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Pacific Youth, Local and Global

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Introduction

Pacific Youth: Local and Global Futures was conceived as a follow-up to the collection that was edited by Gilbert Herdt and Stephen Leavitt (1998a), *Adolescence in Pacific Island Societies.* As with that earlier book, it contains a series of rich ethnographic case studies of youth across the Pacific, adding a focus on youth in the diaspora. The case studies consider the contemporary situation of youth and their uncertain futures, with a stronger focus on social change than the more 'traditional' emphasis of the contributions to the 1998 volume. In the two decades since that earlier publication, the local and, to varying extents, what is perceived as traditional has continued to shape the everyday lives of Pacific youth, but they now live in a globalised, interconnected world that has changed remarkably in that time.

The chapters in this collection cluster around some key themes that emerged during sessions at the annual conferences of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) in 2017 and 2018. These include education and employment and how these are linked to social inequalities; the marginalisation of youth and the focus in recent years on trying to encourage their political and civil engagement; youth 'problems', such as substance abuse, crime and violence; and the experiences of youth in the diaspora. These themes also recur throughout the youth-focused work within the expanding and interdisciplinary field of Pacific studies and in the numerous reports on Pacific youth for governments and

non-government organisations—resulting in strategies and policies that have been produced for many years, mostly with remarkably little effect on young people's daily lives.

Who Are 'Pacific Youth'?

In their introduction to *Adolescence in Pacific Island Societies*, Herdt and Leavitt (1998b) recognised that 'adolescence' is a Western category that is constructed from a specific period of physical and social maturation. Although they use the term throughout their introduction, several of the chapter authors clarify that the category does not fit well for their case studies. In two of the case studies based in Papua New Guinea (PNG) (Biersack 1998; Lepowsky 1998), 'youth' is used instead and is shown to extend into the late 20s. In Rotuma, 'youth' can extend even beyond the 20s and it encompasses all those who are unmarried (Howard 1998, p. 149). The preference of these authors for the term 'youth' reflects the reality in many Pacific[1] societies in which social maturity may be recognised well after a person has physically matured.

In this collection, 'youth' is used rather than adolescence, while recognising that there is no widely accepted definition with the Pacific. Anthropological engagement with the category of youth in the Pacific has been mostly confined to localised studies that include some discussion of who is included in that category in both local and official definitions. The development industry, which has engaged with questions of youth potential and risk in the Pacific, as discussed later in this chapter, often tends to use 'youth' in a way that is much like adolescence: a stage in biological development, as well as one in the life course. In development discourse, 'youth' is often a subset within the broader definition of 'childhood', which includes anyone up to 18 years old, according to the UN definition in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF n.d.). The UN definition of youth, which is an age of 15 to 24 years (United Nations n.d.), is also frequently used. Pacific governments, conversely, often have an even broader definition that extends into the 30s. In the Pacific literature, some even argue that the category of youth excludes older teenagers; in Patrick Vakaoti's (2014, p. 2) extensive survey

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1   'Pacific' is of course also a contested construction, but it is taken in this book to refer to the countries that self-identify as part of the Pacific and their people, both in the islands and in the diaspora.

of young people's political participation in Fiji, he argued that '18 to 35 is preferred as a way of defining youth'. The term 'young people' is also used in highly varying ways, from broad definitions encompassing children and/or youth to those that exclude anyone under 18 and focus only on 'young' adults.

This variation is captured by Curtain and Vakaoti (2011, p. 8) in *The State of the Pacific Youth Report*:

> The age span covering youth, as a stage in the lifecycle moving from dependence to independence, varies. It can range from as young as age ten years to as old as mid-thirties, depending on the age at which some children have to start to fend for themselves and what society deems to be the end point of the transition.

Their report further notes significant variations in the age definitions of 'youth' across Pacific states. While 'the age group 15–24 years is often used', common usage in the region ranges from 12 years of age up to 34 years of age (2011, p. 8). Cameron Noble et al. (2011, p. v) agree with this but add that, in some cases, those considered youth 'might be in their 30s and 40s'.

To give a sense of the range of definitions used by Pacific governments, the Solomon Islands government defines youth as 'persons between 15 and 34 years of age, inclusive' (Solomon Islands Government 2017, p. 14). The Fijian government defined youth as 'those between the ages of 15 to 35 years of age' (Government of Fiji 2012, p. 3), but acknowledged in working documents that this definition is flexible according to community values (Government of Fiji 2012). Across the Pacific, those community values often mean that youth are understood to be those who are not yet married with children or in positions of authority. Simply being of a certain age or occupying 'adult' roles, such as being in paid employment, is not always enough to be considered fully adult.

In some parts of the Pacific, there were no pre-contact terms equating with 'youth'. Today, although the term is not consistently defined, the popular use of terms such as 'youth' to categorise groups of people 'has become a powerful index of global modernity' (Good 2012, p. 293; Chapter 2, this volume). Youth is also a category that has been the focus of increasing concern in the Pacific since at least the 1960s—and today, some of that is directed towards the sheer size of the youth population. In the introduction to their 1998 volume, Herdt and Leavitt (1998b,

p. 7) predicted that Pacific populations would get younger over time and, today, there is some alarm about the growing 'youth bulge' in Pacific populations. A youth bulge is reached when the population of people aged 15–24 years in a country exceeds 20 per cent of the total population, though this figure is 'somewhat arbitrary' (Fuller & Pitts 1990, pp. 9–10). Youth bulge theory goes further to regard such population bubbles as a security concern that is linked to an increased risk of civil unrest.

Using youth bulge theory to highlight security risks presents only one possibility for youth. Henrik Urdal, whose work on the youth bulge in the early 2000s is probably the most influential in this space, cautioned that the presence of youth bulges does not necessitate violence or unrest (Urdal 2004, p. 2). As Patrick Kaiku (2017, p. 7) noted, with reference to the youth bulge in Melanesian states: 'Where the youth bulge discourse generally depicts young people as impulsively violent and conflict-prone, it disregards youth-led initiatives that are worth knowing and supporting' (see also Kaiku 2018). Kaiku's claim captures the divergent view of youth not just in the Pacific, but globally; they can be regarded as a problem to be managed, or as having potential to make a valuable contribution to their societies. Taking the latter perspective, Rose Maebiru (2013, p. 148) observes: 'With a mean age of 21 years for most Pacific Island countries, the region has a huge resource at its disposal to address national and regional issues'.

Researching Pacific Youth

With youth now comprising a large proportion of Pacific societies (however 'youth' is defined), there is an urgent need to better understand young people's life experiences and future aspirations. However, there has been surprisingly little anthropological research focusing on Pacific youth in the years since the publication of *Adolescence in Pacific Island Societies*. Herdt and Leavitt (1998b, p. 4) claimed that their book was the first collection 'in any culture area' of 'cultural case studies of youth', and it was certainly the first for the Pacific. The edited collection *Youth and Society: Perspectives from Papua New Guinea* (O'Collins 1986) had case studies of the effects of social change across PNG, but the book edited by Herdt and Leavitt has remained the only collection with case studies on youth from across the Pacific. This is despite the fact that, as the authors highlight, there was an early surge of anthropological research into 'adolescent

development' that was strongly influenced by the ethnographic research that was conducted in the Pacific by scholars such as Malinowski, Mead and Whiting in the 1920s and 1930s.

In anthropology more generally, from the 1950s to 1980s, the 'anthropological study of adolescence had been dormant, even non-existent, except for occasional ethnographic pieces scattered in monographs' (Herdt & Leavitt 1998b, p. 4). This can be mainly attributed to the decline of 'culture and personality' studies—but even since the 1990s, when child and youth studies had a revival, there has not been a significant amount of anthropological research conducted in this field in the Pacific. Instead, there has been an ongoing trickle of publications, such as Helen Lee's work on Tongan childhood (Lee 2018; Morton 1996), which also studies adolescence, as does Mary Spencer's (2015) study of the children of Chuuk, focusing on the 6–14 age group (see also Spencer, Chapter 10, this volume). Spencer (2015, p. 167) concluded that divergent views of the future existed for the people of Romonum, with some predicting that they will be 'abandoned and virtually empty' due to migration, while others hold onto hope for 'lives that are much like life today, or life with some version of on-island modernization'. In a recent update to her earlier work, Lee concluded that 'the question of how young people can negotiate both their Tongan identity and their engagement with modernity remains critical for Tonga's future' (Lee 2018). The chapters in this collection also focus on the future and provide valuable insights into the future possibilities for Pacific peoples, both in the islands and in the diaspora.

In the 2014 volume *Pacific Futures: Projects, Politics and Interests* (Rollason 2014a), it is notable that youth are scarcely mentioned, despite the volume's focus on 'the aspirations and projects of Pacific people' (Rollason 2014b, p. 1). Yet, much of Will Rollason's introductory chapter is highly relevant to youth, such as his claim that 'achieving a future that includes some measure of prosperity, dignity, self-reliance and opportunity is an object of struggle for many Pacific people in the contemporary era' (Rollason 2014b, p. 1). For young people across the Pacific, this struggle is compounded by their social positioning, which in most countries means that they are 'structurally minimised' (Craney 2018; Chapter 6, this volume). Understanding the effects of that minimisation of youth is critical when considering the future of Pacific countries.

In his introduction to *Pacific Futures,* Rollason is scathing about the 'development' literature, but this is where much of the discussion regarding Pacific youth has occurred in recent years. A significant body of published and unpublished development literature has been produced since the 1960s that is valuable for its data on youth, although it is sometimes highly problematic in its analysis of that data. Some literature has come from international bodies such as UNICEF, which produced 'The State of Pacific Youth' reports (UNICEF Pacific 2005; Curtain & Vakaoti 2011) and, in the 1990s and 2000s, commissioned a series of reports on children, youth and women (McMurray 2005; Romano 2013; Sio 2006). Numerous other organisations, such as UNDP, UNESCO, WHO, OXFAM International, the World Bank[2] and the Asian Development Bank, have at some stage focused their attention on Pacific youth, as have aid donor nations such as Australia (through AusAID, now DFAT), Aotearoa/New Zealand (NZAid) and Japan (Japan International Cooperation Agency). There are also Pacific-focused organisations that have had varying interest in youth issues, such as the Pacific Islands Forum, Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International and the Pacific Community (formerly South Pacific Commission [SPC]), as well as local civil society organisations within the different Pacific countries.

What is striking about this development-focused literature is its emphasis on 'youth problems', and this has influenced the countless youth-focused reports and strategies that Pacific governments have produced over many years. While it is easy to understand why development literature disproportionately addresses issues of deficits, such a focus ignores the positive contributions that young people make to their communities. It also overlooks the resilience of young people and the joyfulness of youth. Though some chapters within this volume also focus on problems that are associated with youth, the authors acknowledge that this is a period of opportunity and that the positive potential of young people should be recognised and supported.

Reading the development literature, it is evident that the key youth problems that have been discussed since the 1960s have remained much the same—including school dropouts, youth unemployment and youth

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2   It is interesting, however, that the World Bank's 'Pacific Possible' series does not include a report focusing on youth, despite claiming to look at 'what's possible for Pacific Island countries by the year 2040?' (The World Bank Group 2018). See Pacific Possible: That's What I Want (www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUmKc6_5MRM).

crime, violence and risky behaviour such as substance abuse. There has also been a significant focus on early pregnancy, mental health issues and youth suicide. 'The youth problem', as this complex situation was often characterised, was initially blamed on urban drift and the breakdown of 'tradition', but a more complex and persistent set of problems has now been identified, including:

> Poverty, education systems focused on white-collar employment skills, stagnating economies that do not provide enough employment opportunities, and rural/urban inequalities … Continuing high population growth; rapid urban expansion; political volatility; under-performing economies, now further weakened by the impact of the global economic crises; and the rising cost of food point to a future for many young Pacific Islanders that holds an increased risk of entrenchment of poverty and broadening disparities, which will cause widespread discontent. (Curtain & Vakaoti 2011, p. 5)

Since 'youth problems' were first identified, there has been an associated assumption that young people are likely to cause trouble. This has been reinforced over many years by sporadic outbreaks of civil unrest across the Pacific, such as the unrest associated with the coups in Fiji between 1987 and 2006 (Firth et al. 2009); in the Society Islands in 1995, when there was a push for independence from France (Elliston 2012); and the civil conflict in Solomon Islands between 1998 and 2003, known locally as the Tension (Kabutaulaka 2001). There have been other examples of riots and disturbances in Vanuatu in 1998 (Mitchell 2011), Tonga in 2006 (Campbell 2008), Kanaky/New Caledonia (Storey 2005) and PNG (May 2017). Despite the dire predictions of 'youth bulge' theory, these are exceptions within what are generally peaceful societies. In all the events, young people were both victims and perpetrators and they were joined by adults; these were not 'youth riots', but more general outbursts of civil unrest.

Although such large-scale events are unusual, concern about 'youth problems' persists and there is certainly evidence of ongoing, localised issues in some Pacific societies. Imelda Ambelye's study of village youth in the Central Province of PNG (Chapter 8, this volume) looks at the 'intense frustration among the youths' and blames a combination of an inadequate education system, increasing economic inequalities, weakening social structures and generational conflicts that lead youth to alcohol, drugs and other antisocial behaviour, including some cases of extreme violence. These

issues have previously been linked to the existence of *raskols* in PNG—youth, typically male, who engage in unlawful behaviours such as 'serious property crime, violence and rape' (Luker & Monsell-Davis 2010, p. 81). As Vicki Luker and Michael Monsell-Davis (2010, p. 81) noted, '*Raskols* remain perhaps *the* symbol of PNG's "law and order" problems' due to their engagement in violence and other antisocial activities. They posited that rather than these behaviours being symbolic of youth and young manhood in the country, they are more reflective of a lack of education, employment and civic engagement opportunities for these young people.

The report *Urban Youth in the Pacific: Increasing Resilience and Reducing Risk for Involvement in Crime and Violence* (Noble et al. 2011) argued the need for 'youth participation in decision-making processes at the community, national and regional levels', as well as for improving the 'relevance and quality of education outcomes' to fit the demands of the job market both nationally and internationally and developing 'targeted employment opportunities and meaningful activities for young people' (2011, p. v). These 'key guiding principles for preventing youth involvement in crime and violence' were endorsed in June 2011 by the Forum Regional Security Committee (Noble et al. 2011, p. iv). Importantly, this report also noted that, as with the more dramatic outbursts of civil unrest, only some youth can be identified as exhibiting problem behaviour. Noble et al. (2011, p. 2) reported that their 'research confirmed that the majority of Pacific youth are contributing positively to society … As a significant portion of the total population, young people have a great potential as they transition to adulthood to drive economic development and contribute to society'.

Countless reports and programs that are focused on enabling youth to reach this potential have targeted either specific youth problems, such as crime and violence, or youth mental health issues (Guttenbeil-Likiliki 2009; Jourdan 2008) or youth 'development', more generally. The latter includes country-specific plans, such as the Tonga National Youth Strategy 2007–2012, and those that attempt to address the Pacific as a whole, such as the SPC's Mapping the Youth Challenge (2009) and the Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014–2023 (SPC 2015). In addition, for many years there have been calls for a more coordinated regional approach to youth issues and for each country to implement better services and support for young people.

The fact that these initiatives have resulted in so little change is deeply concerning. As Maebiru (2013, p. 148) noted, 'These "paper commitments" often lack political will, resources and capacity to realise the policy goals and targets, fuelling discontent, alienation and a sense of hopelessness among young people'. She added that 'limited available resources, weak economies and competing national and regional priorities; together with the huge challenge of promoting ownership and progressing coordination in the youth sector has hampered efforts to progress these youth commitments' (Maebiru 2013, p. 150). Daniel Evans (Chapter 4, this volume) discusses this situation in Solomon Islands, providing an insightful critique of well-meaning but underfunded interventions that often have 'negligible impact'. He shows that local politics adds another layer of complexity to engagements with youth—in this case, members of parliament who spread their largesse only to gain votes.

In their State of Pacific Youth report, Curtain and Vakaoti (2011, p. 5) concluded that 'without a major investment in young people, they may well flounder as a generation, undermining the capacity of Pacific Island countries and territories to escape aid dependence, develop economically and, in some cases, even survive as viable societies'. One of the reasons why there has not been this investment is that the limited resources that are available to Pacific governments tend not to be directed to youth issues, which is a symptom of young people's 'structural minimisation' and marginalisation. A review of the development literature that was produced in 2009 for the World Bank's Youth Engagement Strategy for the Pacific (Woo & Corea 2009) acknowledges that policy initiatives are mainly focused on addressing the symptoms rather than underlying causes. Sonya Woo and Ravi Corea recommended that young people are involved in addressing the causes rather than involving them in the 'problem stage'. Again, the issue of minimisation is relevant; while development discourse may assume that youth can be 'empowered', that they can exert their agency and be involved in this way, in reality, this can be difficult to achieve when the cultural expectation is that they are 'seen but not heard' (Craney 2018; Good 2012).

Anthropological research, including the growing body of work being produced by Pacific authors, can be invaluable to understanding this disconnection between development ideals and young people's lived experiences. A growing cohort of researchers, including some represented in this volume, are helping address the lack of Pacific literature that engages with youth. Studying areas such as online activism (Brimacombe

et al. 2018), practices of contemporary citizenship (LeFevre 2013) and demonstrations of masculinity (Hawkes 2018; Marsters & Tiatia-Seath, Chapter 11, this volume), they demonstrate how understanding youth issues from youth perspectives provides a deeper understanding of social issues in the region. These texts aid in addressing a significant challenge for emerging Pacific youth researchers regarding not only the lack of focus on the causes and sociocultural factors influencing youth problems in recent decades, but also the narrow focus that much of the academic literature has taken. This volume builds on recent work that situates youth issues in broader contexts, such as Vakaoti's (2007, 2019) research into street-frequenting youth and youth political participation in Fiji, Mary Good's (2012) examination of the tensions of 'tradition' and modernity for Tongan youth, and Aidan Craney's (2018) political economic analysis of young people in Fiji and Solomon Islands. By collating research drawn from across the region that considers separate but interconnected issues, this collection provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding of how youth experience challenges of citizenship, civic engagement and personal development.

This addresses a significant gap. The lived experiences of youth have been neglected even in the international development material, which is where much of this broader focus might be anticipated, including in reviews of the literature (e.g. Woo & Corea 2009).[3] There has been some improvement in recent years, with the emerging critical development literature attempting to move away from the modernising discourse of earlier approaches that often made problematic assumptions about what people need and want and tended to ignore cultural specificities (Rollason 2014b). The post-development and recent critical development literature (e.g. Andrews et al. 2012; Esteva & Escobar 2017; Pieterse 1998) moves closer to an anthropological approach by emphasising the importance of local context, histories, ideologies and power relations, as well as more locally informed initiatives rather than one-size-fits-all approaches. It is well positioned to benefit from drawing on anthropological research to provide more culturally informed nuance to arguments about how youth can best be supported to reach their potential.

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3   In their review, Woo and Corea (2009, pp. 45–48) included an Appendix, 'Selected bibliography of anthropological research on PNG', but most of the work listed is not about youth.

For example, the focus in recent development discourse regarding issues like sustainable livelihoods and youth empowerment needs to recognise the role of agency and identity, as well as the cultural aspects and social structures that shape the experiences of youth and their ability to engage with 'development' initiatives. The intersectional approach that is widely adopted in the social sciences is useful here to take into account that age intersects with several factors, such as gender, ethnicity, social status and location. There are also other important intersections that serve as a reminder that 'youth' cannot be studied in isolation. Youth are interconnected with their families and wider communities, and those who can access social media and other digital technologies can have global connections with the Pacific diaspora and beyond.

Change and Continuity in the Lives of Pacific Youth

This potential for the global connectivity of Pacific youth is a recent element of the social and cultural transformations that have occurred throughout the histories of Pacific countries. The changes that are associated with their colonial and postcolonial histories have been well documented, and some of the key changes that continue to shape those societies include the effects of indigenised forms of Christianity, formal education systems, rural to urban migration, political and economic instability and the increasingly youthful populations. More young people than ever before are living in urban and peri-urban areas in the islands, often in areas marked by poverty, precarity and disconnection from ancestral land. Pacific countries also have experienced the forces of globalisation in many ways, and Pacific peoples are mobile within and beyond Oceania in remarkably diverse ways.

Despite these changes, which were experienced within the multiplicity of Pacific cultures and histories, there remain some significant and shared elements of continuity. The lives of most children and youth still largely revolve around home, school and church and, in many Pacific nations, these contexts have not changed dramatically in recent decades. Kinship continues to play a fundamental role in organising society, including the social hierarchies, within which children and youth generally have low status. The marginalisation of youth in society can be traced to their position in these hierarchies as adults in waiting, without full recognition

of their agency or capacities. While the youth studies literature now recognises young people as social actors who already engage with their worlds in many complex ways, this may not reflect how they are regarded within their own families and communities. It should be noted here, however, that this is not a situation confined to the Pacific, as young people are considered and treated as 'apprentice-citizens' (Owen 1996) in Western countries such as Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand and the United States (US) (Bessant 2004; Harris 2006).

The tensions that were noted decades ago between 'tradition' and modernity continue to play out for Pacific people in ways that Niko Besnier (2011) described as 'modern anxieties'. Often, young people become the focus of those anxieties because their elders tend to assume that they will reject 'culture' and 'tradition' for the perceived benefits of global modernity. On closer inspection, these anxieties are often not warranted, with many Pacific young people actively and inventively seeking ways to resolve or sidestep these tradition/modernity tensions. There is a growing self-conscious pride among Pacific youth when merging traditional elements of their cultures with new forms of expression, particularly through the arts: dance, material culture and artistic expression. As Aaron Ferguson shows for Samoa (Chapter 12, this volume), this can be reflected even in the production of T-shirts and tattoos. It is also observed in the sphere of youth activism, with young people finding ways to embrace traditional concepts and values while also engaging on an international stage to urge action on issues like climate change, or to promote gender equality.

Gender has been a significant focus of both anthropological and development literature in the Pacific, and, in recent years, there has been a strong focus on gender inequality (Jolly et al. 2015; Lee 2017a) and gender violence (Biersack et al. 2016). Gender was also a strong theme throughout the conference sessions that led to this book, particularly in relation to ongoing gender inequalities and transformations in the construction of gender identity. As is clear in this collection of papers, young women continue to be excluded from positions of power in some Pacific countries and they experience inequality in many contexts.

Anthropologists have long observed that the changes of the colonial era, including the influence of Christianity, transformed the construction of masculinity to a greater extent than femininity. Within the literature on youth, there was a specific focus on the practice of male initiation in some Pacific societies, particularly in PNG (e.g. Herdt 1994). As these practices

ceased, new paths to masculinity were found, some of which are now often blamed for the 'youth problems' that are so frequently noted in the development literature. Even in societies in which formal initiation ceremonies were not formerly practised, the behaviour of males is more likely perceived as problematic, whether it was as street-frequenting urban youth (Jourdan 1995) or as participants in civil unrest. Deborah Elliston used the case study of Tahitian young men who were involved in antinuclear and pro-independence activism in 1995 to argue that, like young men in many other societies, they were marginalised by 'neoliberal processes of globalization' (Elliston 2012, p. 158). She argued that 'common characteristics include young men becoming less competitive than young women in the labor market, developing elevated school-leaving rates, and becoming objects of blame in local discourses about social problems' (p. 158).

The precarity in these young people's lives echoes the experiences of youth across the globe who are trying to reconcile neoliberal promises of personal fulfilment and material abundance with the lived experience of limited opportunity—from the Occupy Movement's majority youth membership (Giroux 2013) to the youth protest leaders of the Arab Spring (Moghadam 2013). Other accounts of the construction of masculinity in the Pacific today focus on new avenues that have surfaced, notably through sport, at least for some young men (Guinness & Besnier 2016; Marsters &Tiatia-Seath, Chapter 11, this volume; Uperesa & Mountjoy 2014).

Another recurring theme in the ASAO conference sessions that led to this book was the ways in which young people in the Pacific have opportunities to engage with the world beyond their island homes. The ASAO sessions that contributed to the collection that Herdt and Leavitt published in 1998 were held in 1990, before the internet had really had influence in the Pacific (Herdt & Leavitt 1998a, p. 143). The chapters in that book do not discuss digital communication, although Lepowsky mentions 'greater access to transnational commercial media' for youth on Vanatinai in PNG (in that case, national radio and cassettes). Today, the influences of an increasingly globalised world are evident in everyday practices, such as the consumption of Filipino soap operas on pirated DVDs (Good 2013). The changes, such as the widespread use of mobile phones (Brimacombe 2017; Brimacombe et al. 2018; Foster & Horst 2018) and access to the internet in many parts of the Pacific, cannot be underestimated and have become a new source of anxiety about the dangers of modernity (Lee 2018, p. 121). Despite the vast differences in the lives of youth across the Pacific

and its diaspora—such as the contrasts between the experiences of youth in urban Hawai'i and those in rural PNG—mobile phones, the internet and technological change have brought profound change. To give just one example, they have facilitated an increased civic engagement that can be observed in the proliferation of Facebook pages engaging in civic debate, including Yumi Toktok Stret in Vanuatu and the now-closed Forum Solomon Islands International (Craney 2018), or the use of hashtags on twitter when discussing civic issues, such as #TeamFiji.

Education, Employment and Economic Inequalities

In discussions about the situation of Pacific youth over many years, three of the key issues that have been continually raised are problems associated with the formal education system, high rates of youth unemployment and the ongoing effects of economic inequalities. Although none of the chapters in this collection focus specifically on education, it is a common thread and is revealed as an issue that underlies other challenges for youth, including their employment options when they leave school. In her case study of two villages in PNG, Imelda Ambelye (Chapter 8, this volume) links leaving school early with some young people's antisocial behaviour and violence.

There are differences across the Pacific regarding how highly education is valued, and literacy rates also vary significantly. Education remains problematic across the region, partly due to inadequate resourcing—which is worsened by the pressure of growing youth populations and, in some cases, similarly inadequate teacher training. There are also ongoing problems of delivering education to rural and remote communities and, within many Pacific countries, there are students who must travel some distance to school or move to a town and either attend a boarding school or live with relatives. For students who do well in school and want to continue their education, access to tertiary education is limited and, again, it often involves moving to another island or even another country. Many of the regional tertiary institutions offer only a limited range of undergraduate and postgraduate opportunities, and they do not have the capacity to enrol all students who apply.

Most young people do not pursue tertiary education and, for them, there is often a stark mismatch between the formal schooling that they receive and the employment opportunities that are available (Falgout & Levin 1992). There continues to be resistance in many Pacific nations to vocational education, as academic education has long been prized as a possible route to coveted government jobs or to professions, despite the scarcity of such jobs. As Christine McMurray (2005, p. 8; Woo & Corea 2009, p. 8) noted over a decade ago:

> Dropping out of school and high rates of unemployment are interrelated symptoms of two underlying problems: inflexible education systems geared mainly towards white-collar work and distorted economies that do not provide enough employment opportunities for young people.

The Pacific 'youth bulge' has exacerbated this situation, and Pacific governments are unable to provide employment opportunities for the ever-increasing flow of young people leaving school.

However, there are differences across the Pacific in patterns of employment and, in some cases, young people are being trained in areas with limited prospects, while certain jobs remain available and difficult to fill. In Fiji, for example, the lack of skilled workers in certain sectors has resulted in recruitment from outside the Pacific to fill vacancies in diverse occupations such as 'skilled garment cutters, pattern-makers and embroiderers, building construction managers, qualified dive instructors, beauticians, chefs and air-conditioning technicians' (Nilan et al. 2006, p. 897). In many Pacific countries, the lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector, or the mismatch between training and skills needs, increases the marginalisation of young people and can serve to extend the period of 'youth'. It can also be a 'principal contributing factor' for a young person to develop mental health problems (Guttenbeil-Likiliki 2009, p. 7), reduce the likelihood of civic engagement and even develop a sense of disenfranchisement that leads to social unrest. Curtain and Vakaoti (2011, p. 9) highlighted the potential for negative individual and societal consequences as a result of limited livelihood opportunities: 'Denial of economic and social opportunities leads to frustrated young people. The result can be a high incidence of self-harm and anti-social behaviour, including a greater risk of social conflict and violence'. Rural unemployment leads to further crowding in urban areas and places

a strain on both infrastructure and the goodwill of families who end up supporting youth who migrate in search of work. In response to these issues, governments and non-government organisations have been placing a greater focus on equipping youth with skills that formal education has not provided them. This takes the form of life skills training, work-ready training, industry engagement, vocational training and entrepreneurship.

In recent years, some Pacific countries have introduced Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), but this has met with mixed success due to the widely shared perception that the training is only suited to those performing poorly at school. Although opportunities certainly exist for skilled workers in Pacific countries (Tagicakiverata & Nilan 2018), vocational training is regarded negatively by both parents and young people. In Fiji, such centres are colloquially referred to as 'drop-out schools', as 'those who perform poorly in secondary school are directed to technical and vocational education' (Woo & Corea 2009, p. 9; Tagicakiverata & Nilan 2018, p. 551). A further problem is that TVET institutions are usually in urban areas, which encourages internal migration and reduces the likelihood of acquired skills being used in the rural areas. There are exceptions; for example, since 2012, Fiji has introduced outreach training through the Fiji National University, which has operated the Sustainable Livelihood Program. The aim is to provide skills training in rural communities to improve self-sufficiency and create greater economic opportunities, whether through formal or informal wage employment or microenterprise.

Entrepreneurship has also become popular with development-focused training programs, with limited success. Ferguson (Chapter 7, this volume) shows that entrepreneurship in American Samoa can be a way for young people to gain social and economic capital, but each of the three case studies he discusses are 'self-made' entrepreneurs rather than entrepreneurs as a result of development programs. Ferguson also shows that it is possible for young people to connect their business ventures with the aspects of Samoan culture and identity that they value, sidestepping the categories of 'tradition' and 'modernity' and creating their own futures.

An important cultural factor that shapes the education and employment choices of Pacific youth is the ongoing focus in Pacific societies on kinship. Many young people continue to consider helping to provide for their families their primary moral responsibility and, where employment

options are limited in the home country, they may seek opportunities elsewhere, such as through the temporary labour mobility schemes that are offered by Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia. Although these are available only to 'adults' in the Western definition of over 18 years old, many of the workers are still regarded as 'youth' in their home countries. The New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme began in 2007 (Gibson & McKenzie 2014; Gibson et al. 2008) and the Australian Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) commenced in 2012 after a pilot scheme that ran from 2008 to 2012 (Curtain et al. 2018; Reed et al. 2012). New schemes continue to be developed; Australia introduced the Pacific Labour Scheme in July 2018 and workers from some Pacific countries can now obtain employment for up to three years in areas such as aged care, as well as non-seasonal farm work. In September 2018, the Pacific Trades Partnership Program began a new scheme to create new short-term job opportunities in construction in Aotearoa/New Zealand to fill skills shortages there (Matangi Tonga 2018).

The current temporary labour schemes are part of a long history of labour migration, both from and within the Pacific (Connell & Corbett 2016, p. 587; Gibson & McKenzie 2014). Within that history, there are darker chapters, such as the era of 'blackbirding', in which people from countries such as Vanuatu (Mortensen 2000) were forcibly taken to work in Australia (Banivanua-Mar 2007). Parallels have already been drawn between the new labour schemes and this earlier era (Connell 2010) and, in Australia, the SWP was one form of labour that was discussed at the government's 2017 inquiry into establishing a Modern Slavery Act. There certainly are significant problems with the SWP (Ball et al. 2011; Curtain et al. 2016; Doyle & Howes 2015); however, these are unlikely to deter Pacific people seeking ways to provide for their families through the remittances that they send while working overseas for higher wages than they can earn at home (Curtain et al. 2018). Many children and youth are now growing up at a time when temporary labour migration is regarded as a method for young people to fulfil both their obligations to their families and their own ambitions to save money to start businesses, build homes and achieve the other markers of adulthood in the contemporary Pacific.

Political and Civic Engagement

As several chapters in this collection show, youth in Pacific societies tend to be expected to be obedient to their elders and to wait patiently on the sidelines to be invited into decision-making processes and institutions. Within families, schools and churches, there is often an explicit discouragement of critical thinking and young people learn that they are not expected to express their opinions, except perhaps within their own peer groups. This contributes to their 'structural minimisation' more generally in their societies (Craney 2018). In their review of literature on Pacific youth, Woo and Corea (2009, p. 23) found that 'growing marginalization of youth emerges as the most important issue'. Not surprisingly, then, political parties are unlikely to have youth representation or even to be particularly interested in youth voices. Even young people who are born into the traditional elite are unlikely to have a voice in the affairs of their country until they are socially recognised adults (Lee, Chapter 5, this volume).

Both local and international organisations have produced various reports on how to increase youth participation in civil society and how to encourage their political engagement. The World Bank's report, *Giving South Pacific Youth a Voice: Youth Development through Participation* (Jayaweera & Morioka 2008), considered six Pacific countries and focused on the marginalisation of youth, defined as those aged 15–29 years, with the aim of finding ways to increase their participation in 'the development process'.[4] The aim was also to document 'best-practice examples of youth engagement mechanisms in the Pacific' (2008, p. 8). The report identifies all-too familiar issues: education, employment, the silencing of young people's voices and the lack of social support for youth.

Youth are often not taken seriously as political subjects within their own societies; their activism is not viewed as a right and it is sometimes dismissed, sidelined or, even worse, assumed to be anarchic or even criminal behaviour that needs to be controlled. From the perspective of some adults, it becomes merged with the broader 'youth problems'. In Kanaky/New Caledonia, Tate LeFevre (2018) argued:

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4   The authors are founding directors of Youth for a Sustainable Future Pacifika, which seems to be no longer active; its website, dated 2015, has had no activity for some time (orgs.tigweb.org/youth-for-a-sustainable-future-pacifika).

> Their discursive construction as ontologically and temporally 'disordered' delegitimizes urban Kanak youth as potential political actors. When urban youth engage in public protests, they are often characterized as 'delinquents' or 'thugs'. Acts of organized political resistance—such as the 2014 protests in St. Louis following an ecologically devastating chemical spill at nearby Vale Inco nickel refinery—are regularly dismissed as 'riots': ideologically empty violence committed by youths without any 'real' knowledge of Kanak culture, who refuse to respect both Kanak customary or French government authority. (See also LeFevre 2013)

Despite their marginalisation and negative perceptions of their activism, the everyday civic activities of youth in the Pacific must be considered as positive or, at the very least, neutral. Instances of youth involvement in unrest are notable precisely for their abnormality. Most young people in the Pacific, as elsewhere, spend most their time engaging in positive and socially acceptable behaviours.

In addition, some young people in Pacific countries have persisted with political engagement, as they are influenced by colonial histories, ongoing political tensions and emerging issues. Youth throughout the Pacific have been involved in increasingly politicised civil society activities in recent years, particularly in fields related to social justice—such as rights in relation to gender, sexuality and disability and issues in relation to climate change, rising sea levels and environmental degradation. Young people are often at the vanguard of change in these spaces that adults have been slow to claim and they are forcing their way into public consciousness and conversation.

There has been a proliferation of civil society organisations across the Pacific in the last decade, many of which have been established by young people. Some of these are local and often urban initiatives, such as those focusing on using the arts for activism and involving marginalised youth now seeking a voice, including LGBTIQ+[5] youth and those with disabilities. Other local organisations seek to empower females—such as the Talitha Project in Tonga, established in 2009 for young women and girls aged 10–25 years, to encourage political participation, leadership and advocacy against gender-based violence and discrimination, and

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5   Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and others who do not identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender.

to promote reproductive rights and sexual health. There are also more 'mainstream' organisations, such as National Youth Councils in many Pacific nations that are members of the Pacific Youth Council.[6]

Young activists are becoming increasingly confident in seeking support from different funding agencies. They are more entrepreneurial in their activism, linking to global networks to a greater extent than many of the older generation of workers in non-government, civil society and faith-based organisations, who tend to stick with the well-established circuit of regional meetings and the more mainstream donors. Global connectivity is providing some Pacific youth with a means to have a voice about issues that concern them and to overcome their marginalisation within their own societies. For example, social media is used effectively by young people involved in activism (Brimacombe 2017; Finau et al. 2015) and there is now a plethora of Facebook pages that are managed by Pacific youth organisations.

Migration and the Diaspora

It is not only Pacific youth activists who are globally interconnected through social media; the spread of mobile phones and use of Facebook, Instagram and other forms of digital communication have created complex webs of connections that are accessible to many young people, even in remote areas of the Pacific and between island and diasporic populations. In addition to communication, much identity work occurs online, as it has since Pacific people first enthusiastically embraced the internet in the 1990s (Franklin 2004; Morton 1999).

As well as the work that focuses on digital communication, a significant amount of literature exists in anthropology and, more broadly, in Pacific studies on the migration of Pacific peoples and their experiences in the diaspora, particularly in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia and the US (e.g. Lee & Francis 2009; Spickard et al. 2002). Some of this literature focuses specifically on the experiences of young people who have spent all or most of their lives outside the Pacific—the second and now subsequent generations (e.g. Lee 2003; Schoone 2010). As in the islands, Pacific youth in the diaspora have diverse life experiences that are affected by many factors, such as where they live—which can vary from urban ghettos

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6   Some existing youth councils wanted a regional youth coordinating council for the Pacific and, after a failed attempt in 1975, this was finally established in 1996 (pacificyouthcouncil.org).

to small rural towns—their family's socioeconomic status and the ethnic make-up of the local community. Pacific diaspora populations tend to build strong local communities that are often based on kinship ties and churches, but they can still experience considerable marginalisation and discrimination (Moosad, Chapter 12, this volume).

Pacific migrant communities have experienced significant intermarriage, so youth are often negotiating multi-ethnic identities (McGavin 2014)—although it is important to recognise that this can also be an issue for youth in the Pacific, as Bacalzo shows in her study of the Markham Valley in PNG (Chapter 3, this volume). Youth in the diaspora also have varying degrees of connection with their parents' homelands, and while some have strong transnational ties, others are more disconnected and may have never seen the lands of their ancestors (Lee 2017b).

Many of the youth problems that were identified in the literature on island societies also feature in the literature on Pacific youth in the diaspora. Rather than in the development literature that typically describes these problems in the islands, it is more often found in fields such as education, public health, social work and psychology (see Marsters & Tiatia-Seath, Chapter 11, this volume). Problems with education are often highlighted (see Spencer, Chapter 10, this volume, on Micronesian students), as are health issues such as mental health. In the diaspora, youth can also experience problems that are familiar to other marginalised migrant groups, such as racism, poverty and a lack of avenues for social mobility. They may even be regarded as potentially criminal and violent, leading to police harassment, encounters with the criminal justice system and negative stereotypes in the media (Irwin & Umemoto 2016).

For Marshall Islanders, youth 'problems' that are experienced in the islands are transformed in the diaspora (Carucci, Chapter 9, this volume). Larry Carucci shows that the drinking circles that had long been part of the transition to adulthood, mostly for young men, on the atolls of Ujelang and Enewetak, were regarded as transgressing Christian behaviour. However, the use of hard drugs by young men living on Majuro, Hawai'i and elsewhere in the US has created new forms of intergenerational tension, as well as increased risks of criminal charges and even deportation.

Some Pacific countries, such as Tonga and Samoa, have experienced an influx of diaspora citizens who were deported from the countries in which they grew up, many of whom fall into the broad category of 'youth' as defined within those countries—that is, between the ages

of 15 and 34 (Guttenbeil-Likiliki 2009, p. 8). They have become a new source of 'youth problems' and are often blamed for the increasing rates of crime and violence (Pereira 2011). However, a study of urban youth and crime found that although deportees could be blamed for some 'increase in the sophistication of crime in island nations, the vast majority of deportees endure discrimination and a lack of support' (Noble et al. 2011, p. v).

As a trickle of young people born overseas moves into the islands, as deportees or as youth are being returned by their families to experience life in the homeland, some island-born youth leave for higher education or seek a career in elite sports. Participation in elite sports has become an ideal means of attaining social mobility for many young Pacific men—and increasingly women—although few achieve this goal. As Caleb Marsters and Jemaima Tiatia-Seath (Chapter 11, this volume) show in their work with young Pacific men playing rugby in Auckland, both the pressures of success for those who make it and the shame associated with not achieving the elite level can lead to mental health issues.[7] A much larger outflow of island-born young people is occurring due to temporary labour migration schemes and, as noted earlier, these seem likely to grow and become a significant focus of many young people's aspirations.

Conclusion

Much of the literature on Pacific youth, both academic and development-oriented reports, has focused on their problems or, to a much lesser extent, their involvement with activism or success in elite sports. The experiences of most Pacific youth, both in the islands and the diaspora, are not captured by these two extremes because they are the ordinary youth who finish school and move on with their lives, whether in wage labour, entrepreneurial activities or subsistence farming; they marry, have children of their own and make the transition into adulthood. That is to say, the overwhelming majority of Pacific youth make positive contributions to their communities.

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7   In Australia, 36 per cent of National Rugby League contracts signed in 2011 were of Pasifika ethnicities (Lakisa et al. 2014), and Pasifika players make up 42 per cent of players at the professional level and over 50 per cent of junior ranks (Hawkes 2018). Nevertheless, those who manage to secure paid contracts are only a small proportion of those who attempt to reach that level.

Herdt and Leavitt (1998b, p. 5) identified that their book was being published during an important moment in Pacific history. Some 20 years later, a great deal has changed in the Pacific and the ever-growing Pacific diaspora—and yet, in that time, there has not been a similar increase in the academic literature focusing on youth. This is all the more remarkable because of the 'youth bulge' occurring in Pacific countries; with youth now being a substantial portion of Pacific populations, it is more important than ever to include them in our research. It is also another important moment in the Pacific, with geopolitical tensions rising due to China's increasing influence and Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand and the US reconsidering their relationships with Pacific nations—all in a context of growing concern for the effects of climate change. The case studies in this book provide valuable insights into the lives of young people across the Pacific as they are being shaped by change in both local and global contexts. More of this work is needed to gain an even more comprehensive understanding of the experience of those youth—their everyday lives, their aspirations and the obstacles that they encounter. We need to know more about their diverse experiences, as they face uncertain futures.

Acknowledgements

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