we cannot directly observe by how much income may have decreased after a shock, whereas respondents may vaguely remember that income decreased but not by how much. As a result, retrospective surveys usually ask respondents to note whether income decreased rather than by how much.

2. Gift giving refers to the traditional Melanesian practice of gift exchange or *Kula*. Kula is an opportunity for households to display their wealth, while simultaneously honoring the recipient who could often enjoy a more prominent social status in the community (Mauss 1990; Carrier 1992).

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# ON BEING MODERN PEOPLE: ABANDONMENT OF PIG HUSBANDRY IN HAIVARO, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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The abandonment of pig husbandry by several communities in Papua New Guinea has been explained in terms of hygiene, Christianity, and economics or combinations of all three. At Haivaro—a small village in the lowlands of northwestern Gulf Province—these three factors were reinforced by an emerging desire to act, and be seen, as "modern." A progressive decrease in social occasions that entailed the exchange of pigs or the sharing of pork, combined with increased availability of new modern items, led Haivaro people to revalue their world in monetary terms. In this process, they developed a sense that some of their past practices were antithetical to their desire to be modern. In this context, and for this reason, they chose to abandon pig husbandry.

Fasu-speaking people at Haivaro, in Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea, abandoned pig-husbandry in the 1990s. In 2013–14, they said, "We no longer raise pigs because they were damaging our airstrip." For several reasons, this rationale was unsatisfactory. First, the airstrip was built in 1984, about ten years before people chose to cease caring for domestic pigs. Second, different management practices—keeping pigs in fenced enclosures or under care at distant forest houses (Dwyer 1996)—could have easily solved the asserted problem.

Domestic pigs have high social value in many Papua New Guinea societies, featuring in transactions such as marriages, funerals, ceremonial exchanges, compensation payments, and so forth (Brown 1978; Lemonnier 1991, 1993; Strathern 1971). They have been the subject of many detailed studies (for review

*Pacific Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3—Dec. 2017

and bibliography, see Hide 2003), including some that report places where pig husbandry has been abandoned. These latter studies direct attention to a variety of factors thought to be causally implicated in a reduction, or cessation, of pig husbandry. These factors include dietary prohibitions associated with the Seventh Day Adventist Church, considerations of hygiene invoked by government, local shifts in subsistence patterns, and a reduced emphasis on ceremonial exchanges (Boyd 2001; Brookfield and Hart 1971, 123; Brutti and Boissière 2002, 155; Hide 2003: 27–29; O'Hanlon 1989, 71).

In this paper I examine the Haivaro case and argue that a complex of related factors was implicated in the abandonment of pig husbandry. These were a progressive decrease in the social value of domestic pigs, a coincident increase in the value attributed to newly introduced items, and, significantly, a perception that pig husbandry was associated with a former lifestyle that, in "modern" circumstances, is disparaged. In what follows, I first consider the way in which, in 2013–14, people at Haivaro apprehended "modernity." Then I summarize my understanding of the value accorded to domestic pigs in the past, discuss the ways in which the social value previously attached to pigs has been reduced and replaced, and, finally, show how these changes are reinforced and sustained by current desires and practices with respect to "being modern."[1]

## Haivaro "Modernity"

In 2013–14, the village of Haivaro in northwestern Gulf Province, at 60 m ASL, was home to about 230 people (Fig. 1). These people were members of six southern Fasu-speaking clans, which had been formerly dispersed as longhouse communities but, since the 1950s, in response to government and missionaries, drew together first as clan-based hamlets and later, in the mid 1980s, at a single site—Haivaro (Minnegal, Lefort, and Dwyer 2015). Gilberthorpe (2014, 82) described Fasu-speaking people as comprising "approximately 1,100 people living in the rainforest fringe and sago swamp valleys south and south-east of Lake Kutubu." Haivaro is at the southern limit of this territory, and the people living there occupy a lowland rain-forest environment that contrasts with the mountainous terrain in the vicinity of Lake Kutubu. The people were, and remain, hunter–horticulturalists subsisting on sago, sweet potato, and bananas from small gardens and on the products of hunting and fishing activities. Social organization among southern Fasu is primarily based on patrilineal descent. Sociality entailed competitive exchanges, payments of war compensation and transfers of women against bride wealth (Gilberthorpe 2004). Residence pattern was, and remains, virilocal, wives becoming identified with the clan of their husbands.

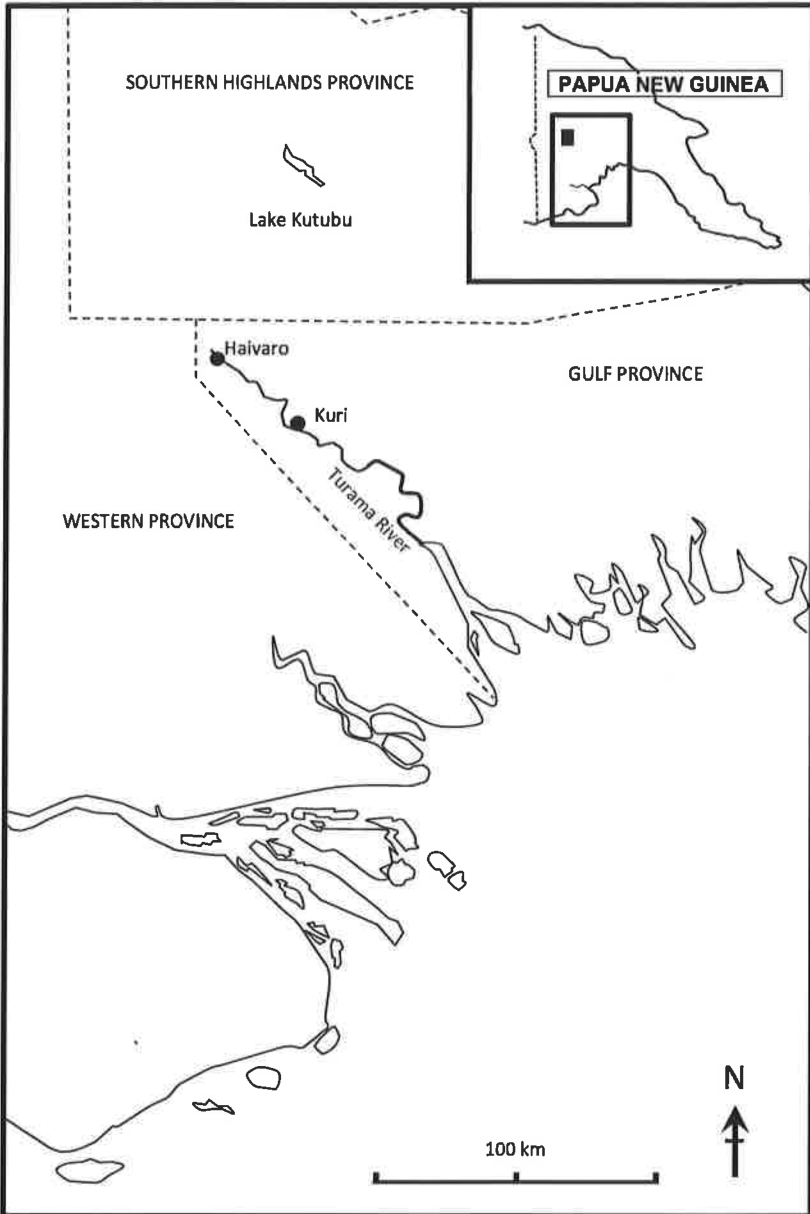


FIGURE 1. **Map of the Area Showing Location of Haivaro and Kuri.**

The amalgamation of longhouse communities at Haivaro culminated in the mid-1980s when missionaries of the Evangelical Church of Papua New Guinea (ECPNG) established an airstrip there. The presence of the airstrip increased local access to exogenous goods such as steel axes, machetes, knives, matches, soap, and salt. Older residents at Haivaro often talk of the ways in which these goods made life easier by rendering the execution of many tasks faster. Their conversations seem to reflect a dichotomy between "primitive" and modern states that had been implicit in the discourse of patrol officers and missionaries.

Missionaries left the area in the late 1980s; although since that time, people have remained aligned with either ECPNG or Seventh Day Adventist missions. The airstrip at Haivaro was initially abandoned, but in about 1990, Turama Forest industries (TFI) established a base-camp at Kuri, 35 km to the south-east.[2] Kuri is located on the alluvial plain of the Turama River, and both the airstrip and associated village were regularly flooded during the wet season. At these times, it was impossible to land cargo planes, and the logging company started to use the airstrip at Haivaro for transporting people, equipment, and merchandise. Relations between Haivaro and Kuri intensified with people from the former community sending their children to the company-sponsored school at Kuri and sick people attending the company's health clinic. They traveled in company vehicles along roads that had been freshly cut through the forest.

To the people at Haivaro, these innovations were an extension of the few modern items with which they were already familiar and reinforced a notion that modernity—with its associated goods and services—was something that was brought from overseas by "white" people (missionaries, government officials, and company workers) and made life easier. However, they felt that, with respect to these desired things, they were disadvantaged relative to their neighbors at Kuri. To offset this disadvantage, they employed witchcraft in an effort to attract their own company. The form of witchcraft was that which was usually used to attract sexual partners; they were, quite literally, seeking to seduce a logging company. And they seemed to be successful, because the company based at Kuri opened a new camp close to Haivaro and started to exploit local forest resources in the early 1990s. The amenities that had previously been found only at Kuri were now established at Haivaro—a school, a trade store, a health clinic, and a few more roads that linked Haivaro to other villages in the area. In addition, between 1990 and 2010, via an Annual Benefits Fund,[3] the company sponsored a "community house" that was soon equipped with a radio that connected Haivaro with Mission Aviation Fellowship, as well as tuition and transportation fees for young people to be sent to mission's school in Port-Moresby. In 2013–14, two new churches, funded from the same source, were

being built. And, finally, because the company was now taking timber from the land of Haivaro residents, the people living there received royalties of about one or two million kina each year.[4] These changes, and their associated material and financial benefits, reinforced local understandings that they were now modern people, more so indeed than their western Kasua neighbors against whom they compared themselves.

With their newly acquired money, Haivaro people started to travel to towns and cities throughout Papua New Guinea (Mendi, Mount Hagen, Goroka, Lae, Port-Moresby) and, in a few cases, overseas (Malaysia and Australia). These experiences led to a new understanding of what it was to be modern such that they classed places that they visited and people they met—including Haivaro and themselves—as being more or less modern. They judged themselves to be sufficiently modern to be worthy of prestige at the local level but considered that, through travel, they were able to extend their social network to places and people who were more modern.

For almost two decades, their financial security ensured the stability of these understandings. But in 2010, local forest resources were depleted, royalty payments decreased, and access to more modern people and places became more and more sporadic. To the people at Haivaro, it seemed that they were now condemned to spend most of their time at the village and that, locally, their former high status had crumbled. Where once they understood themselves to have achieved a "sufficient level of modernity" and, through travel, to be enhancing this, their local situation now seemed to reveal their failure to achieve the level that they desired. They felt this strongly. They wanted to draw "outside modernity" to the village and, once again, grow as they had been growing before. In an attempt to achieve this end, they turned their attention to the roads that connected Haivaro to the rest of the world. And, within the set of possible roads, the airstrip was central.

Modernity is understood in different ways by different people in different places (Leach and Englund 2000; Knauft 2002; Thomassen 2012). It is always given a local flavor. At Haivaro, people first conceived of modernity as a homogeneous entity that was brought from outside. Progressively, they came to understand themselves as being situated on an imagined scale of possibilities and desired to enhance their own position on that scale. Through time, this construction turned against them, and they found themselves in a state of perpetual waiting for the elusive possibility of more and more modernity. In what follows, I shall argue that the abandonment of pig husbandry was one action that they took in an attempt to both demonstrate to themselves that they were modern and to enhance opportunities for the modern to arrive. First, however, I shall consider the place of pigs in the life of Haivaro people in the decades prior to cessation of pig husbandry.

## Value of Domestic Pigs in the Past

There is no published information on past pig keeping practices among southern Fasu clans. Comparative data from neighboring language groups—Kasua, Kaluli, Onabasulu, Foi, and Kewa—suggest that the ratio of pigs to people was low relative to ratios found among Highlanders to the north (0.4 to 0.67 pigs per person in the lowland and midaltitude societies versus 1.08 to 2.17 pigs per person among Huli groups; Hide 2003: 39–47; see also Gilberthorpe 2004, 35). As reported by Gilberthorpe (2004, 48) for northern Fasu clans, and confirmed by me, all domestic male pigs were castrated as piglets, and domestic sows mated with wild boars. This is the pig breeding system that Dwyer (1996: 487–88) labeled "female breeding."

Domestic pigs were co-owned by a husband and his wife, but women had greater responsibility for care than did men and were often accompanied by young pigs when they worked at gardens or sago processing sites. This encouraged development of a relatively close bond between a carer and her pigs (Dwyer and Minnegal 2005). In addition, owners had specific ways in which they cut the ears and tail of pigs to mark them as their own and, as elsewhere in Papua New Guinea, gave their pigs personal names (Jorgensen 1990, 17). Pigs, like dogs and people, were considered to have an immaterial double—the *ho*—which is for Haivaro people the site of agency and the capacity to create, develop, and maintain social relations. When a domestic pig was killed it was not uncommon that the female carer would weep. Thus, the association between people—owners and carers—and domestic pigs was relatively intimate, and the animals probably qualified as "quasi-people" rather than "quasi-things" (Jorgensen 1990, 20).

These factors, together with the work invested in rearing pigs, contributed to the social value accorded to pigs among the people of southern Fasu clans (Dwyer and Minnegal 2005). In 2013–14 at Haivaro, people insisted that rearing pigs had entailed hard physical activity, emphasizing, in particular, the time devoted to harvesting garden products to feed the animals. Given that the number of pigs reared was relatively small it is likely that people overstated the case, but nevertheless, their statements reflect former physical, economic, emotional, and temporal engagement which, at that time, was presumably compensated by the value attributed to domestic pigs in circumstances of sharing and exchange.

The accounts of elders at Haivaro indicated that large-scale pig kills and ceremonial exchanges such as those seen in Highland New Guinea were not a feature of earlier southern Fasu practice. There were, however, other occasions at which pigs were killed and pork was shared. For example, completion of a new longhouse was celebrated by sharing pork with people from neighboring communities. Live pigs, together with pearl shells and shell belts, were an important part of bride price, and at weddings, pork was shared with kin and affines

to sanctify or reinforce interclan relations. In cases where the union of a man and woman failed to conform to the preferred pattern of marriage to mother's brother's daughter, pork was offered in compensation to the groom's mother's brother. A man gave pork to his wife's kin—the amount increasing with the number of children born to the couple—in acknowledgment that the animating principle *himu* that gives life and strength to a child derived, in part, from the lineage of the mother's father.

Meat from domestic pigs was also shared at a ceremony held on the sixteenth day after the body of a deceased person had been placed on the funeral platform. By this time, it was expected that distant relatives of the deceased person would have arrived, and wild meat, which had been consumed to this point, was replaced by meat from domestic animals. Finally, domestic pigs were killed in cases of adultery and of deaths attributed to sorcery. In the first case, the blood of the pig was used as an ointment to remove the shame on people's skin. In the second case, a lock of hair from the deceased person was introduced into the heart of a pig while pronouncing the name of a suspect. The named suspect was considered guilty if, after the animal had been cooked, the heart remained raw. Pig fat was also considered to be ultra nutritive and was used as an ointment to strengthen and embellish the body during initiations and traditional ceremonies.

It is clear from the foregoing examples that domestic pigs once had high social value and that, in part, this derived from an understanding that their substances and organs held the power to reestablish social order and contribute to the reproduction of society. Thus, the complete abandonment of pig husbandry appears to be a high price to pay simply because they damaged the airstrip and when, in fact, alternative ways of keeping pigs were available. It seems, therefore, that the subtle equilibrium, carefully maintained through time, between the multidimensional engagement entailed in raising pigs, their social value, and their potential uses, has been progressively challenged by both a gradual decline of that value and an attribution of value to new items. These matters are taken up in the next two sections of this article.

## Declining Value of Pigs

Through the past two decades, several factors have contributed to a decrease in the value attributed to domestic pigs. In combination, these factors weakened the formerly close relationship between people and pigs.

Christian influence has certainly contributed. The Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) mission was established in the area in the 1970s; the ECPNG followed in the early 1980s. SDA prohibited the consumption of pork, and both missions encouraged a stricter separation of humans and animals as a way to enhance

hygiene. In places where the cessation of pig husbandry has been attributed to the influence of SDA, virtually the entire community has aligned with that mission (e.g., Iyagumo 2001, 295), but at Haivaro, less than half the population is affiliated with SDA, and further, although SDA arrived in the 1970s pig husbandry did not cease until the mid-1990s. Thus, at Haivaro, the cessation of pig husbandry cannot be attributed to SDA influences although these influences may well have contributed to weakening the value accorded to pigs not merely for SDA affiliates but for others who could no longer use pigs to satisfy necessary exchanges with SDA members. Of more importance, however, has been both a progressive reduction in the kinds of situations in which meat from domestic pigs was exchanged and alterations to ways in which those situations are managed. Thus, changes have emerged with respect to celebrating the construction of new houses and with respect to marriages and accusations of adultery and sorcery.

When people first assembled at Haivaro, they altered living arrangements from longhouses with gender-separated sections to a male-exclusive longhouse that was encircled by small female cooking houses. This model was maintained until the early 1990s but gave way gradually to separate family houses with gender-segregated rooms. There is no longer a communal longhouse at Haivaro, and no communal ritual at which pigs are killed marks the completion of new family houses.

One consequence of recent changes among southern Fasu clans is an increase in premarital sexual unions. These often lead to de facto associations that stand in place of marriages and which, therefore, are not celebrated in the way marriages were celebrated in the past. And, again, it is now seldom the case that pork is exchanged in circumstances of adultery, magic, or sorcery. Indeed, conversion to Christianity has led to an attenuation of—or at least a challenge to—belief in the efficacy of sorcery. Although people at Haivaro continue to acknowledge the power of forest spirits, and sometimes say that they know how to make potions that will render people sick, they assert, variously, that their "eyes have been closed by the Talk of God" or that "the powers of the good spirits no longer work" as revenge because they "now believe in God rather than in those spirits." Now, therefore, adultery is compensated with money, and pigs are no longer implicated in the divination of sorcery. In the first case, at least, not all elders are satisfied by the change, arguing that an exchange of money is too easy and does not really resolve the problem.

The various factors described above reflect progressive spatial, emotional, and symbolic detachment from domestic pigs among people living at Haivaro together with a decrease in situations that, previously, were marked or resolved by exchanging, or sharing meat from, domestic pigs. In combination it might be expected that, as has been the case elsewhere in Melanesia (Hide 2003, 27), they

would be correlated with a reduction in the effort devoted to rearing pigs and to the size of the local domestic pig population. Taken alone, however, they do not predict complete abandonment of pig husbandry. Something else was needed. Haivaro people needed to find substitutes for pigs, they needed to transfer the value once associated with pigs to different items before it became possible to give up pigs yet maintain the social cohesion that pigs had once facilitated.

## Revaluing the World

A reduction in the need for pigs, and a progressive detachment from pigs, occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s, shortly before Haivaro people hosted a logging company on their land. This period was marked as well by the progressive discovery of what could be brought by modernity. Subsequent access to money and manufactured goods facilitated by the logging company heightened expectations. As was common through much of Papua New Guinea, purchased foods were increasingly used as items to be shared and exchanged (Brookfield and Hart 1971, 121), and in parallel, the need for domestic pigs was further diminished.

Haivaro people talked of money as providing the means for acquiring lots of things—things that could be distributed to gain prestige—and as making travel and, hence, extending social networks possible. They also stressed the fact that, in their circumstances, where most money was received as royalties, access to money did not entail large inputs of physical work. They drew a contrast between earlier times when social obligations required much prior work invested, particularly, in rearing pigs with present circumstances in which the social obligations were achieved without the commitment of physical labor. They consider that access to more money depended on rhetorical skills that were different from those employed in managing internal affairs. Managing negotiations with the logging company's bosses required that a person understood different forms of both business and sociality. These skills could be acquired only outside the village, in contact with modern people. Thus, money was socially valued because, at least in part, access to it depended on a person's ability to extend his or her social network to include outsiders. To have money revealed that a person participated in a modern social network. At the present time, at Haivaro, money has replaced pigs in a number of social transactions either directly as a substitute for live pigs or indirectly where purchased foods replace pork.

In 2013–14, two types of occasions were marked by large communal meals at Haivaro. The first was children's birthdays that were celebrated several years after the child's birth. This celebration appears to be a renewed version of the customary reciprocity that occurred between a husband and his wife's kin in

recognition of the himu transmitted by the maternal uncle's lineage. The second was the regular visit of two representatives of the Papua New Guinea Forest Authority (PNGFA). These men were delegated by the PNGFA to act as mediators between the logging company and the landowners with regard to logging operations and the rights and duties of both parties. They brought the royalty payments from Port-Moresby to Haivaro people and were welcomed to the village every four months. Their arrival was always celebrated with a communal meal, as a way of sanctifying the relationships between Haivaro landowners and these modernity providers. On these occasions, both purchased food and bush food were cooked and shared to guests. But the different food types provided at the feasts were differentially valued.

Sago and edible bush greens were the least valued food stuffs despite the fact that they appear to function as a marker of identity for people and a feast without them would be unimaginable. Garden products and fish and small game caught in the previous twenty-four hours were more highly valued. Availability of these foods reflects the work and skill of the provider. They are available less often that sage and bush greens, and their relative scarcity contributes to their relative value. Very occasionally, meat from a cassowary that had been reared in captivity was included in these feasts. People spoke of the size of the animal and, on this basis, accorded it high value. The most valued item, however, was food that had been purchased at the company store: rice, tinned fish, corned beef, noodles, scones, and chicken wings in shrink-wrapped tray. Of these items, chicken wings were most highly valued, apparently because of their high cost (thirty kina for a tray that contained four chicken wings). Here, therefore, it is the social value accorded to money that functions as a symbolic measure of the value of the exchange. If the exchange of pork was formerly valued, at least in part, in relation to the work and time entailed in pig raising, money is valued because of its association with modernity. Thus, Haivaro people discuss interclan differences in money incomes in terms of the amount of land owned, differences in rhetorical skills employed in negotiations with the logging company,[5] the capacity to take care of and manage land properly, together with the ability to develop connections with highly educated people or those involved in lucrative businesses, who they judge to be modern. The social value formerly accorded to pigs on the basis of relationships developed with them, and the physical work entailed in raising them, is now refocused on money on the basis of its relationship with modernity and the connections it sanctifies with an extended outside world.

At children's birthdays and at feasts held when delegates of PNGFA visit Haivaro, pork has been indirectly replaced by money—through the exchange of purchased foods—but in payments of bride price, live pigs have been directly replaced by money. Where, previously, bride price comprised pearl shells, shell

belts, and live pigs, there has been a gradual shift toward monetary payments and, more recently, a strong inflationary trend. Initially, a few hundred kina was added to the customary payment. By 1990, this amount had increased to about 5,000 kina. In 2000, one man requested 20,000 kina as bride price for his daughter, and thereafter, everyone sought much higher payments than before.[6] In addition, because domestic pigs are no longer available, additional money is paid in lieu of pigs, with the bride's clan requesting a particular number of pigs and each of them then taken to be equivalent to about 1,000 kina.

The substitution of money for pigs also suggests a parallel between the ways in which both are considered to be produced. Although pigs were raised by women, they were eventually regarded as owned and exchanged by men, and for this reason men were considered to be their *wafaya*, their father. This term invokes a relationship of protection and management and applies in a variety of circumstances (*saro wafaya*, the father of a pig; *hauaka wafaya*, the father of a ground; *ira wafaya*, the father of a tree; *hokosa wafaya*, the father of a child…). Thus, the social value attributed to pigs also derived from this specific relationship between pigs and men. And to some extent, the social value of money derives from the same kind of relationship. As the hauaka wafaya, a man has the duty to take care of his land and to manage it as a good father. From this perspective, therefore, money derived from logging royalties is a return for the care a man has taken in caring for and managing his land. As one elder explained, although some men had sold their land as a single package and, therefore, jeopardized future income he had acted as a good father should by preserving some parts, authorizing exploitation at a rate that allowed for regeneration and guaranteeing a lower, although more sustainable, income stream. One of the criteria formerly prevailing in the attribution of social value to pigs—namely the relationship subsumed under the term wafaya—thus still remains relevant in attributing social value to money.

There were some contexts, however, in which the revaluation of the world in monetary terms posed complications. In 2013, a senior and well regarded Haivaro man died, and it was expected that he should be accorded a proper funeral. Prior to mission influences, funerals required that food, particularly meat from domestic pigs, was shared to reaffirm relationships that may have been diminished by the death. Although sago, edible bush greens, and garden products were available for this funeral, it was important to include foods that were more highly valued. The logging company was asked to open the trade store so that food could be purchased, but the company was unable to comply. In an attempt to resolve the problem, men organized a last-minute hunt of flying foxes at a nearby cave. The hunt was successful in returning many animals, but when these were shared with guests, those who hosted the feast publically apologized for what they were offering. They were ashamed, and the response

of their guests confirmed that the offer of bush meat was not regarded as appropriate to the occasion. If the community had been able to access the trade store and exchange money for store foods—particularly chicken wings—they would not have suffered this embarrassment.

There are also some situations in which money does not function as an appropriate substitute for pigs. Cases of adultery, for instance, provide a glimpse of dissatisfaction with the use of money, rather than pigs, in their management. In earlier practice, blood from a pig was used as an ointment to remove shame from the skin of the clans involved, and pork was offered to the offended clan as compensation. Now, as an elder explained, the adulterous man—in all cases, the man is considered to be responsible for the trouble—pays 1,000 kina, but nothing is done to erase the shame on the skin. Yet, regulation of emotions is crucial to Fasu sociality, and equilibrium has to be constantly maintained to prevent sorcery attacks from evil and powerful spirits called *Wafe*. These spirits always intervene when negative emotions have been triggered by a breach in the social rules of reciprocity. They make children of close kin of the culprit sick, until a proper compensation is provided. In cases of adultery, different parts of pigs were used, namely meat as compensation and fat and blood to relieve negative emotions. For Haivaro people, despite its high social value, money is not divisible into different parts, with distinct properties and, therefore, in this case cannot function as a proper substitute for pigs. It may be that future adjustments will be called for, perhaps even, as Shoffner (1976, 157) has reported, a reappearance of pig husbandry.

Among people living at Haivaro, much of the former value attributed to pigs had been reattributed to money or the things that money can buy. Although, in some circumstances, there remain unresolved issues, it appears that, in many contexts, money has proven effective in satisfying many social needs and goals. Coupled with the declining value of pigs initiated a decade or so ago, access to money and the uses to which it has been put have undeniably contributed to the cessation of pig husbandry at Haivaro. Why, however, do the people say that they abandoned pig husbandry because their pigs had been damaging the airstrip?

## On Being Modern People

Haivaro people's specific apprehension of modernity has led them to accord high value to the routes that connect them to a wider world. Preeminent among these routes is the airstrip. Roads—both traditional trails cut through the bush and the vehicular roads built by company—in the past, were identified as the paths along which people brought pigs to their village. In this way, therefore, these roads contributed to intra- and interclan cohesion. The airstrip, however,

is the path along which people have been able to bring money to the village and to extend social networks to more distant and, often, more modern places. The airstrip is literally the path followed by representatives of the PNGFA who deliver royalty payments to the people. In these ways, the airstrip represents the means whereby Haivaro people have had the opportunity to increase their own level of modernity.

But to these people, being modern has entailed progressive rejection of some elements from their past that they understood—and assumed that outsiders understood—as representing a premodern state, a state that they describe as "bush kanaka."[7] Unlike other Papua New Guinea communities, which have successfully enhanced fragmented aspects of their past in entering modern life (Ernst 1999; Strathern and Stewart 2004), Haivaro people construct modernity in opposition to their past, convincing themselves that the past must be erased to reach the desired state. This rejection of the past has been accompanied by emergence of a discourse that denigrates those past premodern states. Indeed, the former way of life, deemed to reappear at times when money is not available, is disparaged by expressions that represent it as boring, predictable, insipid, or uninteresting. Long-term residence in forest houses, common in the past—notably to allow domesticated pigs to forage—has become rare, almost nonexistent, and people say that that kind of life is too hard or that that time is over. As some say, particularly to outsiders: "Our living standards have been improved, they become more similar to White's living standards, so living in the bush has become too hard for us." The assertion that pig husbandry was abandoned because pigs were damaging the airstrip could be taken literally. In the frame of the argument I have presented, it is better interpreted as a rationale or metaphor that betrays the feeling of Haivaro people that their past is an obstacle to the kind of modernity that they fantasize about and desire.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My research was supported by an Australian Research Council grant (DP 120102162) awarded to Monica Minnegal, Peter Dwyer, and Florence Brunois. I would like to acknowledge Haivaro people for their hospitality, patience, and efforts in supporting and enhancing my research. I am also grateful to Bryonnie Goodwyn Hawkins for organizing the workshop, without which this article would not have been possible, as well as all the participants. My thanks also go to Peter Dwyer and Monica Minnegal for their careful proofreading and enlightening comments on previous versions of this article. Finally, I would like to thank Maurice Godelier and Alexandre Surralles for their advice and encouragement.

## NOTES

1. This article is based on data collected during 15 months' fieldwork from July 2013 to September 2014.

2. Haivaro people reported that logging in the area was started by Turama Forest Industries (TFI), which was followed, first, by New Guinea Industry Corporation (NIC) and, subsequently, by Rimbunan Hijau (RH).

3. The Annual Benefit Fund is an entitlement that was put in place when landowners signed a project agreement with the TFI logging company.

4. In 2013–14, one Papua New Guinea kina was equivalent to approximately 0.5 Australian cents, 0.31 euros.

5. An excessive disparity in monetary income when coupled with a failure in reciprocity is, however, explained in terms of sorcery.

6. In this case, the groom's clan was in receipt of substantial royalty payments, and the groom himself was enrolled in pilot training and was judged to have a bright future. It seemed that the bride's clan tried to take advantage of the situation and that some people thought they were greedy. But to openly suggest that someone had been greedy could expose a person to sorcery attack. It is probably for this reason that people were unwilling to give a detailed explanation of the reason for the first request for such a high bride price payment.

7. Bus kanaka in Neo-Melanesian Pidgin connotes primitive, from the bush.

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# BEING ROTUMAN ON THE INTERNET

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> *Cultural identity . . . is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being." It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation.*
>
> —Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"

This paper is the latest in a long-term exploration of Rotuman cultural identity in which I have been engaged (see Howard and Howard 1977; Howard and Rensel 2001, 2004). Those papers dealt with the origins of Rotuman cultural identity in Fiji and expressions of cultural identity in several diasporic communities, ranging from enclaves in Fiji's urban areas to Rotuman communities in Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaiʻi.

Inspired by theorists such as Stuart Hall (1990) and Anthony Giddens (1991), who regard identity as fluid, multiple, and context driven, the argument I make in this paper is that the contexts in which people communicate with one another provide both opportunities and constraints on the degree to which cultural identity is expressed and the forms that it takes. In the papers cited above, my coauthors and I showed how expressions of cultural identity were affected by historical, geographical, and communication variables that characterized those physically grounded communities. In this paper I examine Rotuman expressions of cultural identity in cyberspace, including the Rotuma

*Pacific Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3—Dec. 2017

Website, which I created in 1996, and subsequently on Facebook. My focus is on the specific ways in which persons of Rotuman ancestry (whether through both parents or only one) choose to communicate their Rotuman roots to other Rotumans, to knowledgeable friends, to country-mates, and/or to the world at large in electronic media.

## Ethnicity and Cultural Identity on the Internet

Studies of diasporic ethnic group participation on the Internet have gained momentum over the past few years. Anthologies such as *Native on the Net: Indigenous and Diasporic Peoples in the Virtual Age* (Landzelius 2006) and *Diasporas in the New Media Age: Identity, Politics and Community* (Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010) offer important insights into the use of various electronic media by specific migrant groups. Examples based specifically on Facebook data include studies of Basques (Oiarzabal 2012); Kurds (Eliassi 2015; Jacob 2013; Jaf 2011); Uyghur Chinese (Nur-Muhammad et al. 2013); and Chinese professionals (Mao and Qian 2015). (For a general review of social media and migration research, see McGregor and Siegel 2013.)

The development of the Internet and, subsequently, social media beginning in the mid-1990s was a godsend to diasporic Rotumans around the world, leading to the formation of a now-global community in which friends and relatives can keep in constant contact, while enabling expressions of Rotuman identity in a variety of ways, which is the main focus of this paper.

The emergence of email provided the initial vehicle for emigrants with computer access to stay in touch, although at the beginning finding one another on the Internet was not so easy. Not long after getting wired for email ourselves, my wife Jan Rensel and I began to share news with Rotumans, and spouses of Rotumans, who were online. In 1995, we started ROTUMANET, a list of interested parties with whom we shared news from any Rotuman community that provided it. People sent us news via email, fax, or regular mail, and we relayed it to everyone on the list, which came to number more than sixty email addresses.

In November 1996, I took the next step—to construct a website that would provide a place in cyberspace where emigrant Rotumans could not only keep up on the news from Rotuman communities around the globe but could also find and communicate with one another. To facilitate this, I introduced a news page, bulletin board, and registry in which individuals could fill out a registration form indicating who they are and how they can be contacted. This allowed individuals to locate relatives, friends, and associates by using the search function.

The Rotuma Website (www.rotuma.net) has grown over the years and now includes over 15,000 files covering a wide array of topics. In addition to a news page and bulletin board, there are pages covering various aspects of Rotuman

history, archaeology, language, population, culture, economy, religion, land tenure, political organization, and food preparation; the accomplishments of Rotuman artists and athletes; and the biographies of notable personalities. Also included is an archive of publications and theses concerning Rotuma dating back to the early nineteenth century, a section featuring historical and contemporary photographs, and separate sections concerning Rotuma High School and the activities of a group of Rotuman scientists (LäjeRotuma Initiative) who are engaged in research and environmental education on the island. Of particular interest for the focus in this paper is the Rotuman Forum (a section of the website where people can express their views regarding topics of concern to the Rotuman people[1]) and sections on Rotuman humor and poetry.

Before discussing the specific ways in which Rotuman cultural identity has been affected by the venues made available by the Internet, including the Rotuma Website, and subsequently social media (especially Facebook), it is important to provide some details of the ways in which Rotumans express their Rotumanness.

In contrast to concepts of cultural identity that rely on notions of common origin or shared characteristics with others, I choose to look at identity construction from a discursive perspective (Hall 1996), specifically from the standpoint of expressions, in multiple formats, that signal affiliation with a particular group. Hall's insistence that "because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies" (1996, 4) provides additional rationale for my contextual approach to identity construction.

Among the multiple ways an individual can signal identification with a particular ethnic group, none is more central than the use of language (Cunliffe, Morris, and Prys 2013; DeAndrea, Shaw, and Levine 2010). However, visual media can also be a prominent means of communicating information regarding identity (Emmison, Smith, and Mayall 2000), as can references to specific cultural icons and practices.

The variety of ways in which Rotumans express their cultural identity include (1) the use of the Rotuman language, ranging from single words to complex sentences; (2) joking in a characteristically Rotuman way; (3) referring to particular places in Rotuma; (4) expressing appetites for typical Rotuman foods; (5) referring to and participating in Rotuman-centered events, such as Rotuman-style dancing and Rotuma Day celebrations; (6) singing songs in the Rotuman language or calling attention to them; (7) acknowledging connections to Rotuman kin and well-known Rotuman celebrities; (8) expressing admiration or nostalgia for Rotuma's beauty and/or culture; and (9) direct expressions of pride in being Rotuman.

### *Use of the Rotuman Language*

Use of the Rotuman language is the foremost way that an individual can signify Rotuman cultural identity.[2] Yet, for the children of migrants (especially those who are the offspring of mixed marriages), learning to speak, read, and write Rotuman can be a daunting task, especially if the language is not spoken at home. In large measure, this is because of the complexity of the language's phonetic and grammatical structures. Rotuman uses metathesis, the inversion of word-final vowels with immediately preceding consonants, which produces a vowel system with umlauts and other diacritics, shortened vowels, and diphthongs. The result is that a base system of five vowels is increased to ten. In addition, the different forms of words that result from metathesis have grammatical significance, further complicating the language (see Churchward 1940; Wikipedia 2016). A further impediment to learning the language outside the home environment is a lack of available resources, including opportunities to hear the language spoken in some localities, and the absence of a consistent orthography, with one based on French, one based on English, and a third that uses linguistic diacritics. As a result, informally written Rotuman is generally subject to the whims of sounding out words and phrases as one hears them.

In an online survey of people identifying themselves as Rotuman conducted in 2012 by Matt Bray (the son of a Rotuman woman married to a white Australian), participants were asked to assess their Rotuman language ability. Of individuals born in Rotuma, nearly all (97.3 percent, $n$ = 37) rated themselves as highly competent in the language, as one would expect; those born in Fiji were intermediate with 51.6 percent ($n$ = 93) rating themselves as highly competent, whereas those born elsewhere rated themselves at the lowest level of competence (60.7 percent, $n$ = 28).[3]

These data are relevant insofar as the overwhelming majority of respondents (97 percent, $n$ = 161), regardless of their Rotuman language ability, agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "Speaking the Rotuman language is an important part of being Rotuman." Thus, the use of the Rotuman language on the Internet, even in the form of isolated words, carries exceptional weight for the assertion of Rotuman identity (see Howard, Bray, and Rensel 2013).

### *Joking in a Characteristically Rotuman Way*

Rotumans love to joke. Any informal Rotuman gathering is regularly punctuated by gales of laughter as participants tease one another about little mistakes they have made, quirky personal characteristics, and just about anything out of the ordinary. Past incidents of a humorous nature may be repeated over and over again, eliciting laughter each time. To take offense at even what might be

considered an insult in other contexts is regarded as inappropriate and a threat to otherwise congenial relationships. The quintessential form of teasing among Rotumans is the custom of *te samuga*, in which people become known by reference to a humorous incident or characteristic associated with an ancestor. For example, the descendants of a man who, upon seeing a mirror for the first time, tried to shake hands with his image are known by the phrase "shake hands with the mirror." Others are known as "red pants," "white horse," "skinny legs," "buttons," and "biscuits" (English translations), among others. Thus, the ability to take a joke, as well as to dish it out, is at the heart of expressions of intimacy when Rotumans interact.

*References to Places in Rotuma*

Like most Pacific Islanders, Rotumans are connected with specific places on their home island, an association that includes rights and obligations and is laden with strong emotions. There is a hierarchy of inclusion, with people from the same district (there are seven) sharing a sense of kinship, people from the same village having a closer sense of relationship, and those whose ancestors occupied the same named house foundation *(fuag ri)* regarding one another as true kin. Places have connotations ranging from stereotypes of character—for example, people from Malhaha have the reputation of being "bush lawyers," supposedly for their propensity to argue and to make snap judgments; those from the district of Oinafa at the eastern end of the island are said to take themselves very seriously because it is a chiefly district and they are obsessed with protocol; and people from the westernmost district of Itu'muta are characterized as relatively relaxed and fun-loving—to personal associations with ancestors, rights to land, and a sense of shared history (see the Figure).

Thus, representations of places are loaded with meaning, and making appropriate references to them, whether in texts or images, suggests an intimate knowledge of the culture. In addition to locally based variations in meaning, certain scenes have an iconic value suggestive of the beauty of the island as a whole or representative of activities that hold a nostalgic value for migrants abroad. Reference to such scenes, generally in photographs or videos, can be used to signify a commitment to one's Rotuman identity in an inclusive manner.

*Expressing Appetites for Typical Rotuman Foods*

In an article published in the *Fiji Times* titled "Straight from the Cooking Bure,"[4] Geraldine Panapasa, a young Rotuman woman living in Suva, began with the following paragraph:

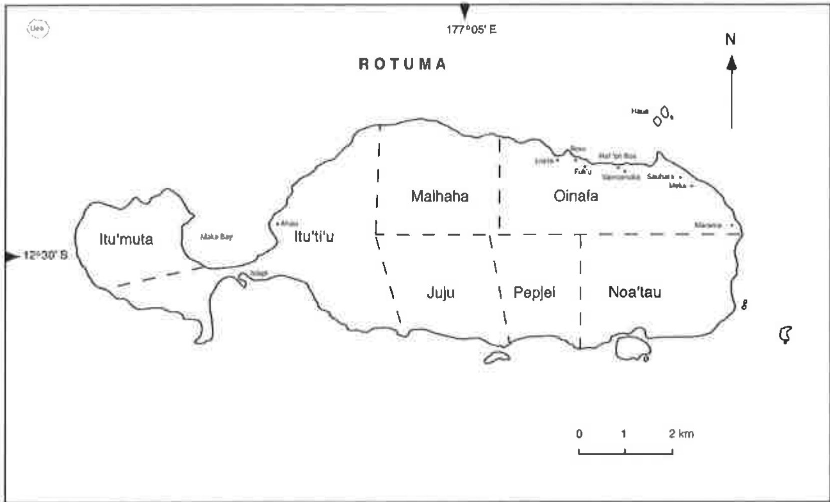


FIGURE. **Map of Rotuma.**

> When it comes to mouth-watering traditional dishes, the best place to go is . . . back to the island. Trust me, there's nothing more scrumptious and delicious than tasting an original recipe from the land of your forefathers. Last month [on Rotuma Day, May 13th], Rotuma was filled with all sorts of yummy foods made from recipes passed down over generations. (Panapasa 2012)[5]

Panapasa went on to describe particular beverages and dishes in near ecstatic terms, including the juice of green coconuts, *tahroro* (fermented coconut flesh used as a sauce with fish or chicken), *fekei* (a sweet pudding made from starch, usually from cassava, sugar and coconut milk), and *telulu* (a method of cooking fish over a hearth fire). In addition to these iconic items, she praised the preparation of pork (cooked in an earth oven), lobsters, seaweed, pan-fried fish, and even the chop suey and stir-fry. Panapasa concluded her article with the assertion that such foods have become "part and parcel of our unique Pacific identity and culture."

Food items such as those mentioned by Panapasa are especially significant for diasporic Rotumans who grew up on the island, although fekei in particular has come to be a favorite of Rotumans everywhere and symbolic of food that is quintessentially Rotuman.

### *Referring to and Participating in Rotuman-Centered Events*

There are several Rotuman-centered activities that transcend geographical boundaries. These include group dances *(tautoga)* and traveling dance parties *(fara)*, rituals associated with life events such as marriages and deaths, gatherings of Rotuman associations abroad, Rotuma Day celebrations, and participation in Rotuman church congregations (mainly Methodist and Catholic).

Of all the activities fostered by migrant organizations, none is more important to Rotuman cultural identity than dance. Rotuman tautoga (dance performances) as well as the practice sessions (*taumaka)* provide opportunities for Rotumans to interact with each other in characteristically Rotuman ways, with much joking and banter; the lyrics of songs accompanying dances characteristically objectify and idealize Rotuma and its culture; and dance engages people in performing publicly as representatives of Rotuman culture and thus encourages identification of performers as Rotumans.

The term *fara* in ordinary conversation translates as "to beg, request, ask for" (Inia et al. 1998, 195). In reference to dance, "going fara" alludes to the practice, especially during the Christmas holidays, of groups going from house to house to perform dances in the Rarotongan style.[6] The residents of each recipient household are expected to express their appreciation for being entertained by providing food and drink and by dousing the dancers with sweet-smelling powder and/or perfume (for a full account, see Scheifes 2005). Participating in other Rotuman-centered events, and, perhaps as important, talking and reporting about them, are also a means of asserting one's cultural identity as a Rotuman.

### *Singing Songs in the Rotuman Language or Calling Attention to Them*

A substantial repertoire of songs with Rotuman lyrics is widely known to people who spend time at Rotuman gatherings. Characteristically, some of the participants bring a guitar or ukulele, and those who know the lyrics join in the songfest that inevitably occurs. In addition, there are several groups of recording artists who have published albums of Rotuman songs, and their CDs are widely distributed among Rotumans around the world. Knowing these songs, and expressing appreciation of them, is another way of proclaiming one's Rotuman identity.

### *Acknowledging Connections to Rotuman Kinsmen and Well-Known Celebrities*

As in most other Pacific Island societies, relationships are all-important to Rotumans, and as part-Rotumans comprise a substantial proportion of those

living abroad, emphasizing one's links to Rotuman relatives is an important way of asserting one's Rotumanness. So, too, is overtly expressing pride in the accomplishments of Rotuman celebrities, whether they are in the arts, sports, politics, or the professions.

*Expressing Admiration or Nostalgia for Rotuma's Beauty and/or Culture*

It would not be an exaggeration to say that a definite mystique has developed concerning the natural beauty of Rotuma and the cultural values associated with the way of life there, such as working hard and being generous. For those who have grown up on the island and have moved away, expressions of nostalgia are prevalent; for persons born abroad who have Rotuman ancestors, visits to the island often trigger rapturous reports of their experiences. In many respects, imagery of the island, with all its physical and social characteristics, is at the heart of Rotuman identity. Referencing these qualities, therefore, whether in poetry, prose, photographs, videos, or by other means, is a strong statement about one's commitment to Rotumanness.

*Direct Expressions of Pride in Being Rotuman*

Expressing pride in one's Rotuman ancestry is the most direct way of affirming one's identity. For example, in a Facebook group by the name of "Rotuman Pride" with a membership of 1,446, one person posted the following poem:

> Roses are red,
> Rotuman's are brown,
> DASH WAT I AM,
> So put it down.
> My Rotuman pride, I will not hide.
> My Rotuman race, I will not disgrace.
> My Rotuman people will always stand by,
> Through thick & thin,
> Til' the day we die.
> Rotuman pride is my mind.
> Rotuman blood is my kind.
> My Rotuman blood Flows hot & true.
> So step aside and let me through,
> Cause its all about Us Rotumans
> Life sucks and then u die,
> But if you're Rotuman you die with pride.

## Expressions of Identity on the Rotuma Website

The Rotuma Website provides a venue in which people can present themselves as individuals who cherish their Rotuman identity. They have done so primarily by submitting items to the Rotuman Forum, jokes to the humor page, recipes for Rotuman dishes, poems to the literary section, and by reporting on Rotuman-centered events on the Bulletin Board.

The Rotuman Forum[7] currently includes discussions of fifty-six separate topics, including political issues, practical concerns associated with development, land issues, and aspects of Rotuman identity. Nostalgia figures quite prominently in a 2004 posting of an expatriate living in Australia at the time, under the title "Thoughts about Rotuma":

> As I reflect and reminisce about those vivid moments growing up in Rotuma, it reminds me of the good old days, of the kinship and life of peace and tranquility I have sorely missed.
>
> From a distance I see the holistic beauty of Rotuma:
> - an island in the sun, given to me by my father's hands
> - with its emerald green and lush rain forest, cupped in leafy hands
> - its white sandy beaches, soft as maidens hands
> - with its sky blue crystal waters, bound by reefy hands
> - abundant in fish, like an exotic dancer's twinkling hands
> - that calls to me by the most seductive sunset I have ever seen
> - from Ahau through Maka Bay to Uea.
>
> From a distance I feel the soothing effect of Rotuma:
> - that calls me all the days of my life
> - from Lagi te Maurea [north-east wind] with its cool and enchanting effect
> - to the tranquility that captivates my senses
> - with the security that I can sleep at night with my doors and windows open
> - with no worries of being robbed or mugged,
>
> From a distance I smell the fragrance of Rotuma:
> - the Tieri and Ragkari [sweet-smelling flowers] that graces the maidens heads
> - to the Sea and Kori [sweet-smelling fruits] that also anoints their heads
> - the fragrances that permeate, I have longed for in my head

> From a distance I hear the call of Rotuma:
> - carried to me by the wind of my imagination
> - with laughter of women and joy of children
> - free of worries
> - that begs me home
>
> With these in mind, I know for certain the meaning of Rotuma Hanua Aier 'Ontou [Rotuma, truly my homeland]. For wherever I go, I will always long for and miss Rotuma all the days of my life.
>
> It is there that I promise that I will one day return to retire and live for the rest of my life. To rekindle the kinship and repay Rotuma for what I owe it, and to be buried with the rest of my loved ones.[8]

This is one of many ways Rotumans abroad have paid homage to the island and their Rotuman heritage on the website.

The section on Rotuman humor[9] is filled with jokes chiding their compatriots who are less proficient in English than they are. For example:

> A Rotuman man went to a store to buy bullets for his gun. Since his English was not good, he thought very hard as to how he will relate to the salesman what he wanted to buy. He knew that the Rotuman word for bullet is *aita* (or *aiat*). However there is another Rotuman word which is very similar in spelling and pronunciation; *a'ita* (or *a'ite*) which is the Rotuman word for Saturday. So he said to the salesman "I want to buy a box of Saturday."

The section of the website on Rotuman recipes[10] provides opportunities both to share information regarding the preparation of traditional Rotuman dishes and to display one's cultural knowledge and hence Rotuman identity.

And in the literary section of the website,[11] almost all the poems in both Rotuman and English extol the virtues of the island's beauty and culture, as seen in this poem entitled "My Home Island":

> How brightly glistering in the morning sun
> Those white beaches with its glimmering sand
> As the dawn softly smiles
> And the cold breeze sighs
> On this beautiful isle
> With the sound of the waves
> Breaking on the rocks

As it thunders in my heart
While I am far away
Threatening to fade
As the years pass away
With coconut trees far and wide
And grooves of evergreen
Lining on the side
Of winding roads all around
Restore to me those memories
Of childhood years growing up on this isle
Though distant
I still remember you
Under God's blue sky
Oh give me back my home island
Where its beauty never fades.[12]

The website also provides a venue for announcing and calling attention to events of special interest to Rotuman communities like Rotuma Day celebrations or fund-raisers for Rotuman causes such as the island's hospital, schools, or scholarships. Indeed, virtually all contributions to the website by Rotumans or part-Rotumans constitute direct or indirect ways of expressing one's Rotumanness.

However, the role of the Rotuma Website in fostering Rotuman identity abroad goes well beyond the opportunity for individuals to express themselves as Rotumans in cyberspace. In an online survey of Rotumans who visited the website, Caroline Clark (whose master's thesis, completed in 2005, is titled "The Rotuma Website: Transnational Relations and the Articulation of Cultural Identity") reported:

> The response to the website, as articulated through the survey, is positive. Community members that access the website use it as a tool for learning about Rotuman culture and connecting to cultural identity. For some migrant Rotumans, the website is the only form of Pacific Island culture that they know. While the website itself is not a form of culture, it serves a dialogic purpose. There is a circular relationship between the website and the community in that each contributes to the other. As a result, the Rotuma Website reflects and recreates Rotuman culture and is thus both conservative and transformative. (Clark 2005, 36)

As one respondent to Clark's survey put it:

> The website helps us stay connected with our communities everywhere, and by that we are continually sharing and revisiting the unique experiences that each of us can identify with as being inherently Rotuman. We are able to maintain links with each other through this website, and so are able to feel that we are part of each other's experiences and celebrate and acknowledge that. (Clark 2005, 28)

Clark reported that 90 percent of her 151 respondents "believe that the website works to preserve Rotuman culture," and that 100 percent "believe that the website creates and maintains a sense of community among the global Rotuman diaspora" (Clark 2005, 27).

Yet the venue provided by the Rotuma Website is limited in terms of allowing people as individuals to express aspects of and pride in their cultural identity. In fact, although the website has been a popular site for news and bulletin board messages—getting an average of 300+ visitors a day at its peak—relatively few individuals have been regular contributors. But these limitations were rapidly overcome with the advent of social media.

## Cultural Identity in the Digital Diaspora

While still in its infancy, the literature concerning the role that social media play in perpetuating ethnic or cultural identity has been expanding rapidly. Research about Facebook usage is a growing specialization in social science, fueled by the worldwide involvement of a broad band of demographic groups around the globe.[13] Relatively easy access to this wealth of data has already stimulated studies of the online behavior of a wide variety of socially defined categories of Facebook users, including gender (García-Gómez 2013); homosexuals (Atay 2015); teenagers (Boyd 2014); race (Grasmuck, Martin, and Zhao 2009); nationalities (Miller and Slater 2000); and ethnic groups (Boupha et al. 2013). It is a subset of the literature regarding ethnic groups—focused on identity construction and maintenance among diasporic populations—that is most relevant to my concerns in this paper, given that the vast majority of Rotumans on Facebook live away from the home island.[14] The arena of Internet communication engaged in by immigrant groups has been labeled the "digital diaspora" (Brinkerhoff 2009; Laguerre 2010), recognizing that people now are able to actively maintain relationships across geographical boundaries on a daily basis, whereas in the past this was not possible.

A common theme in such studies is that, in diaspora, cultural identities are not static but are evolving and becoming more complicated. In the words of Stuart Hall:

> Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a "production", which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (Hall 1990, 222; see also Hereniko 1997[15])

One way of conceptualizing identity formation in diaspora is to refer to "hybrid" or "hybridized" identities (Smith and Leavy 2008; Marotta 2011) as a means of explaining and interpreting the experiences of individuals who live within two or more cultural milieu. I am somewhat less than satisfied with such a concept, perhaps because of its metaphorical roots in biology and its earlier application to racial interbreeding. I much prefer the concept "multicultural" when applied to the cultural identity of Rotumans in diaspora. The notion of multiculturalism and its application to identity has been well defined by Peter Adler:

> the multicultural individual is propelled from identity to identity through a process of both cultural learning and cultural un-learning. The multicultural person ... is always recreating his or her identity. He or she moves through one experience of self to another, incorporating here, discarding there, responding dynamically and situationally. The multicultural person is always in flux, the configuration of loyalties and identifications changing, the overall image of self perpetually being reformulated through experience and contact with the world (1998, 234).

While I'm not proposing that all Rotumans and part-Rotumans in diaspora fulfill all aspects of this definition, I would maintain that a great many do and that a fundamental (though not necessarily conscious) appreciation of the nature of cultural differences, along with a willingness to adapt to them when contexts permit, is widespread. Thus, almost all the Rotumans that I know in Fiji are multilingual, fluent in Rotuman, Fijian, and English, while many speak some Hindi as well, and they can comfortably interact with members of each ethnic group. This is not to say that they consciously identify themselves with these groups, but rather that the cultural knowledge they control becomes part of their sense of self. In the perspective of Joseph Straubhaar, their cultural selves are "layered," and those layers are constantly changing over time as individuals are exposed to new cultural experiences through personal interactions or by exposure to various kinds of media (Straubhaar 2008).

Studies of diasporic ethnic group participation on the Internet have gained momentum over the past few years. Anthologies such as *Native on the Net: Indigenous and Diasporic Peoples in the Virtual Age* (Landzelius 2006) and *Diasporas in the New Media Age: Identity, Politics and Community* (Alonso 2010) offer important insights into the use of various electronic media by specific migrant groups. Examples based specifically on Facebook data include studies of Basques (Oiarzabal 2012); Kurds (Eliassi 2015; Jacob 2013; Jaf 2011); Uyghur Chinese (Nur-Muhammad et al. 2013); and Chinese professionals (Mao and Qian 2015). (For a general review of social media and migration research, see McGregor and Siegel 2013.)

The methods used in Facebook studies vary considerably.[16] Some researchers have relied primarily on qualitative data, while others have attempted to code postings on Facebook. Qualitative studies usually rely on content analysis of postings or intensive interviews with selected Facebook users. The size of the samples can be quite small, as few as eight (Jacob 2013) or twelve (Jaf 2011; Mao and Qian 2015). In other instances, researchers have done content analysis of Facebook groups based on particular ethnic group interests (Nur-Muhammad et al. 2013).

Content analysis and interview material are of limited value for comparative studies; instead, such studies call for coding schemes that allow for quantitative analysis. An example is the study of African American, Latina/o, Indian, Vietnamese, and white students by Sherri Grasmuck, Jason Martin, and Shanyang Zhao (2009). Their research methodology included focus groups, interviews, and analysis of Facebook profiles based on a coding scheme "covering virtually all the major items that can be found in a Facebook account" (Grasmuck, Martin, and Zhao 2009, 167).

Because I consider my study of Rotuman Facebook users a comparative study, albeit within a single ethnic group, I have opted to create a coding scheme for Facebook postings that covers a wide range of characteristics, including responses to postings in the form of comments and "likes." My approach is comparative in the sense that I am examining different patterns of expressing Rotuman identity within different kinds of Facebook groups as well as in the postings of individual Rotumans. In addition to analyzing Facebook postings per se, I use data collected from an online survey I conducted in June 2016 that specifically focused on Facebook usage; the survey generated 186 responses from Rotuman Facebook users.

## Rotuman Facebook Groups

Soon after Facebook became available to the general public in 2006, Rotumans began signing on and, in the process, they formed groups devoted to various

purposes. In this section, I focus on the use Rotumans make of Facebook by identifying specifically Rotuman Facebook groups and examining postings, including comments attached to postings, for their patterns of discourse and the ways in which Rotuman cultural identity is expressed within them.

The underlying premise of this analysis is that Facebook groups develop cultural (in this case, subcultural) patterns that may differ from one another in significant ways. The rationales for a group, the number of members who belong to a group and who participate by posting items and/or commenting on them, the use of imagery, the language used (Rotuman and/or English, including text speak—shortened bits of English), degrees of interaction between members, and the use of humor, among other variables, all contribute to the distinctive patterning of a group's subculture.

A search of Facebook groups containing "Rotuma" or "Rotuman" in their names in August 2016 turned up over one hundred groups, with memberships varying from one to over 5,000.[17] Having identified these groups, the next step was to create a typology that would reflect their purposes and the ways in which the groups were used by participants. I arrived at a typology of six types, presented below, listing groups with fifty or more members as of May 24, 2016. Groups can be either public or closed. Public groups are open to anyone who accesses their webpage; postings are visible to anyone, and anyone can upload postings or comment on postings. Closed groups are limited to "members" such that postings only appear to members and only members can upload postings or comment on postings. One can request membership in a closed group but must be admitted by a current member.

1. Groups based on specific communities:
   Rotumans in the UK, Ireland, and Europe (Closed—298 members)
   Auckland Rotuman Fellowship Group (Official Page) (Public—233 members)
   Rotuman Youth of New Zealand (RYNZ) (Closed—110 members)
   RAV: Rotuman Association of Victoria (Closed—86 members)
   Wellington Rotuman Group - Public (Public—65 members)
   Navua Rotuman Farmers club (Public—56 members)

2. Groups based on locations in Rotuma:
   Motusa, Rotuma (Closed—503 members)
   Oinafa Rotuma (Closed—304 members)
   Lopta Rotuma (Closed—423 members)
   Paptea Village, Rotuma (Closed—208 members)
   Sauriri'is–Mara'e Lopta, Rotuma (Closed—117 members)
   Juju District Community (Public—69 members)

3. Church-centered Rotuman groups:
   Vailala Rotuman Catholics, Brisbane, Australia (Closed—240 members)
   Rotuman Church Hymns (Public—169 members)
   Suva Rotuman SDA Youths (Closed—90 members)

4. School-based groups:
   Rotuma High School Alumni (Public—740 members)
   Rotuma High School scholars on Facebook (Closed—398 members)
   Rotuma High School Friends (Closed—301 members)
   USP Rotuman Students Association (Closed—175 members)
   Ex-Rotuma High School (Closed—62 members)
   Rotuma High School (yr 2001–06) (Closed—58 members)
   FNU, Rotuman Tribe (Samabula Campus)[18] (Closed—58 members)

5. Sports-based groups:
   Rotuman Sports Council (FRSC) (Closed—507 members)
   Rotuma Hapmak Sports Club (Closed—285 members)

6. General Rotuman-centered groups:
   Rotumans on Facebook (Public—7,221 members)
   —>[ROTUMAN PRIDE!!]<— (Closed—1,446 members)
   MUST BE ROTUMAN (Public—1,314 members)
   Rotuma (Closed—782 members)
   ROTUMA (Public—767 members)
   Im Proud To Be Rotuman (Public—637 members)
   Rotumans Overseas (Closed—584 members)
   Rotuma Island Brothers (Public—387 members)
   Rotuman Community Worldwide (Public—266 members)
   Fapui, Rotuma (Closed—82 members)
   Rotuma Islanders (Closed—72 members)
   Rotuma United (Public—70 members
   The Rotuman Squad (Public—62 members)

The growth in membership of groups has been rapid. In the groups I have been monitoring (see upcoming text), the average increase from August 6, 2014 to May 24, 2016 has been 35.3 percent.

To compare and contrast the subcultures of these various groups, I developed a coding scheme for postings and comments to posts that included the following variables:

*Audience*

Individual Personal Posting (no specific audience)
- Activity (what individual is doing, has done, intends to do)
- Disposition: mood, attitude, identity

Postings addressed to members of the group
- Announcements regarding events, congratulations, requests, general information
- Expressions of gratitude, appreciation, condolences, apology
- Greetings related to holidays or extending welcoming
- Humor, Rotuman-centered or general

*Images*

Self: self alone, self with family, self with friend or friends
Others: family, friends, groups
Events: Rotuman gatherings, performances, sports
Places: Rotuma, elsewhere
Food: Rotuman food, general food items
Photos with audio: hymns, Rotuman songs, other
Videos and slideshows: dance performances, band performances, slideshow with Rotuman music, other

*Topics*

General: religious, political, cultural, music, advertisements
Health: physical health, mental health, food, and diet
Life Events: births, birthdays, graduations, marriages, deaths, and funerals
Rotuma: comments about Rotuma, expressions of Rotuman identity

*Interactional*

Requesting information about events, whereabouts of someone, services, other
Providing information about events, whereabouts of someone, services, other
Conversations: dialogue between two or more individuals in the comments
Humor: general (often signaled by LOL, hahaha, teehee, etc.), or Rotuman-centered

*Language (coded separately for postings and comments to posts)*

English
Rotuman
Mainly English with some Rotuman words or phrases
Mainly Rotuman with some English

*Number of Responses to Posts*
Likes
Comments
Seen by (a statistic that appears only on a select few sites)

## Selected Group Profiles

I began monitoring postings on Rotuman Facebook group sites in August 2014 and have periodically coded information on selected groups through July 2016. I am a member of all the groups profiled below, including closed groups to which I have been admitted. My procedure was to start with the latest posting on each site and to code fifty postings working backward. What I call the "monitoring period" refers to the interval between the earliest and latest postings in each set.[19] Thus, depending on the amount of activity on a site, monitoring periods vary from a few weeks or months to two or more years. I have selected one group from each of the six types listed above for profiling.

*Group Based on Specific Community*

The Auckland Rotuman Fellowship Group is a public group, which had 199 members at the time it was coded. It was created in February 2013 by the elected leader of the Rotuman community in Auckland, which, according to the 2013 New Zealand census, is home to 462 (59.0 percent) of the total number of individuals who identified themselves (or member of their family) as ethnically Rotuman. The Auckland group is one of three chapters of the New Zealand Rotuman Fellowship (NZRF), the other two being Wellington and Mairani (Waikato/Bay of Plenty). The posted rationale for the Auckland group reads as follows:

> Noa'ia e Mauri!! [formal Rotuman greeting]
> Welcome to the Official Facebook page for the Auckland Rotuman Fellowship.
> This page is an opportunity for the Executive to update all members and interested parties on upcoming events and for you to send in your feedback on events we host.
> Feel free to join and to send in any feedback and suggestions on events that we have hosted and that we can host for the Rotuman community here in Auckland.
> Hope to see you all at our next event!!
> Faiaksia [thanks].

*Auckland Rotuman Fellowship Executive*

The monitoring period for this group was from February 18 to November 1, 2014, during which seven individuals posted messages, with three members accounting for 80.4 percent of the items. The overwhelming number of postings (forty-three, 86.0 percent) concerned events of interest to the group, in most instances (thirty-nine, 78.0 percent) providing information about or relevant to an event. The majority of these postings concerned dance practices *(taumaka)* preparatory to performances by the group at Rotuman gatherings and information about the annual NZRF gathering, which was hosted by the Auckland group in October 2014 (the final posting during my monitoring period, on November 1, 2014, consisted of a twenty-six–minute video of the occasion). One member, who formed a Rotuman Zumba group, posted fifteen announcements regarding meetings of the group. Only five photos of people were posted, all of groups, although thirteen images containing decorative designs and two photos of food appeared.

While sixteen of the postings inspired ten or more "likes," the average was eight. A posting of a photo of the Zumba group drew the greatest response (thirty-six likes and two comments). Comments were quite rare, averaging fewer than one per posting (0.8), and there was a total absence of conversations. Humor was expressed in only three instances. However, indications are that a substantial passive audience visited the site, as evidenced by an average of 96.6 viewers of postings (indicated by a "seen by" statistic attached to each posting).

The language used in most of the postings and comments was overwhelmingly English; only two postings were entirely in Rotuman; three postings and two comments were primarily in English with some Rotuman; and two postings and one comment were primarily in Rotuman intermixed with English.

The site was clearly intended as a means for the leaders of the Rotuman community in Auckland to communicate with members regarding organizational matters. Therefore, it does not encourage postings of attitudes or opinions by the general membership, and, although it serves a Rotuman clientele, it does not facilitate expressions of Rotuman identity as such. The relative lack of Rotuman language in the postings and comments can be seen as recognition that many members of the Rotuman community in New Zealand lack fluency in the language.

*Group Based on Location in Rotuma*

The island of Rotuma is divided in seven districts, each headed by a *gagaj 'es itu'u* (district chief). The district of Oinafa is on the northeastern part of the island (see Figure) and is the basis of the Oinafa Facebook group.

Oinafa is a closed group, which had 184 members at the time it was coded. The group was created in August 2011 with the following rationale:

> Secret Group
> Membership is strictly available to those who are from Oinafa and have once been or lived in Oinafa.[20]

During the monitoring period, from January 16, 2012 to April 10, 2014, seventeen different individuals posted items. However, twenty-one of the postings (42 percent) were by a single individual who had spent the Christmas holidays on Rotuma in December 2011. Most of his posts were photos taken during his visit and included iconic scenes of the island, groups of individuals engaged in various traditional activities, well-known individuals, children frolicking in the sea, and men with the fish they had caught. All together, just four individuals accounted for 62 percent of the postings.

Responses to the photos, and to the postings in general, elicited an average of 5.4 "likes" and 4.2 comments, but a relatively high number "seen by" (120.0), suggesting a substantial passively engaged audience. The posting that received the greatest response was a poem in the Rotuman language (eighteen likes, nine comments). Noteworthy was the comparatively frequent use of the Rotuman language in both posts (40 percent) and comments (48 percent), with sixteen posts and five sets of comments entirely in Rotuman. This is more than any of the other groups surveyed and suggests a sense of connectedness (through kinship, shared icons, and a common attachment to the locality) that makes expatriates more comfortable using their native tongue. This same sense of connectedness led to a relatively frequent number of conversations (37 percent of postings with comments) and the second highest percentage of humorous expressions (38 percent) among the groups surveyed.

In addition to photos of scenes and iconic activities taken on Rotuma and the use of the Rotuman language to express Rotuman identity, several postings were in praise of Rotuma, and particularly Oinafa, including some in the form of poetry. For example, the member who had spent his Christmas holidays on Rotuma posted the following:

> POEM FOR MY DISTRICT "OINAFA"
> Born & bred in Sauhata, in the beautiful district of Oinafa,
> Crystal clear sea waters surrounding the unspoilt islands of Haua,
> Snow white sandy beach of Islepi, the only place where people like to come for picnics,
> Unwind, distress under the trees, falling asleep from the scents of hoas pene'isi [sweet-smelling flowers],

> Growing up surrounded by our Mapigas [grandparents/elders], mua'ak te rak'ak te [taking the lead in teaching] backed up by their wisdoms,
> As the sun sets for another day, they tell us tales of giants till we snore away,
> The friendly smiles of the people, living their life in simple,
> Haharagi tauna' la re 'ia 'iom kau ta [youths getting together to drink kava],
> faeag mane'ak [joking],
> kaha'ak te ma ahae'akia te ne au ta [laughing and thinking all the time]
> The best picnic spots in the island, Haf 'on Ros, Roro & Fu li'u are one of their kind,
> Yarning under the niu hu & hi fau [coconut and *Callophyllum*] trees,
> pas lon ma a'fain ke kihkihi [playing cards and giggling],
> From Marama to Mal'ia [Melia], Far ta [going dancing] to Vaimomoko & Lopta,
> fup famori figalelei ma se mao'akia [the younger generation should not forget],
> la hanis ma haisoag se 'os 'Itu'ta [to love and help our district],
> No matter where i go, what the world has in store for me,
> Where the river of life may flow, i will remain loyal to OINAFA
> 'Ereko 'ae 'otou FATUMANAVA [Because you are my HEART].

*Church-Centered Group*

Vailala Rotuman Catholics, Brisbane is a closed group that was created in October 2011 with 122 members at the time of coding. Its stated rationale is to "post questions, photos, events and comments in relations to the Catholic Mission in Rotuma."

During the monitoring period, from August 15, 2011 to October 16, 2014, items were posted by ten individuals, with the creator of the group accounting for the great majority of the postings (74 percent). As might be expected, religious themes were common in the postings (e.g., announcements of Mass, inspirational quotations, happy feast day messages) often accompanied by images (e.g., Pope Francis, historic photos from the Catholic mission on Rotuma, photos from the funeral of Fiji's archbishop). Responses to the postings were an average of four "likes" and an average of one comment, while "seen by" an average of 77.1 members. And although postings were almost all exclusively in English, with only two of them containing some Rotuman, 30 percent of the sets of comments contained Rotuman phrasings. However, there was only one conversation and one expression of humor, suggestive of an essentially passive audience.

Although a Rotuman group, this site is primarily dominated by religious themes appropriate to its congregation. Therefore, it did not provide a venue that encouraged expressions of Rotumanness so much as expressions of religious devotion.

*School-Based Group*

Rotuma High School Alumni is a public group that had 576 members at the time of coding. It was created in July 2008 with the following rationale:

> For all ex-Rotuma High School Students. Tell others when you were a student, your experiences, your teachers, your subjects, sports, culture, the fun, dancing and many more

This was amplified in a subsequent post by the group's creator:

> Many of us who attended RHS still hold fond memories of times spent at the school. Share with us your experiences, great moments, your most unforgettable event or experience at RHS. Identify the year you were at RHS. . . . Happy sharing. Upload fotos . . . *Alalum* [Good luck]!

It is one of the more participatory groups, with posts by twenty-nine different individuals during the monitoring period from April 16, 2012 to December 17, 2013. Photos were infrequent, with one group picture of Rotuma High School students and eight images related to high school athletics. Seventeen of the postings (34 percent) included expressions of gratitude or appreciation for what they had taken away from the high school experience on the island, including praise for teachers and staff. A few posts concerned recent news items that related to the school, such as a shortage of fuel on the island, which resulted in children having to walk to school because the buses were unable to take them. The postings elicited an average of 7.5 "likes" and 4.8 comments. The posting drawing the greatest response (thirty-four likes, twenty-six comments) was the group photo of eight male Rotuma High School students from an unspecified earlier time.

The data on language suggest a relatively high comfort zone for using the Rotuman language, with 26 percent of the posts and 48 percent of the sets of comments including Rotuman phrasing. Thirty percent of the postings and comments were entirely in Rotuman. Other indicators of interactional comfort were the frequency of conversations (20 percent) and indications of humor (46 percent).

*Sports-Based Group*

Rotuman Sports Council (FRSC) is a closed group with 507 members at the time of coding. It was created in September 2015 with the following rationale:

> Noa'ia [Greetings]
> This page has been created by the Council to provide updates, raise and answer queries, Improve Communication to Clubs and vice versa but most importantly: ultimately improving our Rotuman standards and uplift of Council oversight

During the monitoring period, from October 20, 2015 to March 12, 2016, thirteen members posted items, with one individual, the founder of the group, accounting for 64 percent of the postings. Three types of items dominated the postings: photos of sports groups participating in the annual Rotuman games (twelve), information about the various Rotuman sports groups (thirteen), and expressions of gratitude (seven), greetings (five), or condolences (three) addressed to particular parties.

The average number of responses to the postings was 19.2 likes and 2.3 comments per item, with the greatest response (forty-seven likes, two comments) in reaction to a photo of one of the competing athletic groups. At least some Rotuman language was included in eleven of the postings and six of the sets of comments. Joking was involved in ten instances, and four conversations occurred in comments.

*General Rotuman-Centered Group*

Rotumans on Facebook has become the premier site for Rotumans, with 7,280 members as of August 15, 2016. Considering that the total number of individuals identifying themselves as Rotumans or part-Rotumans in the world is probably in the range of 12,000 to 15,000 at the most, this site apparently includes a large proportion of the total population.[21] The group, which is public, was created in May 2011 with a simple rationale:

> *Rotuam ta tae'e ut tutu ne rante' ma 'is la 'io ne famor his tae'e facebook.*
> Rotumans are spread around the world and let's see how many Rotumans are on Facebook.

During the monitoring period, from May 28 to August 5, 2016, thirty-four individuals posted items, with four being the most from any one person, suggesting a broader level of participation than other groups as far as posting is concerned.

The majority of posts (thirty-five, 70 percent) included images covering a wide spread of subjects ranging from family members to Rotuman celebrities in sports and politics[22] to slideshows of scenes from Rotuma accompanied by soundtracks of Rotuman songs. Videos were included in eight postings.

Responses to postings were far more numerous than in other groups, but hardly in proportion to the number of members, with an average of 45.7 "likes" and five comments per posting. The highest number of responses (145 likes, eleven comments) was in response to an instrumental version of a popular Rotuman song.

Use of the Rotuman language showed up in twenty (40 percent) of the posts and twenty-four (48 percent) of the sets of comments, the second highest number of instances after the Oinafa group. Conversations occurred within the comments 16 percent of the time and humor in 18 percent of instances.

## Individual Rotuman Facebook Pages

In addition to group participation, thousands of Rotumans have created their own Facebook pages, which constitute a somewhat different context from group pages, especially insofar as the anticipated audiences for postings differ. In group settings, the anticipated audiences are other members of the group, whereas postings on personal pages are aimed at one's "friends," only a portion of whom may be Rotuman.

To obtain a sample of postings from individual Facebook pages comparable to that from groups, I selected a sample of fifty of my Rotuman "friends" (the first fifty who appeared on my list of over 400 Rotuman friends) and coded the latest posting for each.[23] I also relied on two additional sources of data to assess the ways individual Facebook pages implicate expressions of Rotuman cultural identity. One source is the information provided by individuals about themselves in the "About" sections of Facebook pages. The other is from the June 2016 online survey I conducted among Rotumans regarding Facebook usage, which yielded 186 responses.

Regarding the two samples (my "friends" and the respondents to the online survey), it should be noted that neither can be regarded as representative of the entire population of Rotumans on Facebook. Because I am much better known by older Rotumans than by teenagers and young adults, those who have befriended me and those who responded to my survey tend toward the older portion of the age spectrum. Thus, 59 percent of my "friends" were over the age of thirty-five, as were 64 percent of those responding to the survey. As for gender, half of my "friends" were male, half were female, although among survey respondents only 39 percent were male and 61 percent were female. The discrepancy in the survey sample suggests that women tend to be more active on Facebook, a conclusion supported by the number of hours reportedly spent per week on Facebook by men and women: 31 percent of the men reported spending one hour or less per

week compared with 18 percent of the women, while 41 percent of the women reported spending ten or more hours compared with 24 percent of the men.

Although at the time of this writing Facebook does not include a space for ethnicity in its "about" section, there are several ways in which people can signal their cultural identity, including the languages section of basic information, places lived, schools attended, "details," and life events.[24] However, less than half (42 percent) of my "friends" sample took advantage of the opportunity. Fourteen of them (28 percent) indicated knowledge of the Rotuman language, five (10 percent) reported having attended Rotuma High School, and three (6 percent) referred to the district they associate with on Rotuma. One person self-described as "a pure-blooded Rotuman," but there were no other direct references to ethnicity. Among other markers of identity, current residence was provided by forty (80 percent) of my friends, school affiliation by thirty-seven (74 percent), occupation by twenty-nine (58 percent), marital status by twenty-five (50 percent), religion by sixteen (32 percent), and political views by eight (16 percent). This suggests to me that, on the whole, Facebook does not provide a particularly fertile context for Rotumans to express their cultural identity. I attribute this in large measure to the fact that among their many friends (median = 593) are many non-Rotumans, which differentiates the context from the Rotuman Facebook groups. Asked in our online survey, "What proportion of your friends on Facebook are Rotuman?" 35 percent responded "Most of my friends"; 33 percent checked "About half of my friends"; while 32 percent answered "Fewer than half of my friends."

This impression—that the Facebook context for individual postings does not provide a particularly fertile context for Rotumans to express their cultural identity—is supported by an analysis of postings on my friends' Facebook pages. The monitoring period for coding was from March 16 to August 21, 2016. What stands out is the prominence of photographs, videos, or other images in the postings. Only three of the postings were not accompanied by some such form of visual imagery. The majority were photographs of oneself with or without family or friends (twenty, 40 percent), followed by photos of family members or others (twelve, 24 percent), videos or links to videos, mostly from YouTube (eight, 16 percent), and images as background for sayings (for example: "Kindness makes you the most beautiful person in the world no matter what you look like" seven, 14 percent). Noticeably absent were photos of places in Rotuma.[25]

Responses to the postings were quite varied, ranging from none or just a few to over 200. The average number of "likes" was 37.3 and the average number of comments 3.5. The greatest number of responses (238 likes, twenty-two comments) was to a photograph of a beautiful young Rotuman woman who had recently won a surfing competition in Fiji. Joking was embedded in twelve (24 percent) of the postings and five (10 percent) included conversations.

None of the postings were in the Rotuman language and only four (8 percent) of the comment sets were primarily in Rotuman, while seven (14 percent) were primarily in English with some Rotuman included. Interestingly, there was as much Fijian as Rotuman in the comments, a reflection of the multilingual abilities of virtually all Rotumans in Fiji. To put this into perspective, in response to a question in the online survey asking individuals to rate their knowledge of the Rotuman language, 57 percent answered that they were fluent, 23 percent that they could converse moderately well, and the remaining 20 percent professed lesser ability. In response to a question concerning what language they use when posting something on Facebook, only 18 percent responded "Usually in Rotuman," or "Usually in Rotuman with some English"; 36 percent responded "Usually in English with some Rotuman"; and 47 percent answered "Usually in English." Their responses to what language they use to make comments varied only slightly, with 22 percent favoring Rotuman. What this suggests is that the predominant use of English is more a matter of choice rather than a deficiency in Rotuman language ability.

There were several references, with pride, to the recent gold medal performance of the Fiji rugby sevens team at the Rio Olympics but no mention of Rotuman celebrities or cultural icons. The overall impression I get from these individual postings, and from my general participation with Rotuman friends over several years, is a desire by most to convey a multicultural identity rather than a narrowly Rotuman one.

## Summary of Expressions of Rotumanness on Facebook

The Table provides a tabulation, by Facebook groups and individual Rotumans, of the nine ways, previously detailed, in which Rotuman identity is commonly expressed. It reveals both how the varying purposes of the groups encourage or discourage expressions of Rotumanness and the forms of expression they favor. For example, the groups that showed the highest overall number of such expressions—Oinafa (105), Rotumans on Facebook (eighty-nine), and Rotuma High School Alumni (seventy-one)—have no pragmatic purpose other than providing a venue for Rotumans, with or without shared backgrounds, to interact. Those groups with pragmatic agendas—Auckland Rotuman Fellowship Group (twenty-seven), Vailala Rotuman Catholics, Brisbane (thirty), and Rotuman Sports Council (thirty-five)—showed the least. A large part of discrepancy between these groups can be accounted for by the greater use of the Rotuman language by the nonpragmatic groups, by expressions of intimacy through joking by the Oinafa and alumni groups, and by references to places in Rotuma by the Oinafa group (mostly involving photos taken in the district of Oinafa). References to Rotuman celebrities or kin played a significant role for the Rotumans on Facebook group (fourteen) and individual Rotumans (nineteen). In general, the

**TABLE. Expressions of Rotumanness by Facebook Group.**

| Names of Facebook Groups | Instances of Rotuman Language[*] | Instances of Joking[†] | References to Places in Rotuma[‡] | References to Rotuman Foods[‡] | References to Rotuman Events[‡] | References to Rotuman Music[§] | References to Rotuman Kin/ Celebrities[‡] | References to Rotuma's Beauty/ Culture[†] | Expressions of Pride in Being Rotuman | Total Expressions of Rotuman Identity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Auckland Rotuman Fellowship group | 10 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 27 |
| Oinafa | 51 | 19 | 19 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 105 |
| Vailala Rotuman Catholics, Brisbane | 17 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 30 |
| Rotuma High School Alumni | 41 | 23 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 71 |
| Rotuman sports council | 18 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 36 |
| Rotumans on Facebook | 44 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 14 | 3 | 0 | 92 |
| Individual (non-group) Rotumans | 11 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 42 |
| Totals | 192 | 77 | 38 | 7 | 25 | 8 | 46 | 9 | 1 | 403 |

[*] Inclusive of both postings and comments (each set of comments counted as one unit).
[†] Including generic expressions like LOL, hahaha, heehee, etc.
[‡] Including photos or videos.
[§] Including soundtracks.

dominant means of expressing Rotumanness was through use of the Rotuman language (193), followed by joking (seventy-seven), references to Rotuman celebrities or kin (forty-eight), and references to places in Rotuma (forty).

## Concluding Observations

As a self-conscious product, Rotuman identity has evolved from its origins in the migration from Rotuma to Fiji during the mid-twentieth century, to its expressions in diasporic communities abroad, and more recently to digital environments such as the Rotuma Website and Facebook. The overall evolution has responded to a variety of facilitators and constraints, which has resulted in a multiplication of ways of expressing Rotumanness as the contexts within which Rotumans interact with one another and the world at large have continued to proliferate.

Among the most profound changes for Rotumans in diaspora is the addition of digital media as a primary means of communication, particularly among individuals who lack opportunities for face-to-face interaction. There is an important distinction to be made between physical, face-to-face contexts for expressing cultural identity and online contexts. In physical contexts, participating in dances, singing songs, preparing and sharing Rotuman foods, communication based on body language, touching, and so on, are prominent means of expressing Rotuman identity, but these activities are not available in online communications. In contrast, online communication facilitates the use of photos, videos, and soundtracks for referencing distinctly Rotuman activities and icons. It also facilitates the planning and organizing of face-to-face gatherings. Cultural bonding can take place in either context, although one could argue that digital communication lacks the depth of face-to-face encounters and does not produce the same degree of bonding.

It must be pointed out that the samples of Facebook codings in this study cannot be considered as representative in the broadest sense. Not only is the sampling of individuals skewed by my relationship with different age cohorts, but changes in content and form also take place over time as particular events are foregrounded. For example, in conjunction with Rotuma Day celebrations in various segments of the global Rotuman community, a flurry of postings planning the events, commentaries about them, and photos and videos of the events come to dominate for a time each year. Likewise, certain sporting events, like the annual Rotuma Games or political events affecting the Rotuman community, come to the fore periodically. And a visit to Rotuma by an avid photographer can result in a surge of postings in one or more venues. It is also the case that Facebook has changed and continues to evolve by adding new features and encouraging the provision of more and more personal information. But although my sample codings represent limited slices of time and may

not reflect the overall scope of postings over the long run, they nevertheless illustrate my main point—that expressions of cultural identity are sensitive to context, including online contexts like Facebook, and that they can be expected to continue to evolve as those contexts change.

Undoubtedly, the opportunity to participate on social media, and particularly Facebook, has had an uplifting effect on Rotuman identity generally. By providing venues in which participants can lend expression to their Rotumaneness, where they can share words and images that reinforce their sense of belonging to a distinctive culture, they facilitate a sense of pride in being Rotuman. Thus, in my 2016 online survey, in response to the question "Has your participation in Facebook affected your identity as a Rotuman?" nearly two-thirds of respondents replied that it had strengthened their sense of identity, with 40 percent checking "It has made my sense of identity as a Rotuman much stronger," 26 percent checking "It has increased my sense of identity as a Rotuman somewhat," and 34 percent checking that "It hasn't made any significant difference." Facebook has also played a major role in creating a global Rotuman community in which new expressions of that identity are emerging.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Previous drafts of this paper were presented at meetings of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) in sessions on "The Digital Pacific" co-organized by Geoff Hobbis and myself. I would like to thank all the participants in those sessions and particularly Alex Golub, Helen Lee, and Chelsea Wentworth, who provided excellent suggestions for revisions, most of which have been incorporated.

## NOTES

1. I have generally edited items submitted by Rotuman colleagues for grammar, spelling, and clarity with the aim of making their contributions as much to the point as possible. In most cases, I return the edited versions for approval before posting them on the website. Therefore, the postings are more like letters to the editor of a newspaper than raw message board items.

2. There are a small number of non-Rotumans who are relatively fluent in the language and many more, especially those married to Rotumans, who know a smattering of words.

3. Low competence includes the following responses: (1) I've never spoken, sung, read, or been taught any Rotuman; (2) I can sing lyrics to Rotuman songs without knowing the meaning of anything; (3) I know the meaning and pronunciation of very few words; and (4) I know some basic phrases (e.g., greetings, counting). Medium competence includes (1) I can carry out a very basic conversation; (2) I can understand most Rotuman spoken to/around me but can't respond; and (3) I can understand most Rotuman spoken to/around me and can respond

although not fluently. High competence includes (1) I can speak enough to get by living in Rotuma but struggle to write with correct spelling and diacritics; and (2) I can speak, read, and write fluently like Rotumans on the island, with a local-sounding accent.

4. In her article, Panapasa used the Fijian word *bure* (house) rather than the Rotuman term for cooking house, *kohea*.

5. Rotuma Day is celebrated on the anniversary of the island's cession to Great Britain on May 13, 1881. Although on Rotuma it is celebrated on the 13th, abroad it is usually held on a weekend in May convenient for those in the community involved.

6. Rarotonga-style dancing was introduced to Rotuma in 1940 by a group of Rarotongans who visited the island for two months. According to Vilsoni Hereniko, the Rotuman version is like Rarotongan dancing in many ways, yet different: "The swaying of the hips and the shaking of the knees is much lower. Hand and leg movements are less varied and simpler. Also, the men tend to keep the upper part of the body more erect, not displaying the flexibility that one often sees in Rarotongan dancing" (1991, 137).

7. http://www.rotuma.net/os/Forum/Forum1.html.

8. http://www.rotuma.net/os/Forum/Forum27.html.

9. http://www.rotuma.net/os/Humour.htm.

10. http://www.rotuma.net/os/recipes.htm.

11. http://www.rotuma.net/os/literarycompetition/literarycomp.htm.

12. http://www.rotuma.net/os/literature/Rupeni_Fatiaki-1.htm.

13. In their comprehensive review of Facebook research in the social sciences, published in 2012, Wilson, Gosling, and Graham identified 412 relevant articles, which they sorted into five categories corresponding to five broad questions: (1) Who is using Facebook and what are users doing while on Facebook? (2) Why do people use Facebook? (3) How are people presenting themselves on Facebook? (4) How is Facebook affecting relationships among groups and individuals? (5) Why are people disclosing personal information on Facebook despite potential risks? They classified fifty articles (12 percent) as dealing with "identity presentation."

14. Internet access on Rotuma is expensive and quite limited.

15. Hereniko, a Rotuman who is a professor at the University of Hawai'i, offers a different perspective from the one presented in this paper. He divides Rotuman history into three phases: *ao maksul ta* (time of darkness), *ao taf ta* (time of light), and *ao fo'ou ta* (new time), corresponding to the Euro-American categories of precolonial, colonial and postcolonial (1997, 429). He summarizes the identity implications in his concluding paragraph:

> The *ao maksul ta* (time of darkness) was a period of contested identities, marked by exploration and trade. Then came the *ao taf ta* (time of light), when missionisation transformed cultural identities by converting Islanders to a new religious

> order while suppressing certain cultural practices. However, as Islanders embraced Christianity, they infused it with their own symbols and ways of worshipping. Since World War II, in their quest for personal, national and regional identities, Islanders have sought ways to reconcile indigenous culture, Christianity, and Euro-American values of materialism and progress. A wide range of fusions ensued, creating different identities from which to choose and multiple ways of symbolising them. In the contemporary phase, the *ao fo'ou ta,* Pacific cultural identities are indeed negotiable. (Hereniko 1997, 437)

Hereniko observes that a similar historical pattern exists in other Pacific Island societies and notes some of the ways in which artistic productions have been affected by this progression. I do not see our different perspectives as incompatible. Rather, I see his approach as dealing with a broader level of historical inclusion.

16. For general discussions of research methodology in the study of diasporic populations on the Internet, see Reips and Buffardi 2012 and relevant articles in Vargas-Silva 2012. Also of interest is Trevor Castor's article "Mapping the Diaspora with Facebook" (2014).

17. I also included some groups named after districts or villages in Rotuma.

18. FNU stands for Fiji National University.

19. Postings are not necessarily in chronological order on Facebook. Making a comment on an older posting moves the posting up to the date of the comment.

20. Jan Rensel and I spent several field sessions living in the district, so we qualified for membership.

21. Of course, not all members of the group have Rotuman ancestry. Included are non-Rotuman spouses, persons who have visited or worked on the island for shorter or longer periods of time, close friends of Rotumans, and at least two anthropologists.

22. The current president of Fiji, Jioji Konrote, is a Rotuman. Photos of him appear frequently in local media.

23. Because friends can post on one another's "walls," the postings were not necessarily by the person owning the Facebook page. In such cases, I selected the latest posting by someone I knew to be Rotuman.

24. It should be noted that Facebook periodically adds new features to its pages that alter the context in significant ways.

25. This was also the case with the heading photos atop the Facebook pages, many of which were of beautiful scenery, but none of scenes were from Rotuma.

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# SUICIDE IN FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA: A NEW DIRECTION

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Suicide, a major cause of death among males under the age of twenty-five, has been a real although sometimes unacknowledged threat to the Micronesian population for the past four decades. The author has studied the problem over that period, admittedly less from a psychological perspective than a sociocultural one, and has published several articles on the subject beginning with a 1976 piece that first brought the problem to public attention (Hezel 1976). Others, most notably Donald Rubinstein, cultural anthropologist and professor at University of Guam, have added considerably to the literature on Micronesian suicide.[1] From this research has emerged a consensual understanding of the scope of the problem, the rapid escalation of the suicide rate and the etiology and psychodynamics of suicide. Hypotheses on the reason for the sudden spike in suicide have also been advanced and critiqued.

A research grant in 2015 obtained through the Department of Health Services in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration permitted the author to gather further suicide data from FSM for 2007–15. The new data gathered, along with the earlier suicide database, provide a full half century of documentation on suicide cases in the island nation. In addition, they offer a detailed view of Micronesian suicide on Guam, the closest and most favored destination of migrants from FSM.

This article is an attempt to present the findings of this recent survey, link them to the previous work done on the subject, highlight any significant changes

*Pacific Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3—Dec. 2017

in the cultural pattern of suicide, and offer a suggestion on how research on Micronesian suicide might proceed in the future.

## Suicide Epidemic in the Region

The 1960s was an exciting time for the Trust Territory of the Pacific, the islands in the western Pacific that the United States had administered since the end of World War II. With the US determination to jump-start the economy of the Trust Territory after years of stagnation, a new level of economic and social development at last seemed within reach. With the creation of the Congress of Micronesia, the scent of self-determination was fresh in the air. The time seemed full of promise for the islands that had been ruled by four colonial powers over the past three-quarters of a century. If there were any social concerns at all at that time, they may have been more focused on youth violence and the growing problem presented by islanders' consumption of alcohol, which had been legalized at the beginning of that decade.[2]

By the early 1970s, however, a sudden spike in suicide throughout the area captured the attention of many of us. The total number of suicides occurring in Micronesia (that is, Palau and the Marshalls in addition to what is now known as Federated States of Micronesia) leapt from thirty-five to ninety-five from the last half of the 1960s (1966–70) to the first half of the 1970s (1971–75) (Hezel 1989; table 1). The increase in the island groups that now comprise FSM was even more astounding; during those few years suicides skyrocketed from seventeen to sixty (Table 1). But the increase did not stop there. The number of FSM

TABLE 1. **FSM Suicides in FSM, 1961–2015, Number of Suicides.**

| | Chuuk | Pohnpei | Kosrae | Yap | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1961–65 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| 1966–70 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 17 |
| 1971–75 | 37 | 14 | 0 | 9 | 60 |
| 1976–80 | 65 | 24 | 4 | 13 | 106 |
| 1981–85 | 70 | 11 | 7 | 16 | 104 |
| 1986–90 | 67 | 34 | 6 | 22 | 129 |
| 1991–95 | 86 | 37 | 5 | 22 | 150 |
| 1996–2000 | 85 | 37 | 10 | 17 | 149 |
| 2001–05 | 41 | 23 | 14 | 22 | 100 |
| 2006–10 | 54 | 43 | 5 | 13 | 115 |
| 2011–15 | 58 | 36 | 5 | 17 | 116 |
| Total | 577 | 262 | 57 | 155 | 1,051 |

suicides continued to rise—to 166 during the 1970s, then to 233 during the 1980s, and on to 299 during the 1990s. In other parts of Micronesia, it might be noted, there was a corresponding increase during those same years.

The yearly suicide rate, which allows us to correct for population differences, reflects the sharp increase during those early years and shows that, despite a growing population in FSM throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the suicide rate maintained a constant high level of nearly thirty per hundred thousand people from 1980 until 2000 (Fig. 1). Micronesia's suicide rate is strikingly high when compared with other parts of the world. The FSM suicide rate of thirty, one maintained for twenty years, would have been the second highest of all countries in the world today, with only Guyana, at a current rate of 44.2, surpassing it. For the sake of comparison, the United States has a rate of 12.1, Japan 18.5, Germany 9.2, Thailand 11.4, Solomon Islands 10.6, and Fiji 7.3 (WHO 2012).

*The Suicide Pattern*

In the early years of this suicide explosion, Rubinstein and I started gathering data that we hoped would help us provide an explanation of why so many more Micronesians were now choosing to end their lives early. As we pored through death certificates and interviewed families and friends, building a growing database on cases, we found a clear pattern in the suicides. The victims were overwhelmingly male; only 6 percent were women. They were nearly always rather young; 72 percent were below the age of twenty-five, and half of them were still in their teens. In the vast majority (91 percent) of cases, the victim ended his life by hanging—usually by

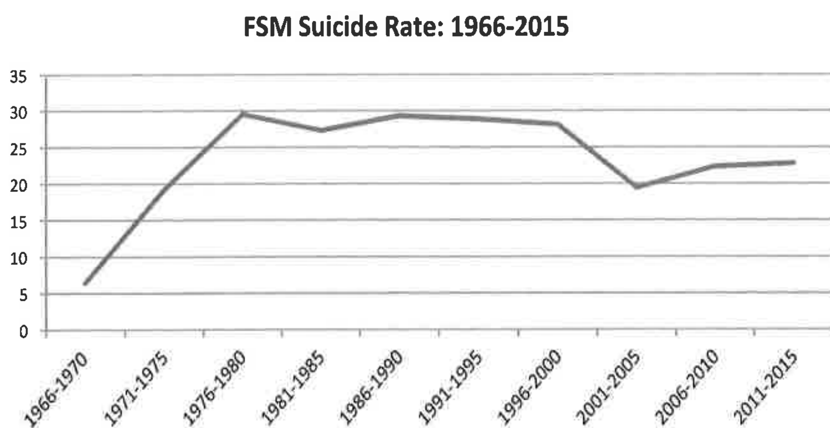


FIGURE 1. **Annual Suicide Rate (Per 100,000) for FSM: 1966–2015.**

leaning into a noose and cutting off the oxygen supply causing the victim to slip into unconsciousness before he died of anoxia. The tight patterning of Micronesian suicide gave us further reason to believe that we were not witnessing a random outbreak.

Moreover, most of the deaths were reportedly occasioned by a tiff between the victim and his family. An earlier article on the subject offered a number of examples.

> In one typical case, a seventeen-year old boy who had often complained that his family did not love him injured his younger brother in a fight and was severely scolded by his parents for this act. Not long after this he got drunk and hanged himself outside his house. Another young man from a different island was ordered by his father to work in the family garden even after he stated that he had other plans that day. After the family had left to attend a community celebration, he dug up the garden and then hanged himself. An eighteen-year old from still another island group committed suicide shortly before his graduation when his request for money from his parents went unheeded. One young man in his early twenties, who is representative of many others, took his life when his family refused to allow his marriage to a girl with whom he had been living for almost two years and who had already borne him a child. Another young man hanged himself after a prolonged drinking bout following the discovery that he had been making sexual advances toward a girl in the household who was classified as his "sister." Boys in their early teens have hanged themselves for similar reasons: one in anger at his mother for giving away a pet dog, another in shame and terror at injuring an uncle with a rock he had thrown, and a third for fear that he would be beaten for returning home late after watching video (Hezel 1989, 49).

Sometimes anger at a girlfriend or wife might trigger suicide, but more usually the cause was a rift (real or imagined) between a young man and his blood relatives. Given the cultural importance of age and the obligation of respect toward elders, the "offending party" was usually a parent, an older sibling, or occasionally an aunt or uncle. Younger brothers who did something to offend their older sibling could be dealt with more straightforwardly, by being scolded or beaten up.

Suicides in Micronesia, then, were expressions of anger or shame at close kin, often explosions of frustration at the perceived loosening of the bonds between the victim and his family. As an earlier article put it:

> The dominant emotion at play in suicide, everywhere in Micronesia, is anger. Usually the victim takes his own life after he is denied a request, chastised or rebuffed in some way by parents or an older sibling. Inasmuch as Micronesian cultures place strong sanctions on the direct expression of negative feelings toward a parent or older authority, the offended party can choose either to suffer in silence or to act out his anger upon himself by suicide or such non-lethal means as cutting himself with a knife or refusing to eat for a time. Many of the suicides in recent years are of young men or women who, although acting impulsively, have nursed a grievance towards their family for months or even years. The imbroglio that precedes their death is often merely the latest, but decisive expression of tension between them and their families. Yet their act of self-destruction . . . is not a gesture of blind rage, much less defiant retaliation against the family; rather, it is seen by Micronesians as a poignant plea for understanding and reconciliation with the family. In a small minority of cases, perhaps 13% overall, the break in family ties is caused not by other members of the family, but by the victim himself, who is ashamed of something he has done to offend the family and fears the disruption in his relationship with the family that his action may cause (Hezel 1987: 284–85).

It was clear that, whatever the cause of the suicide epidemic in the islands, it could not be viewed through the same lens as Western suicides.

> Even a cursory examination of the case data reveals that Micronesian suicides exhibit an etiology markedly different from that associated with suicide in the West. There is almost none of the chronic depression, the vague sense of meaningless of life, or even the despondency at failure in business or school that seems to play such a large part in suicides in other parts of the world. Micronesian suicides are manifestly interpersonal in nature, occasioned by what is perceived as a disruption in a significant relationship (Hezel 1989, 49).

### *Search for an Explanation*

The importance of family for islanders was an ancient value, and ties with close kin had been cultivated and protected for centuries. What had happened to threaten these bonds—at least in the eyes of many young people—so suddenly in the late 1960s and throughout the next several years? Why had family relationships, long taken for granted, suddenly become so brittle? What was responsible for the sudden surge in suicide in Micronesia?

In his early writings on the subject, Don Rubinstein wondered whether the loss of the men's house might have been responsible for the suicide epidemic (Rubinstein 1983, 1987). The men's house, in Rubinstein's view, could be seen as a symbol of the collective care on which young lineage members could depend: other males in the family were around him for support, with the older men ready to mediate in the event of the very sort of family misunderstandings that seemed to be triggering suicides in recent years. Although Rubinstein looked primarily at the decline of those institutions embedded in the lineage that once played a large part in the socialization of young islanders, my own writings pointed to the decline of the lineage itself and the loss of those who once functioned as mediators in family conflicts (Hezel 1987, 1989). For both of us, the sociocultural changes in the family structure figure heavily in the rapid rise of suicide increase.

We had witnessed a surprisingly rapid breakdown of the lineage, which over the centuries had functioned as *the* family for islanders throughout the region. Even if the term "family" has always been a fluid one, it was increasingly being used from the 1960s on to designate the nuclear family—with mother, father, and children, perhaps along with a few other relatives. In the new, more streamlined modern family, a son could easily find himself in conflict with his father, or a younger brother at odds with an older brother, without the other older relatives who might have once intervened to resolve such disputes. Social organization of island culture at its most basic level was being redefined, and people were without those personal resources needed to mediate between individuals and reassure the young who might have had doubts on their status in the family.

What caused the revolutionary changes in social organization at the family level? Could it have been the sudden increase in the 1960s of US funding for the Trust Territory, a policy change that led to the creation of thousands of new jobs, rocketing employment among Micronesians, and the final surge of the cash economy to the tipping point? By the late 1960s, for the first time, money flowed in sufficient quantity as to allow a significant number of wage-earners to feed their own families. They no longer had to rely on the land-based subsistence sector to survive. Cash inflow was no longer so limited as to serve as little more than a supplement to locally raised staples, providing occasional treats, Christmas presents, and the like. For many, cash was available in sufficient quantity to purchase the rice and canned fish or meat that one ate most days and perhaps even to make a down payment on a second-hand automobile. The economic boom that began in the early 1960s was incontestable. I argued that the ramping up of the cash economy was also responsible for the alteration of social organization and the breakdown of the lineage or extended family (Hezel 1989). That, in turn, put young people face to face with those exercising authority over them, even as it stripped the functional family of those members

who had been most effective in mediating these disputes. The end result, in this view, was the enormous spike in suicide that has occurred in recent years.

If the suicide spike is indeed a product of social changes in the islands, then the remedies are limited. Given the reluctance of islanders to share with others intimate details of their own family life, especially its negative side, it is highly unlikely that expanded counseling services would make a positive difference. Intervention on a case-by-case basis was impractical, and in any case, the social factors responsible for the suicide increase would continue to endanger many more lives. The best that could be hoped for was that islanders and their families would adapt to the changes rather quickly. The suicide rate might drop as islanders adjusted to the smaller form of family and the conflict that inevitably resulted, but this might take a generation or two to happen (Hezel 1991).

## Recent Survey on FSM Suicide: Methodology

The recent grant from the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs allowed the author of this article to gather data on those suicides in FSM that occurred most recently—that is, from 2007 through 2015. The collection of suicide data as part of this project would represent the completion of more than a half century's data on suicide in FSM. The earlier material, a database on suicides from 1960 to 2006, was created by Micronesian Seminar, the church-based research and public education institute that the author directed for thirty-nine years. The enlarged database that resulted from this project contains 1,051 suicides for FSM from 1960 through 2015—the material drawn upon in this article—as well as several hundred additional cases for Palau and the Marshall Islands. When added to the earlier data on the region, the information collected in the course of this project provides us with nearly complete documentation on a fifty-five–year span, most of which represented a historically high suicide rate in the islands.

The methodology employed in earlier data collection was followed again for this project. One American woman, designated the project manager, worked over a period of nine months with a retired Yapese woman who had resided at times in three of the four states. They began by examining all death certificates at the national and state levels for basic information on suicide cases. Accounts of suicides pulled from official death certificates were then supplemented by personal inquiries in the local communities. The principal informants selected were normally those in the community who were close to the victim but who, as a rule, were not from the victim's own family. The reason for the exclusion of close family members was that the information they furnished on the events leading up to the suicide was often unreliable because of their desire to protect the family's interests.

The author's past experience has shown the importance of relying on key informants in gathering information on suicide victims. Death certificates are generally found for only about 60 percent of all victims; the remainder will be identified in the course of a search for informed parties of the particular island. One informant will often suggest another; hence, that information is gathered in a snowball method. Significant details gathered from one informant will be checked against data obtained from another. At some point, when further inquiry for additional suicide cases comes up empty, fieldworkers may assume that they have recorded all the cases.

The fieldworkers used questionnaires nearly identical to those that had been used from the start in gathering suicide information. The entry for each suicide included as much biographical information as was available. The data gathered included birth rank in the family, level of educational achievement, employment status, history of alcohol and drug use, previous suicide attempts or warning, past family problems, details surrounding the death, and probable motives for the act. Whenever possible, the research team tried to corroborate the information gathered with others from the community in which the suicide occurred.

## Survey Findings

Table 2 shows a tally of the suicides recorded in the recent survey, with the number and suicide rate broken down by state. The suicide data shown here is for FSM citizens who took their lives only while residing somewhere in FSM; it does not include the many others who committed suicide in the United States or on Guam.

### *Overall Decline in Suicide Rate*

The suicide rate in FSM, as indicated in the recent survey, has dropped markedly over the last fifteen years. The number of suicides dipped by about a third during the first five years of this century, as Table 1 shows. Overall, the suicide rate has fallen from about thirty per hundred thousand, a rate that was nearly constant over a twenty-five–year span, to about twenty-two today (Fig. 1).

Table 2. **FSM Suicides in FSM, 2007–15, Number and Rate (Per 100,000).**

| | Suicides (2007–15) | Avg. No. Per Year | Rate (Per 100,000) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chuuk | 104 | 11.6 | 23.2 |
| Pohnpei | 63 | 7 | 20.0 |
| Kosrae | 10 | 1.1 | 15.7 |
| Yap | 30 | 3.3 | 29.2 |

In Table 3, each of the states shows a general downward trend despite considerable fluctuation over the entire period.

Yap has had the highest overall rate of the states, peaking at forty-five per hundred thousand in the late 1980s, with a general downward trend since then. Chuuk's rate peaked slightly earlier than Yap's and also began its descent a bit earlier. Kosrae's suicide rate hovered at about twenty for some years before peaking in 2001–05. During its worst years, Kosrae with its small population of about 8,000 was experiencing only two or three suicides a year. Pohnpei's rate, one of the lowest in FSM throughout this period, maintained a plateau of between twenty and twenty-five, although the rate dipped sharply at times.

*Increased Numbers in Some Atolls*

Although the suicide rate of Yap has decreased in recent years, it appears that this is attributable to the drop in the number of suicides on the main island by ethnic Yapese. Indeed, suicides by those living on the Outer Islands are more numerous than ever: 57 percent of the Yap suicides for the period 2007–15 were from the coral atolls that account for just 37 percent of the state's population. For the first time, suicides from the Outer Islands outnumbered suicides from the main island. During the period covered by the earlier data set (1960–2006), suicides in the Outer Islands accounted for just 17 percent of the total. Yet, the current suicide rate for Yap Outer Islands during this period, at forty-five per hundred thousand, is significantly higher than the rate for the entire state (thirty).

The suicide rates in more remote atolls in other parts of the nation vary, according to the results of the recent survey. The number of suicides, for instance, was high on Nama, one of

TABLE 3. **Suicide Rates (Per 100,000) for FSM by State: 1966–2015.**

| | 1966–70 | 1971–75 | 1976–80 | 1981–85 | 1986–90 | 1991–95 | 1996–00 | 2001–05 | 2006–10 | 2011–15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chuuk | 7.2 | 23.4 | 35.6 | 35.8 | 29.8 | 33.1 | 31.8 | 16.4 | 22.0 | 24.7 |
| Pohnpei | 2.5 | 14.6 | 21.3 | 9.6 | 25.2 | 22.7 | 21.8 | 13.1 | 23.9 | 19.5 |
| Kosrae | 6.3 | 0 | 17.0 | 24.6 | 18.2 | 13.9 | 27.0 | 40.0 | 14.9 | 15.4 |
| Yap | 11.8 | 23.1 | 32.1 | 37.6 | 45.4 | 40.0 | 30.4 | 39.3 | 23.0 | 30.1 |
| FSM | 6.4 | 19.2 | 29.5 | 27.3 | 29.3 | 28.9 | 28.1 | 19.4 | 22.3 | 22.8 |

TABLE 4. **Suicides by Gender, With Female Percentage of the Total, 1960–2015.**

| | Males | Females | Female % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1960–69 | 16 | 1 | 5.8 |
| 1970–79 | 136 | 9 | 6.2 |
| 1980–89 | 206 | 25 | 10.8 |
| 1990–99 | 282 | 26 | 8.4 |
| 2000–06 | 126 | 24 | 16 |
| 2007–15 | 183 | 27 | 12.9 |

the Mortlock Islands, but low in the rest of the Chuuk atolls. In Pohnpei, the number of suicides associated with Pingelap—both on the atoll itself and in the Pingelapese settlements of Mwalok and Mand on Pohnpei itself—appears high. Yet, there was no corresponding increase detected in other remote atolls in Pohnpei.

Through the 1980s, the rate of more remote and traditional island communities was significantly lower than other urban and peri-urban locations (Rubinstein 1983, 659). In their analysis of suicide patterns, authors have ascribed this to the insulation of such places from the stronger effects of modernization, particularly its erosion of the traditional extended family. The sudden rise in the suicide rates in at least some of these atolls suggests that some of the impact of modernization on the social organization of atoll communities is already being felt. Thus, the atolls may already be less immune to suicide than they had been some years earlier.

*Shifts in Gender and Age*

Suicide has been overwhelmingly a male phenomenon over the years, as the data in Table 4 reveal, but female vulnerability to suicide has been gradually increasing with time. During the years 1960–99, females accounted for sixty-one of 701 suicides, or 8.7 percent of the total. In the last sixteen years (2000–15), women were the victims in fifty-one of 360 suicides, or 14.2 percent of the total. As the table shows, females have accounted for an increasing percentage of the total. The female share has doubled over the years, from about 6 percent of all suicides during the 1960s and 1970s to nearly 13 percent over the last decade.

The low suicide rate among females has sometimes been ascribed to the fact that island women have a more secure place in the family than men. This would be especially true in the strong matrilineal societies of Chuuk and Pohnpei as well as in the Outer Islands of Yap.[3] Moreover, young women might be more

inured to the inevitable clashes that occur with their parents, if only because they spend more time working with their mothers in the home than young men do with their fathers. Whatever the explanation for the low rate of female suicide in the past, it appears that female "immunity" to suicide is weakening today.

The recent data collected on suicide also shows some changes from the tight age patterns that formally characterized Micronesian suicides in the past. The percentage of suicides among those aged fifteen or below and in the 16–20 age cohort has dropped considerably, as Table 5 indicates.

Overall, suicides of teenagers, those in the two youngest age cohorts in Table 5, have dropped significantly over time. In earlier years, this age group accounted for more than half (50.9 percent) of all suicides, but in recent years only 37.6 percent of all suicides have fallen into this age group. This is an encouraging trend because it suggests that the impulsiveness strongly associated with the suicides of younger victims might be less a factor today than it has been in the past.

Recent suicide victims were not only older but also much more educated than those in the past, as Table 6 shows. The percentage of victims who never even finished elementary school has fallen significantly. The gap is even greater for those victims who never went beyond completing elementary school: 21 percent to 9 percent. Correspondingly, the more recent suicide victims showed a much higher completion rate for junior high school and senior high school.

### Hints of a New Element: Focus on the Family

Suicide in FSM, as in other parts of Micronesia, is generally a response to a perceived disruption in a vital family relationship, as has been already noted. The recent suicide data gathered for this project suggest that the same is true today. The recent suicides included a young boy who was caught by a relative sniffing gas and was told that he would be reported to his parents, and a teenager who was found drunk and threatened with a beating the next day. There are many other instances in which young people were angry at

TABLE 5. **Percentage of Total Suicides by Age Cohort.**

| Years | <15 | 16–20 | 21–25 | 26–30 | 31–35 | 36–40 | 41–50 | >50 | Unknown | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1960–2006 | 15.3 | 35.6 | 21.5 | 11.1 | 5.0 | 3.0 | 3.9 | 3.3 | 1 | 100 |
| 2007–15 | 9.5 | 28.1 | 23.3 | 14.3 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 3.8 | 3.3 | 4.3 | 100 |

TABLE 6. **Educational Attainment (by %) of Suicide Victims.**

| Highest Education Attainment | 1960–2006, % of Total | 2007–15, % of Total |
|---|---|---|
| Elementary incomplete | 25 | 17 |
| Elementary school finished | 21 | 9 |
| Junior high school finished | 11 | 24 |
| High school finished | 15 | 22 |
| College finished | 3 | 5 |
| Info missing | 25 | 22 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

measures their families had taken against them. In what could be described as a classical suicide, one young man got in a drunken argument with his older brother and hanged himself the same evening. A young boy, offended and angry when his mother turned off his game station in the middle of a contest, rushed out of the house and hanged himself. There are also one or two cases of suicide by young men who were frustrated when their parents refused their consent to marry the girl of their choice.

For the most part, these instances of suicide follow the traditional pattern. The incident leading up to the suicide, however insignificant it might appear, is viewed as the cause of the rift between the victim and his family. Even if the victim had a history of previous altercations with members of his family, the evidence suggested that this latest incident precipitated the suicide, if only because it confirmed in the eyes of the victim the broken bond between him and his family.

The reduced frequency of suicide among the very young, as we have seen, suggests that in recent suicides the element of impulsiveness, while never altogether absent, has been reduced. The individual choosing to take his (or increasingly *her*) own life may be subject to other forces—such as the familiar contagion effect of other recent suicides on the person—but he or she is still reacting to a personal crisis within the family. In earlier studies of Micronesia suicide, major emphasis was placed on the broken relationship between the victim and his family. The focus of these studies was the victim; relatively little attention was paid to the quality of family life itself. In the recent data set, however, the deficiencies in family life may have been better highlighted in the background information on victims. Even if what we might call family disruption cannot be easily quantified, it appears to be both a critical and an understudied factor in island suicides, whether the more recent cases or the older ones.

*Families with Multiple Suicides*

One strong marker of family disruption is when more than one of the children in the family have taken their own lives. Even the older data set offers numerous instances of this. The most remarkable was a single family in Chuuk in which five brothers were reported to have taken their lives during the late 1980s and early 1990s.[4] About ten years later a distinguished family from Pohnpei lost two middle-age brothers and the son of one of them to suicide.

The earlier data (1960–2006) record twenty-seven families in which at least two siblings committed suicide; in all but five of the cases, the siblings shared both parents. In four of those same twenty-seven families, three siblings committed suicide. In one of the families with multiple suicides, even the mother and father are recorded as having attempted to take their own lives. The multiple suicides were distributed rather evenly throughout the time period covered by the early data set. In two cases, the first suicide in the family occurred in the 1960s; in seven cases, it occurred in the 1970s; in nine cases, it occurred in the 1980s. Three had their beginning in the 1990s, and six in the period 2000–06.

The chronological proximity of the suicides within the families was not particularly close in most cases: generally there was an interval of at least three years, sometimes much longer, between the deaths. Some notable exceptions, however, can be found in the records. In the three families, the interval between suicides was just one year; and in another three families, it was even closer: the second suicide occurred in the same calendar year as the first. The concentration was most striking in one family that lost three young boys within a year and a half.

In the nine-year period (2007–15) covered by the recent data set, there were similar findings. Eight families in FSM suffered the loss of at least two siblings to suicide, with one of these families experiencing three deaths. In general, the interval between the deaths of the siblings was shorter than was found in the earlier data. In two of the families, the deaths occurred only a year apart, and in another two cases, the interval was two years.

Clearly suicide is far more likely to occur in some families than in others. In this, there appears to have been little change. Nonetheless, we have only noted families in which there have been multiple suicides among siblings. This does not take into account the suicides of other members of the family group: parents in a few cases, uncles and aunts in many more, and other members of the broader family living in the household or close by. Past writings on the subject have examined suicide clustering as a phenomenon observed in islands or villages, but no study has been done of suicidal families in Micronesia. As the general rate of suicide in FSM slowly declines, a few families seem to bear a greater share of the suicide burden in the islands. This topic might be profitably explored in future research.

*Family Disruption*

The background data gathered on suicides during the recent period (2007–15) offer a few examples of family disruption and an understanding of how it might have played a part in the decision of the victims to take their own lives.

The split up of parents or the death of a parent can be a major cause of family disruption. This is true today notwithstanding the common practice of traditional adoption in the past, with the son or daughter shifting from natural parents to adoptive parents with relative ease. From the anthropological literature on adoption, one could get the impression that parental ties were of secondary importance to young people, inasmuch as they were expected to move freely within broader family circles.[5] There is abundant testimony to the easy circulation of young people in the past. To judge from the low suicide rates back then, adoption does not appear to have put young people at risk of suicide.

Yet, the background information on recent victims suggests that the death or departure of one or both parents may be a strong force in suicide today. In one family, the death of a mother was soon followed by the suicide of two of her sons. When the father remarried, the sons sought out other family members with whom to live, but they frequently experienced problems with those they moved in with. Another young man took his own life after his mother abandoned his father to live with another man. The victim was reportedly ashamed at what his mother had done and bothered by the way in which his father responded to her departure. Yet another suicide victim, a few years later, was in a very similar situation when his mother left the family to marry another man. This victim, too, seems to have been motivated both by shame at his mother's behavior and anger at his father's reaction to the situation.

After suffering the loss of one or both parents, the children sometimes leave home and move around among other relatives. One woman, who had three children by different men, would not allow her offspring to stay with her after the man she married died. Accordingly, they moved off island to different places, taking whatever their father had left behind with them. Soon afterward one of the sons took his own life. In a similar case, a woman who had just lost her husband disposed of her land and began traveling back and forth between islands. Faced with the disintegration of his family and the prospect of leaving home, one of the sons hanged himself.

In some cases, even when the parents remain married to one another, they or their children may be propelled for one reason or another into a nomadic lifestyle. One couple from two different islands spent much of their time traveling from one island to another, leaving their sons unattended as they moved around. Within a few years, two of their sons committed suicide. In another

case, the parents remained at home, but the children shuttled from one relative to another, perhaps in search of the peace they could not find at home. One young man in this family eventually took his own life following an argument with his parents over his behavior.

Occasionally, young men and women who have left home—often to escape an unhappy home life—find themselves in the care of other relatives who may treat them even worse than their parents did. In one such case, a young man and his siblings went to live with an aunt who was not very well off and was seemingly unprepared to care for the young people who came to live with her. The young man committed suicide after he was scolded by one of his older siblings, but the act was no doubt conditioned by the difficulty he had been having with his aunt and his parents before that. In a different situation, a woman whose husband had just died was compelled to live with her husband's parents, who took every opportunity to embarrass her. Soon afterward she died at her own hand.

## FSM Suicides on Guam

As the survey of suicide in FSM was being conducted, the research team also gathered data on FSM people residing on Guam who committed suicide in recent years. The Government of Guam Vital Statistics Office provided anonymous data from death certificates that allowed us, through extensive interviews with Micronesian residents, to fill in the names and circumstances of those who had taken their own lives between 2003 and 2015. The average size of the migrant FSM population on Guam was about 13,000 during this period.[6] We hoped that the data gathered on Guam might provide an added dimension to the work being done on suicide in FSM, especially because no study of Micronesian suicide abroad had previously been done.

The number of FSM suicides on Guam for the period 2003–15, shown in Table 7, averages 8.5 each year. The number of suicides has been in double figures every year since 2009 except for two (2011 and 2014), whereas the suicide count for 2015 was the highest number for a single year yet. Although most of the suicides by far were of Chuukese, the latter made up 78 percent of the migrant FSM population on Guam. Hence, the Chuukese suicide rate was about the equivalent of that of FSM migrants from other states, notwithstanding Chuuk's high numbers.

Assuming an FSM population of 13,000, the suicide rate for FSM people residing on Guam during the period 2003–15 has been extremely high. As Figure 2 shows, the FSM suicide rate on Guam for 2006–10 was almost three times higher than the rate in FSM, and the difference was even greater in the most recent period, 2011–15. The figures for suicide on Guam shown here are

TABLE 7. **Suicides of FSM People on Guam by State and Year.**

| Year | FSM | Chuuk | Pohnpei | Kosrae | Yap |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2003 | 5 | 4 | | | 1 |
| 2004 | 6 | 6 | | | |
| 2005 | 11 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2006 | 4 | 3 | | | 1 |
| 2007 | 9 | 9 | | | |
| 2008 | 4 | 3 | 1 | | |
| 2009 | 13 | 12 | 1 | | |
| 2010 | 12 | 11 | 1 | | |
| 2011 | 3 | 3 | | | |
| 2012 | 13 | 9 | 4 | | |
| 2013 | 10 | 8 | 1 | | 1 |
| 2014 | 6 | 6 | | | |
| 2015 | 15 | 8 | 6 | 1 | |
| Total | 111 | 90 | 15 | 2 | 4 |

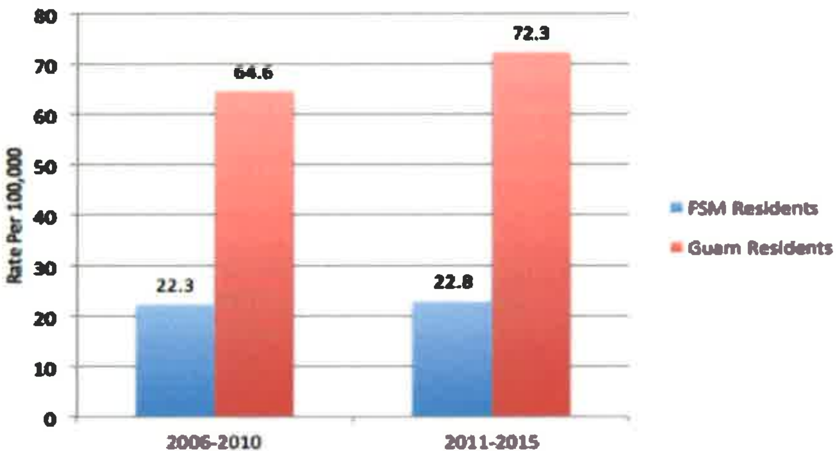


FIGURE 2. **Suicide Rate for FSM People Residing in FSM and on Guam, 2006–15.**

TABLE 8. **Percentage of Recent Suicides in Select Age Cohorts: Guam and FSM.**

| | <15 | 16–20 | 21–25 | 26–30 | 31–35 | 36–40 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guam (2003–15) | 5.4 | 23.4 | 31.5 | 17.1 | 11.7 | 6.3 |
| FSM (2007–15) | 9.5 | 28.1 | 23.3 | 14.3 | 6.7 | 6.7 |

by far the highest yet recorded for the island population. The combined rate of sixty-six per hundred thousand for Guam during recent years is 50 percent higher than the peak of suicide in Yap (forty-five) and double the suicide rate in Chuuk during its high years—from 1975 to 2000—when the rate was between thirty and thirty-five a year.

### *Gender and Age*

Despite the strikingly high suicide rate among FSM people on Guam, the trends in suicide are very much in line with those we find in FSM: a slightly higher rate among females and a lower rate among the very young.

Of the 111 suicide victims on Guam during this period, eleven were females. Females represent 10 percent of the total number of suicides, a percentage that is line with the growing female share in Micronesia. The female percentage in suicide in FSM was close to 13 percent over the most recent period, as is shown in Table 4.

As we have observed, the prevalence of suicide among the youngest age cohorts has notably dropped in FSM over recent years. Although in the early data set for suicide in FSM covering the period 1960–2006 teens or preteens committed over half of all suicides, that percentage has fallen in FSM to 37.6 percent in recent years.[7] Table 8 indicates that the percentage is even lower for FSM residents on Guam (28.8), suggesting that the impulsiveness characteristic of these young age groups is now playing a more modest role in suicide on Guam as it is throughout the islands.

### *Reasons for Suicide*

At first glance, the events triggering suicide on Guam appear to be indistinguishable from those that would occasion suicide back in the FSM. The parents had strong objections to the girl that one young man wanted to marry. A young man had an automobile accident when drunk and ruined a car that his family had just purchased. A teenage girl was denied permission to go out with some friends, and a sixteen-year-old boy was not permitted by his parents to perform at a public dance contest. A young man was embarrassed at a scolding his mother gave him in the presence of his best friend. A man, ashamed of his

arrest for public drunkenness, hanged himself in jail. A young man took his life after he was scolded by his relatives for speaking to his girlfriend too long on the phone. A girl was confronted by her uncle after sneaking out at night to see her boyfriend and was forbidden to do so in the future.

Yet, further investigation often reveals another dimension to the problem between the victim and his family—what has been earlier referred to as family disruption. The high incidence of suicide on Guam in recent years appears to have little to do with the financial struggles of migrant families, nor is it attributable to the belittling treatment that Micronesian migrants sometimes complain of receiving from local people on Guam. To gain a better understanding of this family disruption, we might look at those families with multiple suicides, as we did earlier in our review of the recent suicide data in FSM.

### *Families with Multiple Suicides*

The data set of FSM suicides on Guam shows seven families with deaths of more than one sibling; two of these families lost three siblings to suicide. The concentration of suicide in certain families, because of the difference in size of the data sets, appears to be even a stronger element in Guam than it has been in FSM during recent years. (It should be noted that the number of suicides in FSM is 202, almost double the 111 suicides on Guam.) Besides those families that have suffered the deaths of two or three siblings, others have experienced multiple deaths of close relatives. One young man who hanged himself in 2010 lost two cousins to suicide just one month apart from one another and two months before his own death. Another young victim, aged ten, was reportedly the third person to take his own life in the house in which he had been living.

The two families on Guam that lost three siblings to suicide offer some hints on the kind of family disruption that might make young people more susceptible to suicide. In one family in which all three boys took their own lives, their father died when they were all quite young, leaving their mother to care for them on an island that was not home for the family. None of the boys received much schooling, and all went to work while still young in the struggle to provide for family needs. With very few close kin on the island, all three seem to have been sadly lacking in family support.

In the other family with three suicides, the parents split up against the strong desire of the children. Each of the boys in the family finished high school and was able to find a job, but their ardent hope to reconcile their separated parents was frustrated. Each of them attempted to bring their parents together and failed, with the suicide of each occurring soon after his failed attempt.

*Family Disruption*

Some of the most tragic cases of such disruption are those in which parents have split up against the desires of their children, as in the case described above. A ten-year-old boy, who had been living on Guam for just three years, watched his parents break up and then took his life seemingly in frustration. Another boy, who had also experienced the break up of his parents, was living with his mother and watched helplessly as his mother's new boyfriend was preparing to drop her for another woman.

Other victims, because they did not have parents on Guam, were staying with other relatives. One was having problems with the shrewish aunt with whom he was staying. Another moved from one aunt to another but apparently could not find peace with either of them. Yet another young man was said to have found little support from the aunt who was caring for him when his girlfriend left him. A Pohnpeian girl who took her life was staying with an uncle and his family and helping take care of the home when she experienced difficulties with the uncle. One young woman from a broken family moved from one house to another because of difficulties in getting along with her relatives.

In a few instances, the suicide victims fell in love with persons judged to be too closely related to them and they were denied the opportunity to marry them. This happened to one young man in 2013, and to another two years later. The most famous example of this was undoubtedly the Micronesian couple, first cousins of one another, who jumped off Two Lovers Point together, thus reenacting the tale that gave the landmark its name. It is easy to imagine that these young people might not have had the detailed schooling on just who their relatives were that they would have received back home; therefore, they could unknowingly fall in love with a forbidden partner. In some cases, the mere fact that they were living with close relatives just outside their immediate family might have made it easier for them to disregard their blood bond. At any rate, the frustration of not being able to secure permission for such weddings presumably would have triggered the suicide.

Overall, there are strong suggestions in the Guam data, as in the recent FSM data, that circumstances in the family, even apart from those that might spark direct conflict between members of the family, may provide an environment that occasions suicide. As in the FSM data already reviewed, loss of one or both parents, moving back and forth between relatives, and custodial care by an unsympathetic relative without any fallback are all markers of the sort of family disruption that can result in suicide.

## Conclusion

The pattern of Micronesian suicide that has emerged in earlier research has been largely confirmed in this study. Suicide remains preponderantly male,

although slightly less so than in the past. The young remain at greatest risk, although the very young are resorting to this strategy less frequently than before; an increasing percentage of those who take their lives do so in their twenties and thirties. Suicide remains, as it has always been, a resort for those who feel that their bonds with family have been severely threatened or damaged beyond repair. The motives remain, as before, anger and shame prompted by something that either the victims or their close relatives have done to create a rift between them. In short, the basic dynamics of suicide along with its cultural meaning remain just what they have always been.

For several decades now, the Micronesian family has clearly been undergoing a major transformation. The lineage group, whether or not coresident, has lost the privileged position it once enjoyed. The likely explanation for this shift is that the cash income that was being made available to ever more islanders presented a challenge to the old land-based economy that was central to the way in which the lineage functioned. The effect of the cash economy, at least in this author's judgment, was to weaken the bonds that kept the lineage functioning as an economic and social unit. This traditional lineage, with its multiple parents and the strong role of the maternal uncle, modified the authority role of the natural father and provided for a number of intermediaries in the event of conflict within the family. As the residential lineage unit lost its authority, however, the nuclear family achieved a degree of autonomy that it never before enjoyed. The authority of the father grew even as the nuclear family had to do without the senior family members who might serve as mediators in conflict. There may have been other forces at work in escalating suicide rates, but in all probability this was one of the strongest.

If the original explosion of Micronesian suicide that began in the late 1960s was brought on by the breakdown of the extended Micronesian family, we could at least hope that islanders would eventually make the social adjustments needed to bring down the high suicide rate. The recent data on suicide in FSM presented here suggest that the rate is falling at last. We may yet see the suicide rate drop to what it had been before the economic and social upheaval in the islands.

At the same time, however, the suicide rate of Micronesian migrants to Guam has recently skyrocketed to a new high, surpassing any of the peak rates in Micronesia itself. The juxtaposition of the declining rate in the islands and the escalation of suicide among Micronesian on Guam may be paradoxical, but it might suggest that hitherto unexplored forces are at play. Many of the recent victims on Guam appear to have come from incomplete families or damaged families. Is migration, if only because it denies vulnerable young people access to the support of family members they might have relied on back home, yet another contributing factor in suicide?

Often enough among the migrants who have moved to Guam in large numbers, not even the nuclear family system is intact. Hence, migrants are often denied even the relatively frail support system—at least by comparison with the traditional lineage—that the nuclear family provided. It is no surprise, then, that young people who have migrated to Guam are often unable to find the support they need in the face of the additional stress that is an inevitable part of life abroad.

In view of the growing visibility of families with multiple suicides, suggesting that certain families are more troubled than others, this might be the time to explore family disruption even as we attempt to refine the concept itself. Such an effort would offer a new and potentially fruitful avenue of research in Micronesian suicide.

## NOTES

1. Donald Rubinstein, a cultural anthropologist who had recently completed his dissertation, and Geoff White, working at the East–West Center in Honolulu, both developed an early interest in Micronesian suicide. My own attempt to explore the suicide problem began in 1976 with the publication of an article "Tragic End to Troubled Youth." Key publications on Micronesian suicide include Rubinstein 1982, 1983, 1985, 1987; and Hezel 1984, 1985, 1987, and 1989.

2. The rapid social and political transition of the 1960s is captured in a number of works: among them are Nufer 1978, Nevin 1977, and Hezel 1995.

3. Thomas Gladwin, an anthropologist who worked in Chuuk for several years in the early post-war years, writes that he was forced to rethink his assumption "that the man is in a securely dominant position in the society" (Gladwin 1953, 307). He is far from the only one to recognize belatedly the importance of women in island societies (Hezel 1987, 289).

4. Although informants in the community insist that five members of the family took their own lives, only three of the deaths are confirmed in the suicide database.

5. For a summary of anthropological thinking on adoption in Micronesia, see Marshall 1999.

6. In the survey of FSM migration on Guam completed in 2012 by Hezel and Michael Levin, 13,558 FSM people were found to be living on the island. This can be compared to the migrant population of 9,098 recorded in 2003. Because the increase of the migrants was rapid and the present level achieved some years ago, we assumed an average population of about 13,000 over the course of the period 2003–15.

7. The sum of the first two columns in Table 8 provides the total for preteens and teens.

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# INVISIBLE ISLANDERS: PRECARIOUS WORK AND PACIFIC SETTLERS IN RURAL AUSTRALIA

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A growing number of studies have focused on precarious employment in relation to temporary and illegal immigration status. However, few have examined if this precarity is resolved once migrants acquire permanent residency. This article explores the work experiences of Pacific Islander settlers in rural Australia who either overstayed their visas or had temporary visas and later acquired Australian residency. These Pacific people are employed primarily in seasonal labor and find it difficult to gain more secure employment outside the horticultural sector. Even members of the second generation tend to work as casual laborers on farms. The difficulties migrants face in acquiring more stable jobs and their concerns about their children's futures demonstrate the ongoing impacts of initial immigration statuses. We argue that Pacific settlers are "invisible" in ways that exacerbate their precarious situation and that they have been largely neglected in rural migration studies and policymaking in rural areas.

## Introduction

The presence of long-term Pacific Islander settlers in rural Australia has been largely neglected in the literature on the Pacific diaspora. The focus of research has been primarily on settlement in urban centers in the main host nations of Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (e.g. Howard and Rensel 2012; Spickard, Rondilla, and Hippolite Wright 2002). Since the introduction of formal seasonal worker schemes in New Zealand and Australia, research has also

*Pacific Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3—Dec. 2017

begun to emerge on this movement into rural areas in those countries. Recent studies of these schemes have tended to focus on their value for Pacific nations' development (Curtain et al. 2016; Gibson, McKenzie, and Rohorua 2008; Maclellan 2009) and for employers within the horticultural industry (Hay and Howes 2012; MBIE 2013). Although these studies contribute to filling in a gap in knowledge about the rural migration of Pacific people, they have ignored the long-term Pacific settlers who already live in the regions that are attracting seasonal workers and who also rely on the horticultural industry for employment.

These Pacific settlers have been rendered "invisible" not only in academic research but also from the perspective of service provision and official statistics. This article explores the causes and consequences of this invisibility and the precarious nature of these rural migrants' employment by focusing on the experiences of Pacific people who currently have permanent residence or Australian citizenship and live in northwest Victoria. Many of them entered Australia with temporary immigration statuses, including student and visitor visas, and then "overstayed" and sought income opportunities in horticultural work as seasonal laborers. Once settled in the rural areas, they went through the difficult process of gaining permanent residency, and many have now been in northern Victoria for twenty years or more. Yet they remain invisible in significant and multiple ways, exacerbating their precarious situation and leading them to depend on what they regard as the security of access to employment as seasonal laborers.

Much of the work on precarity in relation to migrants has focused on immigration statuses without secure residency, including temporary migrants and undocumented migrants (Anderson 2010; Bernhard et al. 2007; Boese et al. 2013; Sigona 2012). These studies have shown that such migrants often have precarious employment conditions that have negative impacts on their lives more generally. Focusing on this connection between immigration statuses without secure residency and precariousness can lead to the assumption that once residency is acquired, migrants' circumstances will improve. However, the experiences of Pacific settlers in rural areas illustrate that this is not the case and that migrants' initial immigration statuses can have long-term effects. As this article reveals, Pacific migrants continue to struggle to find employment other than unstable seasonal jobs, and they are also concerned about their children's precarious futures as many leave school early and work on farms (referred to in the area as "on the block") with their parents in the same temporary and insecure jobs.

## Invisible Migrants? An Underresearched Population

The ethnographic research on which this article is based was conducted between August and December 2014 and between January and May 2016 in

northwest Victoria in the towns of Mildura and Robinvale and the surrounding rural area. Participants include seventy Pacific Islanders, including Tongans, Cook Islanders, Fijians, Solomon Islanders, and ni-Vanuatu, who completed questionnaires and in-depth interviews. In addition, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, such as farmers and service providers. Our field sites are a considerable distance from major cities: Mildura is located 542 km northwest of Melbourne and 393 km northeast of Adelaide, and Robinvale is 90 km southeast of Mildura. According to the 2011 census, Mildura has a population of 31,298, including various Pacific groups, whereas Robinvale has a population of only 3,763, and its Pacific population is predominantly Tongan (AEC Group 2012, 3). The economy of the region is supported by horticultural production, including table grapes, oranges, and almonds. Although the increasing mechanization of farming influences the demand for labor, tasks such as harvesting and pruning still need personnel, and Pacific people have contributed to this work for many years.

In addition to sociocultural diversity within these Pacific groups, there have been some differences in their treatment under Australia's immigration policies. For example, the Cook Islands is in free association with New Zealand, so its population can work in Australia without any restrictions using New Zealand passports under the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement, although since 2001 they have not been entitled to financial support, including welfare payments. In contrast, those who have passports from Tonga, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu only have preferential visa access to Australia through the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP). Following New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme, introduced in 2007 (Cummings 2013) Australia established the SWP in 2012 after a pilot version was run from 2008 to 2012: the Pacific Seasonal Worker Scheme (Connell 2015; Tazreiter et al. 2016). The SWP is open to ten Pacific nations, and workers stay in Australia for four to seven months at a time, engaging primarily in horticultural work.

The research participants discussed in this article have diverse immigration statuses, including Australian citizenship, Australian permanent residence, or New Zealand passports and visitor visas or are overstayers, the term used in Australia for undocumented migrants. Despite the diversity among Pacific participants, those who have engaged in horticultural labor in the area also have shared experiences of precarity, which are the focus of this article. Since this article examines the long-term effects of initial immigration statuses, it focuses primarily on interview data collected from thirty migrants who have Australian citizenship or permanent residency and stakeholders, including farmers and health care providers.

One of the most striking findings of our research is that all of the participants have expressed the view that Pacific people are "invisible" and largely

unknown within the wider community. Stakeholders have welcomed our research because they are concerned about the lack of empirical data about Pacific populations in the area, something that is needed in their policymaking and planning. Community leaders have also welcomed the research because they believe that Pacific people in rural areas receive less attention than other groups. A Tongan woman in Mildura aptly described this invisibility by saying that the Pacific populations are positioned "in-between" Aboriginal people and refugees. As the federal government tries to "share the burden of hosting new arrivals between different localities" by facilitating "the dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees away from major urban centres" (Johnston, Vasey, and Markovic 2009, 93), Mildura has become one of the destinations for refugees and humanitarian entrants (Marston 2003). From the Tongan woman's perspective, Pacific people's generally low socioeconomic status and issues such as precarious employment are problems largely shared with refugees and Aboriginal people. However, most of the government funding and support programs are directed toward the other groups (Anscombe and Doyle 1997; Murray 2010). As a service provider in Mildura explained, "I don't see much that is designed or catering to the welfare of Pacific Islander groups unless they fall into particular visa categories."

Frustration was expressed by migrants as well, and another Tongan woman pointed out that two questions prevent Pacific people from accessing public services in Australia: "Are you a refugee? Are you an indigenous [person]? . . . If I seek help from you, [you will ask,] are you an indigenous? No. Are you refugees? No. Don't meet the criteria." However, the problem is also lack of knowledge. In her study of Pacific people in Wollongong, a coastal city in New South Wales, Vasta (2004, 209) found that many of them did not know "what services are available and how to access them," and the same can be said of those living in the Mildura and Robinvale area.

The invisibility of Pacific people in rural areas is also an issue in the academic and policy literature. In general, the flow of international migrants to rural areas has received less attention than movement into urban areas. Although cities continue to be the main destinations for such migrants, demographers have recently found that this trend is changing and that "the growth of immigrant populations has been greater outside of gateway cities than in them" (Hugo 2011, 152). This tendency is not limited to Australia but is also found in host countries such as New Zealand and the United States (Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008; Spoonley and Bedford 2008). Despite these findings, in migration and globalization studies, rural areas continue to be underresearched. In Australia, there have been some studies since the 2000s of government-led movement of international migrants to rural areas, including skilled migrants through the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (Hugo, Khoo, and McDonald 2006;

Wickaramaarachchi and Butt 2014) and refugees being resettled (Broadbent, Cacciattolo, and Carpenter 2007). The emergence of studies of the SWP for Pacific people has been part of this general focus on government-led migration programs (Curtain et al. 2016; Tazreiter et al. 2016). Working holiday makers are included in that focus, especially since the federal government gave them an incentive to work in horticulture by allowing them to extend their visas (Tan and Lester 2012; Underhill and Rimmer 2015). Underhill and Rimmer (2015, 25) argue that the uniqueness of horticultural work in Australia lies in the fact that it "is now performed predominantly by international backpackers—young well-educated workers with mostly sound English language skills" as well as undocumented migrants who overstay their visas. However, they do not mention the permanent settlers who also do this work, further illustrating the invisibility of these populations.

Many Pacific people move to rural areas without involvement in any government programs, including the thirty residency holders discussed in this article, of whom sixteen initially overstayed temporary visas, five had New Zealand passports, two successfully obtained skilled visas after studying in Australia, and the other seven came to Australia through family reunification schemes or partner visas. While these diverse channels have been used by Pacific migrants for many years, their experiences have received little attention. An important exception is Mark Schubert's (2009) study of Fijians in Griffith, New South Wales, a rural town with a predominance of horticultural work for its Pacific population. Schubert explores how the settled Fijian population supports their undocumented compatriots. Since Schubert's research, the influx of workers through the SWP has created new challenges for long-term settlers in areas such as Griffith, as has occurred in northwest Victoria. Recent studies calling for a further expansion of the SWP have not taken into account any of the potential impacts on the settled Pacific population (Curtain et al. 2016).

The invisibility of Pacific people in rural areas is also evident in census data. It is well known by stakeholders as well as researchers that census data in horticultural areas such as Mildura and Robinvale do not accurately represent the population in general (McKenzie, Martin, and Paris 2008). For example, while the 2011 census shows that 169 people in Robinvale either are born in Tonga or have Tongan ancestry (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015), a Tongan community leader estimates that there are about 500 Tongans there. A service provider in Mildura acknowledged that there is a lack of information available to migrants, including those from the Pacific, that explains the purpose of the census and the benefits of participation, such as the use of census data to influence funding of hospitals and other services and for policymaking. As in other communities, there are many Pacific people who do not complete the census forms for a range of reasons—reluctance to give personal information,

not understanding the form, not having time, and so on—and, of course, there are some who choose to remain invisible due to their status as overstayers.

Service providers recognize that one of the ways to solve the problem of Pacific people's invisibility is to build up trust and stable communication channels with their communities. Efforts to achieve this can already be seen in some government schools and hospitals in the Mildura and Robinvale area that employ Pacific cultural liaison officers. However, even with their help, service providers are still struggling to build relationships with the Pacific population. For example, a health worker in Robinvale acknowledged that the only Pacific person he knows in the area is the cultural liaison officer with whom he works and added, "I don't even know who's the minister of the Tongan church here!" In addition, organizations can usually employ only one liaison officer who will be from a specific ethnic group within the broad category "Pacific Islanders." Liaison officers are typically Tongans or Samoans, as these are the largest Pacific populations in the Mildura and Robinvale area. While each officer tries his or her best to support all Pacific populations, Amelia, a Tongan liaison officer in Mildura, admitted that she cannot provide the same service to all groups. For example, one of her roles is to visit households, and although she can communicate with Tongans in their own language, she cannot do the same for other Pacific clients. In addition, Amelia explains that the poor English proficiency of some Pacific settlers contributes to their invisibility and reduces their likelihood of accessing services and interacting with the wider community. She claims that such Pacific people "can't come to terms with communicating with the *pālangi* [Anglo-European] people; they don't know how or they don't want to make mistakes in front of them. They are too scared."

This resonates with stakeholders' concerns that they do not have strong communication channels with Pacific communities, which is also due to the important role that churches play as community hubs in the Pacific diaspora (Lee 2003; Macpherson and Macpherson 2009). While this can provide important support networks within communities, it also tends to reduce the level of people's engagement with the wider society. Ministers of Pacific churches are expected by their congregations to act as counselors and social workers, and this can lead them to act as gatekeepers to the community. A service provider in Mildura observed that because any issues affecting members of church congregations tend to be directed to ministers, ethnic churches are unintentionally "masking those issues." Since there are no official "reporting lines" established, the information provided to ministers is not transmitted to community organizations, service providers, and government agencies.

Cultural values are another factor hindering Pacific people from openly discussing their problems with others. A Cook Islander man in Mildura observed,

> When you ask Pukapukan [a cultural group within Cook Islands], when they are sick, when they have a broken or really crook, broken leg, broken hand or suffering from disease of whatever, you ask him, honestly, you ask him "how are you?" Other cultures, races, ethnic groups [would say], "I'm terrible, I have pain, or my arms are broken, I have this disease, I don't know what to do." But the Pukapukan response is different. The Pukapukan response is "I'm OK," even if they are having their last breath.... That's the culture.... The only time they can say they're no good is not them. It's the other person. The other person can tell them they're no good.

During the interview, he was speaking as a Cook Islander, but in the quote above he specifically identifies himself as a Pukapukan. Therefore, the extent to which his observation is applicable to all Pacific people is debatable; however, within the Tongan community, there is certainly a cultural value of stoicism and a reluctance to seek help, particularly from non-Tongans (Lee 2003). As one Tongan woman in Mildura asserted, "We trust our family and those people that we know well, and [we prefer] to seek support from them, and be helping each other." Since the Pacific population in Mildura and Robinvale is comprised of people with diverse immigration statuses, a further factor increasing their invisibility is that overstayers are highly reluctant to seek help outside their own community for fear of detection and deportation. Undocumented migrants are typically associated with invisibility (e.g., Bernhard et al. 2007; Sigona 2012), making it more difficult to gain information about either their numbers or their needs.

The many factors that make Pacific Islander settlers "invisible" exacerbate their precarious situation because the issues and problems they face and even the size of their populations are not being communicated to those who can provide support beyond their own local ethnic community or church congregation. In contrast, backpackers who work in the same horticultural industry have a stronger voice; they top the list of people complaining about their employment to the Fair Work Ombudsman (Beilharz 2016) and are more accessible to researchers (Underhill and Rimmer 2015). Recently, Pacific workers employed through the SWP also have gained attention for their exploitative conditions (Hermant 2016). These cases create the false impression that only working holiday makers and temporary workers are detrimentally affected, masking the issues that Pacific settlers have been dealing with for many years.

## Precarious Horticultural Work

The Mildura and Robinvale area was multicultural long before the recent influx of refugees being resettled (Department Immigration and Multicultural

and Indigenous Affairs 2003), as the area has attracted diverse international migrants seeking work in the horticultural sector. According to the 2001 census, 33 percent of horticulturalists in the Mallee Statistical Division, which covers Mildura and Robinvale, "spoke a language other than English at home" (Missingham, Dibden, and Cocklin 2004, 29). The history of migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds moving to rural Victoria can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, when southern European settlers migrated to the area. They continued to migrate throughout the two world wars and more recently in the 1970s and 1980s (Missingham, Dibden, and Cocklin 2006). They purchased small-scale farms that created stability for their families, and they encouraged upward mobility for their children by investing in their education (Price 1963). From the 1980s, when their children found jobs outside the farms, they began employing migrant workers, including backpackers and Pacific people. Most of the research participants are working for either Italian or Greek farmers, with only a few working for Anglo-Australian farmers.

Richard, a second-generation Italian migrant in Robinvale who inherited seventy acres of vineyard from his parents, explained this historical shift in the use of harvest laborers: "Years ago, you worked on one farm, your family worked all together; it was okay but today it's just too hard. Family is all separated, and by yourself, you've gotta employ lots of workers." Richard described his difficulty managing the cost of hiring personnel and how, in order to save money, he transformed half of his family vineyard into a garlic farm. He can manage that by himself for most of the year except during harvesting, when he employs forty people for three to four weeks. In contrast, table grapes cost him much more because it takes about three months for fourteen people to complete harvesting his thirty-five acres of vineyard. In addition, he employs ten to twelve people for about three months for pruning. Therefore, from the workers' point of view, table grapes provide jobs for about six months, while garlic provides work for only a few weeks.

Pacific settlers in the area engage in the longer-term seasonal work, such as table grapes and almonds, while the short-term harvesting jobs are often undertaken by working holiday makers and international students primarily from Asia, who are organized by contractors. Richard explained,

> Asians are taking over. Pacific Islanders, Tongans or Fijians, they are around, but not as many. Ten years ago, there were a lot more Tongan people, Fijian people. They are still around but Asian contractors come around and they supply all Asians, very little Pacific Islanders in that group. Contractors approach us and they bring workers. Before they [Pacific people] came to the farm, knocked on the door, and [farmers] employed them. But today, the contractors got everything together.... They [Pacific people] used to come as family ... a big family group of

> six or seven people . . . because being in there for so long, right, everyone knows everyone. That's why the Islanders work in one farm and stay there for ten years. They work on that farm all the time but now it's changed. Contractors changed everything.

Richard started employing "Asians" (mostly Malaysians and Vietnamese) because of the convenience of having a contractor in charge of arranging his workforce. During the research, no Pacific people were encountered who had lost their jobs because of these contractors. However, Richard's description of Pacific workers matches participants' accounts, as they work seasonally for specific farmers for many years, also utilizing networks of family and friends within their own ethnic group. A Cook Islander man in Mildura explained, "Cook Islanders, they worked on one farm, and then two brothers [owners] separated, and the most of our people work in these two farms." Job security for Pacific people therefore relies on their relationships with employers, creating a precarious situation particularly in the context of shifting agricultural methods and labor hiring practices. If farmers change their crops or begin to rely on contract workers, including through the SWP, rather than personal approaches by workers, Pacific settlers risk losing their main source of employment in the area.

Purchasing farmland is no longer affordable for migrants, as they have to compete with large-scale agribusiness, and in any case it would be difficult for most Pacific people to save enough money due to their ongoing obligations to send remittances to kin in the islands. Therefore, Pacific people have continued to work as landless seasonal laborers, and they still prefer to secure their employment directly from farmers rather than using contractors to find jobs in order to avoid losing the margins that contractors take. Many research participants emphasized the importance of good relationships with their employers, and while they admit that there are "bad farmers" who may underpay people or not pay on time, they said that if that happened, they would not return to that farmer the following year. However, their strategy to secure employment—creating a relationship with a "good" farmer who pays workers fairly—relies heavily on farmers' goodwill and does not address the precarity of their employment.

Even if one is employed by a "good" farmer, harvesting jobs are inherently precarious. Generally, most of the harvesting jobs are available only during summer and autumn, and wages are determined by the amount of produce that a worker can pick. For example, participants reported that, for grapes, a worker is currently paid between AUD$2 and AUD$3.50 per box, which weighs around 8 to 10 kg, with rates depending on the quality and kind of grapes and their destination (e.g., exported overseas or sold by domestic supermarkets). According to workers, if you are a "quick picker" who can fill up many boxes, it is possible to earn more than AUD$1,000 a week; some people can even earn more than AUD$1,500 a

week. Since most people can earn a lot of money only during a period of three to four months, workers want to pick for as many hours as possible each day. However, the weather can hinder this, as working hours are limited on days above 40°C, which is common in that region, and while it seldom rains in summer, even a short shower ruins a day's work because fruit cannot be harvested when it is wet.

Another source of precarity is that settlers need to survive periods with little income, unlike those in the SWP, who stay in Australia only temporarily. Undocumented migrants cannot access any government support when unemployed, so they strive particularly hard to save while they have work. Pacific people with Australian residency have access to welfare payments (if they meet the eligibility criteria), but they also try to save as much as possible during their working months. However, creating savings is more difficult for them, as they are under more pressure than overstayers to contribute to remittances and meet other familial obligations and community expectations. Tongan settlers reported that fund-raising groups frequently visit the area during summer, when people have more disposable income. A Tongan man with Australian citizenship said everyone in Tonga knows about Robinvale:

> There are heaps and heaps and heaps of groups come from Tonga to raise money and Robinvale, I can say it's the best area. They got money. When we first arrived here in the early days, when the groups come in there they raise up $10,000, but now they just come up to $20,000, $30,000. . . . Like the schools, most of the schools they just come around, the church, they just come and ask for money to help build a church or a place for the minister. Robinvale is well known in Tonga. . . . Every group thinking about coming to Australia for one month, Robinvale the first one, was put on the list.

In addition to financial precarity, employment in the horticultural industry impacts workers' health. While the Australian health workers interviewed focused on Pacific people's lifestyle-related diseases, including obesity, diabetes, and heart problems, farmworkers are more concerned with the physically challenging nature of their work, which leaves them aching and exhausted; with how many chemicals are used on the farms, which affects people with sensitive skins and can cause long-term health problems; and with how the hot weather drains their energy (see Holmes 2013).

Exposure to the health risks of horticultural work can continue for many years given the difficulties of finding other forms of employment and the lack of income security in old age. While the majority of SWP participants are males between twenty-one and forty-five years old (Joint Standing Committee on Migration 2016: 16–17), the age range of settlers who work in the horticultural

industry is much broader: children may help their parents during their school holidays, teenagers work seasonally when they leave school, and older people continue to work due to lack of retirement savings. In fact, it is not uncommon to see Pacific people older than sixty working on farms, especially New Zealand passport holders, who are ineligible to receive the Age Pension.

The most negative descriptions of horticultural employment are commonly heard from the children of migrants who were born and raised in Australia or New Zealand. For example, Sālote, who grew up in Mildura, is now in her late twenties and works with her parents and two brothers on a farm as a harvest laborer. The farmer grows diverse fruit crops, including table grapes, mandarins, oranges, lemons, grapefruits, and avocados, helping Sālote's family to secure employment from mid-February to mid-December. During the two months when they have no income, Sālote's family has to live on their savings. Although her family members are Australian citizens and thus are eligible for unemployment benefits, they have not applied for them, of which Sālote is proud. When asked if her employer pays her family members fairly, her answer was "no":

> Like I went to school so I've got a bit of knowledge and going out to the block I just know we're getting underpaid and we're not getting everything that we should, because we should be getting some super but we're not and there's just other people that are getting underpaid by contractors.

In Australia, by law any employees who are older than eighteen years and earn more than AUD$450 before taxes in a month are entitled to be paid superannuation on top of their wages, to be accessed on retirement from the workforce. However, the employers of most of the research participants working in the horticultural industry are not paying any superannuation. Sālote's explanation highlights that without knowledge, people cannot fully understand their rights and entitlements or even recognize problems. None of the research participants were aware of avenues of support, such as the Fair Work Ombudsman, so they had never officially reported any problems. Even Sālote, who has some knowledge, does not know where to report work-related issues or how to solve problems such as underpayments and false deductions. In any case, addressing such problems is risky: Sālote recalled that her family once tried to ask a farmer to pay their superannuation, but he "comes up with excuses and just threatens to give us the sack . . . that's why we ignore it."

## Secure or Precarious? Relative Perspectives on Horticultural Work

Boese et al. (2013, 318) argue that there are two ways to treat the concept of precariousness in relation to employment: first, "in the sense of objective

conditions of heightened insecurity, as these are produced through both legal regulation and social practice," and, second, as "individual experiences of precarious conditions . . . and the perceptions and feelings of precariousness or insecurity that may arise out of these experiences." Both apply in the case of the Pacific settlers in our study; however, it is also important to acknowledge that feelings of precarity and security can be relative. Horticultural work in the Mildura and Robinvale region is seen by many Pacific people as a safer, more secure option than living in Australian cities or in their home country.

Almost all Pacific Islander interviewees who have worked in the horticultural industry raised their initial immigration status as a factor leading them to work in regional Victoria, and more than half of them had spent time as overstayers. As with other industrialized countries, the Australian government prefers skilled migrants and thus offers limited options for unskilled workers, the category into which most Pacific people fit. In fact, the Australian government regards Pacific people as potential overstayers, so obtaining even visitor visas is difficult and can require family members in Australia to pay bonds so they do not breach their visa conditions. However, if they manage to get to Australia, many people try to stay as long as possible in order to support their family in the homeland because income opportunities in Pacific countries are limited. A Tongan man in his forties who overstayed his student visa and was eventually granted permanent residency through marriage with an Australian woman said, "Sometimes people talk: going to heaven is easier than coming to Australia, and it's right. It's still hard. Because the law is very strict." Some overstayers are caught and deported, but there are also those who have been granted permanent residency by one means or another, depending on the immigration regime at the time. It is not unusual for them to fight for this for more than a decade, until their residency is granted or they are forced to return to the islands.

It is illegal to employ people without work permits in Australia, so it is difficult to find work in urban areas, but many undocumented migrants still have access to jobs in horticultural areas such as Mildura and Robinvale. Farmers are concerned primarily with getting their fruit harvested in time and so may not question prospective employees' visa status (Mares 2005). A Tongan man in Mildura who now has permanent residency reflected on his migration process:

> We just heard about Mildura. Because when we were staying in Sydney, me and my wife [were] both illegal in Australia, so we couldn't find a permanent job, so we heard about Mildura . . . it's easier for illegal immigrants to have jobs here. That's [fruit] picking, so we decided to come and see.

As undocumented migrants and New Zealand passport holders in Australia cannot access welfare payments or the Medicare system of free public health, it

is essential for them to find paid work, even if the job is characterized by unstable income as discussed previously. David, a Cook Islander man in Mildura who has been working on a farm for twenty years, explains,

> The only opportunity is here, you don't have to be Einstein to work on the farm. It's all common sense. So they [Cook Islanders] started moving here. The money, when people see money, they forget about their problems.... A few people started coming, then the news spread, the word of mouth.

As people can make up to $1,500 a week during the harvest season, this makes them feel "secure" compared to their life in the islands or in urban areas in Australia where they experience unemployment. Those who have established relationships with particular farmers over a number of years also tend to regard their seasonal work as secure and ongoing. In describing the work, they tend to downplay the negative, more precarious aspects and focus on their perceptions of security as well as positive aspects, such as the camaraderie between workers.

However, horticultural work does not offer opportunities for socioeconomic mobility, such as promotion to higher-paid work or even gaining more stable employment. Therefore, while horticultural jobs generate instant immediate income, which migrants regard as a form of security, some long-term settlers with permanent residency or Australian citizenship do seek other opportunities. For example, David, quoted above, acquired Australian citizenship in 2014, making him eligible to receive government financial support for education, so he enrolled in a diploma of social work at a technical college. He explained,

> I felt I did everything that I need to do on the farm because in the farm, there's nowhere else to go, like to further yourself. You cannot develop your skills. I thought I learnt everything I need to know and there's no progression for me. I felt that I needed to use my skills elsewhere. I felt that I can bond with people, or I found it that I have a gift for communicating with people, so utilise all my skills in that area. So I thought I go back to school.

While many Pacific people would prefer to have more stable employment, few pursue the path of adult education, and there are limited options in Mildura and Robinvale for unskilled employment. In addition, as stated earlier, it can take more than ten years for overstayers to acquire permanent residency, making it difficult to apply for other forms of employment outside the horticultural industry.

Even for Pacific people with permanent residency, the wider community's stereotype of them as "fruit pickers" is so strong that they often feel stigmatized

and prevented from obtaining other jobs. As Vasta found in her study of Pacific people in Wollongong, "Not only are Pacific Islanders discriminated against because of their skin colour, they are also stigmatised as being uneducated, untrained and only useful for unskilled labour" (Vasta 2004, 207). The experiences of Eseta, a Tongan woman now in her fifties, illustrate just how difficult it can be to escape the fruit-picker stereotype. Eseta moved to Mildura from Sydney in 1994 to join her mother but did not like fruit picking. She already had permanent residence in Australia and so began looking for another job but claims it took her twenty years until she finally found a part time job in 2014. She describes how she felt during her job-hunting period:

> Very long and it's made me a little bit depressed, because I don't want to be under welfare system for very long, because I just couldn't help it. My husband is doing seasonal work and sometimes it rains; sometimes there's no work. It depend on the weather and also the market from overseas and local markets for the fruits to go through. It's very frustrating. You wanted to have a proper job to be employed and help but just couldn't. I try to get into the retail area like shops. Same thing, they just looked at me and maybe they think my age is getting [old] and maybe they think that I'm not capable of doing anything good, but I have been trying so much. I've tried so much as long as I can get employed. I even applied for petrol stations, dry-cleaners.

The burden of stereotypes and the added obstacle of high rates of unemployment in Mildura and Robinvale affect not only the migrant generation but also their children. Here, we can observe the long-term effects of the parents' initial immigration statuses that led them to choose seasonal work. That work becomes generational as eventually their children also become seasonal laborers "on the block." Many Pacific people acknowledge that this is a problem; for example, Finau, a Tongan man in Mildura and a father of four children, observed that since he moved there in 1993, "I hardly see any youth, any of our youth further than picking. They just fall from school and out at the block. From school, getting married, and out at the block." Many interviewees gave particularly negative descriptions about horticultural work once they began speaking about their children's employment options; precarious aspects of the work that they downplayed in relation their own situation seemed less acceptable when they thought of their children's futures.

There are several key factors leading Pacific Islander youth to leave school early and join their parents in seasonal work. One is the rural location, which provides limited options for education and employment. Finau, quoted above, says, "Mildura is limit[ing]. It limits the things we do in here. . . . Mildura raises the children here until they finish the high school. When they move onto the

university or stuff like that, the option is to be in city." Although the other research participants share Finau's view that cities offer more opportunities for migrants' children, many young people remain in the area and follow their parents into horticultural work. As a cultural liaison officer, this issue is of concern to Amelia, who explained how children may understand seasonal work:

> Sometimes they [children] think it's easy job. They will go out there with mum and dad and pick a lot of boxes and maybe he'll get paid maybe $400 or whatever for example, and they will think that it's easy money. . . . For them to go out and look for jobs . . . it's a big thing for some children. So they think "oh yeah, go out and pick with mum and dad. That's easy. Let's go out there, follow them and get that money."

Most research participants said that they have taken their children to the farms where they work. While some did this to teach them how hard the work is in the hope that their children will choose a different path, others use their children's labor to increase their household income. A service provider raised his concern about low school completion rates for children in Pacific communities, explaining that when children reach high school age, some become part of the family workforce "on the block" with their parents. He claimed that some high school children take weeks away from school to help their parents during the picking season, further limiting their chances of completing high school and having different careers.

## Conclusion

Southern European migrants who settled in rural northwest Victoria from the late nineteenth century experienced upward mobility by purchasing orchards and vineyards and investing in their children's education. From the 1980s, they employed backpackers and other migrant workers, including Pacific people, as seasonal laborers. Many of the Pacific people were drawn to the area because their status as overstayers was less likely to be an obstacle to finding work than in the cities. Although many settled in the region and managed, often after a long struggle, to gain permanent residency, they did not become landowners or farmers, and most have continued to rely on precarious seasonal horticultural employment. From an objective perspective, relying on unstable income earned in the harsh conditions of such labor is clearly associated with precarity. However, from many Pacific migrants' point of view, the "easy" accessibility of income through fruit picking is initially considered to be an "opportunity" that generally provides them with feelings of security rather than precarity. Permanent residency also provides a form of security, as there is no longer the threat of deportation and access is granted to social welfare and free medical care, yet precariousness in

relation to employment does not necessarily improve. For those who have been unable to convert their overstayer status and for New Zealand passport holders, life is even more precarious, as they have no access to government benefits. Those who aspire for more stable employment struggle to find other jobs and find themselves stigmatized as "fruit pickers." The long-term impact of Pacific people's initial immigration status therefore has meant that most have remained in work that offers no career opportunities and no job security and that takes a significant toll on their physical health. The impact continues to resonate, as many of their children leave school early and follow them into seasonal labor.

This article has shed light on the experiences of this underresearched, "invisible" population of Pacific settlers in Australia. To a great extent, they remain invisible in population statistics and government policy as well as in the academic literature on rural migration. Although they have contributed to their invisibility to some extent, through their self-reliance within their own communities and the desire of overstayers to remain undetected, Pacific migrants are increasingly aware of problems that their relative invisibility creates and believe that they have been neglected by policymakers who have focused primarily on Indigenous Australians and the influx of refugees. Falling "in between" these groups and unused to accessing support through the wider community, the issues facing Pacific people—including the precarity and poor conditions of their seasonal work—have not been addressed by government agencies and service providers. With the current focus on the SWP, Pacific people who have settled in rural Australia continue to be ignored despite this program threatening to further exacerbate their precarious situation by bringing temporary workers into the horticultural sector that Pacific settlers have relied on for many years and to which they have made a significant but unacknowledged contribution.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was supported by La Trobe University under a grant from the Research Focus Area Transforming Human Societies (2014–18) and the Australian Research Council under Grant LP150100385, 2015–18. The project has two partner organizations: Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC) and Mallee Sports Assembly (MSA). Our Partner Investigator from SMECC is its Executive Officer, Dean Wickham. We would like to thank all of our research participants, who have generously shared their experiences of living and working in rural Australia.

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## REVIEW

Nicholas Thomas et al., eds. *Artefacts of Encounter: Cook's Voyages, Colonial Collecting, and Museum Histories*. Nicholas Thomas, Julie Adams, Billie Lythberg, Maia Nuku, and Amiria Salmond, eds. Photographs by Gwil Owen. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press in association with the University of Otago Press, 2017. Pp. 348. ISBN 978-0824859350. US$68.00 hardcover. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography.

*Reviewed by Jeffrey Mifflin, Massachusetts General Hospital*

*ARTEFACTS OF ENCOUNTER* IS A LAVISHLY ILLUSTRATED COMPILATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS, captions, and essays relating to museum pieces whose provenance can be traced to one of Captain James Cook's three Pacific voyages between 1768 and 1779. In the past, intensive study of such artifacts was largely limited to anthropologists, who pursued comparative studies of indigenous technologies and styles. Contributors to the book have embraced a broader approach, interpreting collections in a cross-disciplinary way informed by art history, science, histories of travel, anthropology, and the indigenous knowledge of Pacific Islanders. The publication grew out of two closely related research projects, "Artefacts of Encounter" and "Pacific Presences," at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) at the University of Cambridge. Team members, often accompanied by islander artists and coresearchers, visited many museums in Great Britain and elsewhere, but the book focuses mainly on the "exceptionally rich" and "previously underreported" (12) MAA collections.

Indigenous artifacts can elucidate many aspects of social relations, religious beliefs, the aesthetics of artistic production and appreciation, and the

dynamics of exchange. This is especially true when artifacts and their contexts are considered through the perspectives of individuals with roots in the cultures and historical traditions being studied; on the MAA projects, indigenous informants worked closely with scholars of European descent. An introduction to the book by Julie Adams and Nicholas Thomas explains that the projects were inspired by the idea that art and artifacts "are made up of materialized human intentions" and "want activation" (20). An essay by Amiria Salmond and Thomas describes the collections in general terms and summarizes how they were accumulated. "Relating to, and through, Polynesian Collections," by Billie Lythberg, Maia Nuku, and Salmond, explores links between historical Pacific artifacts and how they are presently perceived. Departing from the book's main focus on the acquisition and meaning of indigenous objects, Simon Schaffer's essay, "Artificial Curiosities and Travelling Instruments," speculates about the role played by scientific instruments on Pacific expeditions: "[I]nstruments are understood as mediators between users and the world; and [they establish] knowledge communities, in which instruments mediate between people, between their different users. They are themselves . . . artefacts of encounter" (56).

The book is well provided with color photographs of artifacts, accompanied by commentaries situating each object in its historical and ethnographic context. Artifacts with Cook-voyage provenance include materials acquired from many places around the Pacific Rim, but the book deals mainly with acquisitions from the Pacific Islands. Thoughtful viewpoints are advanced on such topics as tattooing devices from Tahiti (96–97); Tongan fly whisks and headrests (148–59); elaborately carved Melanesian clubs (160–63); and sundry artifacts from the Sandwich Islands (Hawai'i), ranging from feather helmets to fishhooks, which the English found to be "superior" to their own (178–85). Feather-god images, ornaments, sculptures, cloaks, weapons, fish-skin drums, and other artifacts are loaded with "unique historical as well as artistic significance" (17) when their acquisition can be traced to a particular cross-cultural encounter or even to a specific date and location.

The book is best read in conjunction with Cook's *Journals*, available in several editions. Cook was an insightful observer but had little formal education, having been at sea from a very early age. The following characteristic excerpts (see the Penguin Classics edition of the *Journals*, pp. 265, 309, and 343, respectively) preserve his idiosyncratic punctuation and spelling:

> *New Zealand (April 7–9, 1773)*: When we took leave of them the Chief presented me with a piece of Cloth and some other trifles and immediately after expressed a desire for one of our Boat Cloaks, I took the hint and ordered one to be made for him of red Baize as soon as I

> came on board.... I presented the Chief with the Cloak with which he seemed well pleased and took his Patta-pattou from his girdle and gave it to me....
>
> *Tonga (October 8, 1773)*: [A]t this time a Canoe conducted by four Men came along side with one of those drums already mentioned on which one man kept continually beating thinking no doubt that we should be charm'd with his musick. I gave them a piece of Cloth and a Nail for their Drum....
>
> *The Marquesas (April 9, 1774)*: Towards Noon a chief of some consequence, attended by a great number of people, came down to us, I made him a present of Nails and Several other Articles and in return he gave me some of his ornaments, after these Mutual exchanges a good under Standing Seemed to be settled between us and them so that we got by exchanges as much fruit as Loaded two boats....

How did Pacific Islanders understand the inquisitive strangers who appeared on their horizons and landed on their beaches with iron nails and hatchets, much-coveted red feathers, and other strategically chosen objects to exchange for fresh fruit, pigs, baskets of fish, and indigenous artifacts? Although it is possible to draw some inferences about islander attitudes from historical texts (e.g., ship's logs, diaries, and reports) and artwork produced by Europeans (such as William Hodges), the artifacts gathered during early voyages of exploration are the only primary evidence from the islanders' side of such cross-cultural encounters. Extant artifacts open windows on indigenous orientations and adjustments to change, suggesting insights (and raising questions for further investigation) about what native populations may have wanted to achieve from their contact with explorers.

Some high-status objects offered to Cook and his men, for example, may have been intended "to integrate the British into carefully woven networks of sociability" (62). Hand-twined cloaks, plaited mats, headdresses composed of interwoven human hair, etc., reveal things about the technology and aesthetics of indigenous crafts as well as "alternate ways of being" (55). Some artifacts traded to the English or bestowed as gifts seem to have been of special significance for the people who made them, imbued with ancestral potency "critical [for] managing and negotiating the complex flux of relationships both within and beyond island-based kinship networks" (54). Tongan *ngatu* (layered bark cloth), for instance, was said to make time visible "while keeping the political

world anchored in kinship" (48). For many islanders, the objects collected by Cook and others possessed great spiritual power as "generators of relationships, encapsulat[ions] of time, and manipulators of space: the very stuff of life itself" (55). The English, on the other hand, regarded Pacific artifacts as collectible curiosities, tangible evidence of the worlds they had visited, "discovered," or claimed for King George. Some expected to advance geographic and ethnographic knowledge; others hoped merely to turn a profit at the conclusion of the voyage.

Antiquities and exotic rarities had been of interest to intellectually curious individuals in Europe for centuries, but it was in the wake of Cook's voyages that "ethnographic collecting gained momentum and became a dedicated pursuit" (11). Objects were acquired and sold by dealers, assembled in collections, illustrated in publications, and publicly displayed. On voyages of exploration as well as in centers of European thought, "collectors and scientists were thinking anthropologically in new ways," struggling to understand "the singular problems of human variety that the voyage observations raised . . ." (18).

Cook was a complicated personality who cared (in his own way) about the welfare of Pacific Islanders but had them fired upon with musket balls and cannon shot when he anticipated danger, when essential tools were stolen, or when he was otherwise rankled by double-dealing or disrespect. The well-intentioned restrictions he placed on his men were often impossible to enforce. Sailors took advantage of casual attitudes toward sex and slipped away to consort with Polynesian women, leaving behind a legacy of venereal disease in places not previously affected. On some occasions, crew members deserted to conceal themselves with native women to whom they had formed an attachment—Cook had them forcibly returned by threatening retaliations on the whole native community. At times, the captain had to forbid his crew from trading away important items of nautical gear for indigenous objects they hoped to sell after returning to England.

Several illustrated essays explain the work of twenty-first–century indigenous artists in the context of Pacific cultures. John Pule's meditation, "The Splendid Land," describes his strikingly black Oceanic paintings as an attempt to speak out about exploration and violence in Pacific history and disparate worlds "in various stages of change" (124). Nick Thomas's commentary on the photography of Mark Adams calls attention to "the contradictory energies of empire that . . . dispossess and marginalize native peoples" while providing them with opportunities "to create and showcase their culture . . . in museum environments . . ." (69). A principal goal of the MAA projects was to allow Pacific Islanders, by studying artifacts preserved in the museum, to acquire the craftsmanship and absorb the indigenous knowledge "manifested" (44) in them. Islanders involved with the projects typically looked at the museum's collections not "as fragments

of a world long past," but rather as "vectors of still-active ancestral agency" and "even as living ancestors" (44).

A foundational eighteenth-century inventory is reproduced in facsimile and transcription as an appendix (320–25): "Weapons, Utensils and Manufactures of various kinds collected by Cap'n Cook of His Maj. Ship the Endeavor in the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, & 1771, in the new-discovered South Sea Islands & New Zealand, (the inhabitants of which were totally unacquainted with the use of Metals, & had never had intercourse with any European Nation)—and given to Trinity College by Ld. Sandwich Oct 1771." Entries include catalog numbers, short descriptive notes, and geographical provenance (e.g., the following entry for an implement from Tahiti: "No. 31, Tools with which they make black marks on their bodies, Otaheite"). Maps showing the routes taken by Cook and a glossary of unfamiliar words would have been a welcome convenience for many readers—the book's one defect is that they have not been included. Fortunately, most of the indigenous terms used are clearly defined in captions or commentaries, and maps of Cook's itineraries appear in easily obtained editions of his journals.

This visually appealing volume will be a welcome addition to the bookshelves of anyone with a special interest in Pacific history and culture; and it is destined to be of particular significance to islanders as a record of their ancestors' activities and a guide for perpetuating and/or restoring cultural traditions. "We hope," contributors suggest, "that the research we document here regarding works of the ancestors . . . will be valuable today for their creators' descendants . . ." (12). The book should likewise serve the worthwhile purpose of introducing those less acquainted with the subject to the beauty and intrigue of Pacific art and artifacts.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Cook, James. *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyages of Discovery*, ed. J.C. Beaglehole, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Published for the Hakluyt Society at Cambridge University Press, 1955–74). This impressively thorough, but hard to find, set comprises the complete journals with detailed notes.

Cook, James. *The Journals*, ed. Philip Edwards (London: Penguin Classics, 2003). This one-volume edition consists of essential selections from the Hakluyt Society edition with introductory material, notes, maps, a glossary, and succinct summaries of omitted passages.

Hodges, William. *William Hodges, 1744–1797: The Art of Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). Hodges was a talented artist, who accompanied Cook's second voyage to the South Pacific. His carefully detailed paintings are a valuable ethnographic and historical record.

Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift* (Chicago: HAU Books, 2016). This anthropological essay, translated from French (first published in 1924), is a classic treatment of the "form and sense of exchange" among indigenous groups, with particular emphasis on Oceania.
Salmond, Anne. *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: The Remarkable Story of Captain Cook's Encounters in the South Seas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
Thomas, Nicholas. *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

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0275-3596(201712)40:3;1-3