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Participatory Video and the Pacifica Mamas: A Pilot Project

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By Malama Saifoloi, Evangelia Papoutsaki, Marcus Williams, Usha Sundar Harris,
and Munawwar Naqvi



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Dr Evangelia Papoutsaki [Partner Investigator] Associate Professor, Department of Communication Studies at Unitec, with several years of experience in the Pacific; former Head of the Communication Arts Department at DWU, Madang, Papua New Guinea; Executive Editor Unitec ePress; co-investigator of Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) Media and Communication Baseline Research 2013; Research Associate Pacific Media Centre; author of several edited volumes on Pacific Islands communication issues.

Marcus Williams [Partner Investigator] Award-winning media artist, curator, environmentalist and Associate Professor who now works as the Dean of Research and Enterprise at Unitec. He has a trans-disciplinary practice, working in a wide range of media with a strong emphasis in photography. He has an enduring interest in collaboration and the relationship between the creative industries, social change and community development. Marcus has exhibited extensively throughout New Zealand and internationally, presented at numerous conferences and is published in proceedings and journals.

Dr Usha Sundar Harris [Principal Advisor – Trainer] Lecturer in International Communication at the Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies, Macquarie University, Sydney. Her research areas are participatory media methodology, climate change communication, communication for development, and Pacific media studies. She has taught video production at postgraduate level.

Munawwar Naqvi [Technical Advisor – Participant] Media and Technologies Co-ordinator, Department of Communication Studies, Unitec; director, First Write New Zealand Limited; member, Technical Communication Association of New Zealand; re-search interest in development communication and computational linguistics.

Jarcinda Stowers-Ama [Partner Investigator] Director of the Pacifica Arts Centre, home of the Pacifica Mamas. Her strong Pacific roots stem from the Cook Islands and Samoa. Living art and te peu kuki arani – the ways of Cook Islands culture and values – were the foundations of her upbringing in West Auckland. Both her parents are founding members of the Pacifica Mamas group, making her a lifelong “Mama in training”. The projects and events she develops in her role as Centre Director are influenced by her close connection to the Mamas and the knowledge and culture passed down by her elders. Jarcinda works closely with Papa Pat to support the Pacifica Mamas PV projects.

Sandra Kailahi [Partner Investigator] MA candidate at Unitec, New Zealand and a researcher for the PACMAS State of Media and Communication 2013 Report, and The Gender of Money Project. Sandra has worked in mainstream and Pacific radio and television for over 23 years as a reporter, presenter and producer. She is a founding member of the Pacific Islands Media Association (PIMA) and is the Deputy Chair of the National Pacific Radio Trust.

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Pat Williams [Participant] is a founding member of the Pacifica Mamas group. Born and raised in the Cook Islands, Pat passes on his Pacific culture through the songs, chants and music of his island homeland. A professional musician, Pat has developed a Music, Drums and Dance workshop series, as part of the Pacifica Mamas school education programme. Pat also has a keen interest in film, leading the PV movement within the Pacifica Mamas group and wider Pacifica Arts Centre community.

Deane-Rose Ngatai [Participant] is of Māori and Pakeha descent with tribal affiliations to Ngāti Porou and Tainui. In 2010 Deane-Rose completed a Bachelor of Design and Visual Arts from Unitec, with a major in Photography and Media Arts. She is currently in her second year of the Masters in Design (Awatoru) degree at Unitec. Born and raised in Auckland, Deane considers herself as part of a generation of urban Māori. Since the age of five, she was fortunate to have been nurtured within Te Ao Māori through her bilingual education. Deane considers the schools, units and whanau that made up her education as her ‘urban whakapapa’ and acknowledges how significant this was in developing her own identity in the city.

Participatory Video and the Pacifica Mamas: A Pilot Project



Image 1. Mama Teuke, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team.

Authors

Malama Saifoloi, Evangelia Papoutsaki, Marcus Williams, Usha Sundar Harris, and Munawwar Naqvi

Abstract

Emerging literature highlights that in the Pacific, the use of participatory video (PV) is a new trend in research and community action. It can be employed as a tool to empower communities to have agency over their media outputs, meaning that they have full control of the content creation, production and distribution processes. But to date there is still a dearth of studies that fully explore its potential use in different contexts, especially within diasporic networks. To address this gap, a pilot project was undertaken where PV methodologies were tested in collaboration with a diasporic Pacific community group based in West Auckland, New Zealand. This report feeds back on the overall process of developing the pilot project.

PART ONE: Introduction

1.1 About the pilot project

Recent research in the Pacific (Thomas, Eggins, & Papoutsaki, 2013; 2011; 2010; Harris, 2008) demonstrates the use of participatory video (PV) by local communities to promote their stories. These projects have produced positive results, such as greater awareness of localised health challenges (i.e., HIV in Papua New Guinea) and increased support from government agencies (i.e., using PV outputs to showcase microentrepreneurship in Fiji, thus building business capability for local communities). However, there is a dearth of studies that fully explore the potential use of PV in different contexts – especially within diasporic Pacific networks. To address this gap, a pilot project was undertaken in 2013 where PV methodologies were tested in collaboration with community arts and heritage group the Pacifica Mamas, based at Corban Estate in West Auckland, New Zealand.

The pilot and this report – which feeds back on the overall process of developing the project – together aim to act as dialogic tool not only in practice but in reflection, providing a useful framework for other stakeholders interested in exploring the application of PV as a tool for social change and economic enhancement of Pacific communities.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the pilot project was to trial participatory video (PV) production for use with the Pacifica Mamas, a group of elderly female Pacific migrants in New Zealand. The research team wanted to explore the potential use of PV within a local setting, where the chosen group could have full control of their content creation, production and distribution processes. Furthermore, they wanted to build on research relating to Pacific women in entrepreneurial activity, capturing their response to PV and its use to support their goals.

An important objective of the pilot was to build capacity in PV as a first step. This was achieved by inviting a Pacific PV expert, Dr Usha Sundar Harris, to facilitate a collaborative training workshop for the research team and the Pacifica Mamas at Unitec Institute of Technology. As part of the process the authors assessed the PV methodology for suitability and made modifications, where needed, to cater for the needs of the multi-migrant Pacifica Mamas group.

Research questions

The research questions for the pilot study to explore and answer were the following:

How well do elderly female Pacific migrants in New Zealand respond to PV?

- a) How do elderly female Pacific migrants respond to PV as a tool for their individual and collective group pursuits? What are the initial responses to training, application etc?
- b) What do the Pacific migrants think of PV as a tool for cultural heritage preservation and promotion?
- c) How transferable are the observations to other similar Pacific contexts?

1.2 Background context

Current issues for women in the Pacific

Women in the Pacific are facing several challenges, especially in the areas of leadership and equal economic participation (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2013). Their plight, as reported by regional and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), appears to continue in the following areas: access to land/credit, equal property rights, marital property rights, equal access to credit, labour issues, general labour overview and protections against sexual harassment in the workplace. Furthermore, general issues such as constitutional protection for anti-discrimination; constitutional protection for sex/gender and grievances against women are documented in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2013; United Nations New York, 2014; Zetlin, 2014).

The unfavourable conditions existing within these areas stifle the rights of Pacific women to progress and success (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2013). That is despite the fact that there is a popular view that equal representation of women in leadership and economic development can lead to significantly positive implications for economies (Kelly et al., 2015; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012). However, in the Pacific, women's under-representation as influential civil society leaders and successful entrepreneurs throughout the region is a major limitation to their development (United Nations New York, 2014; Zetlin, 2014).

That said, work continues in the Pacific region to strengthen this deficiency. Questions still remain, however, in regards to how the collective voice of Pacific women around the



Image 2: Pacifica Mamas. Left to right, top row: Mama Teuke and Papa Ulese Mama Masina, Mary Ama, Mama Teuke. Middle row: Mama Tiana, Mama Sefuiva. Lower row: Mama Sisaka, Mama Mata, Mama Mary Ama and Mason with Papa Fatu Feu'u, Mama Sefuiva and Pat Williams. Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, dates various. Photo courtesy of Pacifica Mamas website.

world is being created and disseminated today. Moreover, as opportunities for development increase in the region, it is questionable what capability Pacific women have to control media content about themselves and how they are portrayed. PV and other visual methodologies for social change are beginning to be researched as new methods that allow participants to be fully participative in the process of creating media content and to determine the degree of control that is appropriate to the stakeholders (Harris, 2008).

Pacifica Mamas

The Pacifica Arts Centre, home of the Pacifica Mamas, is under the direction of Jarcinda Stowers-Ama. It was established in the late 1980s by her mother Mary Ama, a strong advocate for keeping her own Cook Island culture alive, as well as other Pacific cultures. She feared that younger generations would not have access to the art of weaving and traditional tivaevae (Cook Island quilt-making) techniques. Mary started the Mamas by recruiting a few women from the community who were keen to participate in this initiative. On their behalf she advocated to the local council and other funders for their support. There are 20 core group members, with 200 members of the extended Pacifica Mamas community.

The group initially set up a small studio home base on the historic Corban Estate Winery in West Auckland and has been meeting regularly to exchange stories and creative skills. They became affectionately known as the matriarchs (and patriarchs) of Pacific heritage arts. Over the years the Mamas' visual art works and the creation of a Pacific cultural education programme for school students gained the attention and support of local government and the Auckland art scene. This led to a number of Pacific artists and groups joining the Mamas community, and to the establishment of a larger home base, the Pacifica Arts Centre.

In true Pacific style the Pacifica Mamas and Papas remain humble about their successes over the years. Their works have been extensively exhibited in galleries and museums around the world and they continue to run a successful cultural education programme for school students, with the support of Auckland Council. In recognition of their contribution to Pacific arts, the Mamas were awarded the Creative New Zealand Pacific Heritage Arts award in 2012.

Entrepreneurship and the Mamas

The Mamas are actively engaged in entrepreneurship. But on the very broad scale of entrepreneurship, where do

these elderly female entrepreneurs fit exactly? ‘Mumpreneurship’ is a relatively new version of entrepreneurship defined by Ekinsmyth (2011, p. 104) as a “term for a business owner involved in a new type of business practice, one that departs in varying ways from masculinity norms of entrepreneurship. Embracing, rather than contesting the role of ‘mother’, it is practice that attempts to recast the boundaries between productive and reproductive work.” Saifoloi, drawing from her experience, suggests that ‘mamapreneurship’ could be viewed as an extension of mumpreneurship where a ‘mama’ in the context of the Pacifica Mamas is a grandmother who is retired from formal employment and is probably looking after her grandchildren while her own children are in paid employment. Furthermore, the mamapreneurs are from various Pacific communities and are not motivated by financial means or necessity, rather they have a desire to keep their cultural heritage alive. The economic benefits are an added bonus.

1.3 Methodology

Participatory video (PV) and other visual methodologies for social change allow participants to be fully participative in the research process and to determine the degree of control that stakeholders have in working with them (Harris, 2008). However, there remains a dearth of empirical studies that address PV use within a Pacific context (Thomas et al., 2012; Harris, 2008). The research team consequently sought to adopt a methodology that reflected the locale of the pilot project. The main aspect of a Pacific-oriented approach to research is to ensure that studies on Pacific issues are carried out respectfully, that they are consultative, based on capacity sharing and conducted according to the values of Pacific people (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2001). In finding an appropriate methodology, the research team therefore sought to develop a framework where they could act as co-creators of PV with the Pacifica Mamas.

There are two significant projects in the region that provide a background framework for this. These are Komuniti

Tok Piksa (KTP) by the Centre of Creative and Social Media at the University of Goroka, Papua New Guinea; and the PACMAS-funded Climate Change, Gender Empowerment and Participatory Video Project. Both projects sought to showcase PV. KTP is a community organisation based in Papua New Guinea that specialises in enabling and empowering local communities with [PV capability](#), while the PACMAS project involved research conducted across five Pacific nations, exploring the use of PV as an effective tool for community and gender-based approaches to actioning social change. Of particular interest to the Pacifica Mamas researchers was KTP’s methodology, which was designed by combining participative research with visual methodologies for social change. According to researchers this has proved effective in dealing with specific conditions and complex situations such as accessing audiences and communicating across the Highland regions in Papua New Guinea (Thomas, Iedema, Britton, Eggins, Kualawi, Mel, & Papoutsaki, 2012). The reiterative process is also an important aspect of the KTP methodology.

Visual methodologies for social change

Visual dialogues are defined as engagement through film or photography as a process of reflection, through which dialogical engagement among a group is stimulated (White, 2003). They are collective – having shared meanings; they give value to what people say and involve a creative process that allows for local concepts to be included. Communication for social change (CFSC) is the localised use of communication tools through which “people themselves define who they are, what they need and how to get what they need in order to improve their own lives” (Parks, Gray-Felder, Hunt, & Byrne, 2005). The CFSC model is a process where community dialogue and collective action work together to produce social change in a community, improving the health and the welfare of all its members (Figuroa, Kincaid, Rani, & Lewis, 2002).

Literature (White, 2003) on participatory action research (PAR) using visual tools within an indigenous research

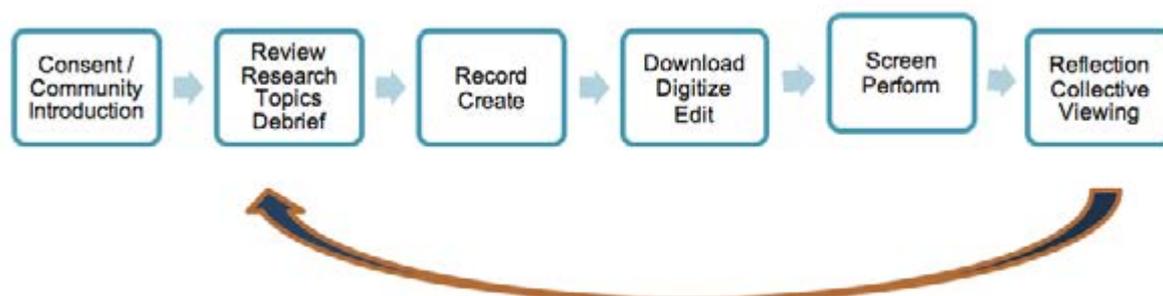


Figure 1. The Komuniti Tok Piksa (KTP) visual research process.

framework further shows the important role they play in:

- raising educational awareness by creating material that can reach a wide community network (audio-visual format);
- developing communication tools for social change within a Pacific Islands context; and
- contributing towards research capacity-building by engaging with a local educational institution and young and emerging researchers.

Further, as literature (White, 2003) on visual methodologies for social change indicates, the camera can:

- act as catalyst for community discussion by bringing people together and getting people talking;
- provide opportunities to record embedded practices (gestures, voice, expression, interaction) and ways to reflect on the ideas articulated by engaging in feedback sessions;
- strengthen visual literacy within the community;
- provide a space for self-determination and confidence;
- create the ability to counter mass-media messages,
- and create new opportunities for researchers to engage with the community.

The engagement through film or photography is seen thus as a process of reflection through which dialogical engagement among a group is stimulated. It is collective in the sense that it provides shared meanings. It gives value to what people say and becomes a creative process that allows for local concepts to be contextualised.

Adapting KTP's approach

A PAR approach was consequently adopted as a method for the pilot because it applies the visual research processes as used by KTP. PAR as an approach is appropriate because it supports cultural, specifically Pacific, research. For example, PAR design is cyclical, collaborative, reflective and context-bound (Kendon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007). It is known for focusing on real-life problems, seeking diversity and having trans-disciplinary outcomes. The visual research process as practised by KTP is significant because it stimulates reflection among participants, it is engaging and creative, it provokes emotional responses, and it lets us see things in more depth through visual recording. Harris asserts that participatory communication is people-centred, process-oriented and contextualised in a local setting, utilising local knowledge instead of top-down, professionally disseminated messages with a predetermined agenda (2008, p. 148). Harris found PAR a central methodology used

to invite community participation in video (2008, p. 151).

The process used in the Pacifica Mamas pilot was modified to suit the size and nature of this particular project. The original KTP model has seven to eight steps; for our project we only needed to have four steps, so the requirement for reiteration was reduced. The following are the main phases we used from the KTP methodology; after each we consulted with the Mamas group who participated in the decision making of the editing and screening phases:

- Recording or creation
- Downloading, digitising or editing
- Screening or performing
- Reflection, collective viewing and discussion

PART TWO: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The use of participatory video (PV) for community development and social change has increased dramatically over the past few years. There has been an exponential growth in literature that has attempted to bring in greater critical analysis of the theory and practice of PV. Scholars have also searched for appropriate conceptual and theoretical frameworks in which to discuss their work (Shaw, 2015; Milne, Mitchell, & de Lange, 2012; White, 2003; Rodriguez, 2001).

2.1 Defining participatory video (PV)

White recognises the deeper implications of video as a tool for social change when she states that “participatory video as a process is a tool for individual, group and community development” (2003, p.64). Rodriguez (2001) has identified the agency of community media producers arguing for the reframing of the theoretical discourse from alternative to ‘citizens’ media’.

Shaw (2015) meanwhile states that participatory video should not only be seen as “representing unheard voices”, but as an interactive process towards “community emergence”, which she defines as “the notion that communities are not static and pre-existent, but that they are dynamic and can surface and evolve through project processes” (p. 628). Furthermore, she argues that PV should be recast as a longer-term community development project that leads to “more inclusive and collaborative relationships within communities” and enables greater exchanges with decision makers (pp. 628-629).

Harris (2013), in her study of the participatory video production process with rural women in Fiji, used a social capital framework to uncover its potential for dialogue, community building and representation. The study found that PV enabled bridging links between individuals and communities; community cohesion through trust building and dialogue; capacity building and knowledge accumulation through information exchange; and community and individual representation through programme creation (p. 273). She noted that, “[H]aving found their voices, the women were keen to use video to capture the ‘impressions and expressions’ of their daily life to effectively communicate their hopes and aspirations to the world” (p.275). Thus PV can break down gender and economic stereotypes and bring fresh interpretations of the way communities imagine themselves. To this extent Huber (1998, p. 19) delineates three types of participatory video approaches: therapy, empowerment and activism, which are summarised below by Harris (2008, p. 33).

Therapy: Video is used to develop participants’ confidence and self esteem. By recording their own stories and seeing them played back, participants can see through video, used as a mirror how they are perceived by others. Thus options for social change are not directly addressed in therapy-type video projects, although the reflexive experience can of course be empowering and motivate for political action.

Empowerment: Empowerment is located somewhere in the middle between ‘therapy’ and ‘activism’. It integrates the two approaches by using the full potential of both, the people and the development communicator. The boundaries between subject, producer, and viewer collapse with this approach. Everybody is involved in the three key activities: filming, performing (being filmed), and watching the film. In addition, the development communicator plays an active role as a facilitator, but is also involved in the communication and learning process. People have a double responsibility: their active engagement is required in the production of the video and also in the distribution of it. If a participatory video project of this kind succeeds, it can be expected that people have been truly empowered. There have been innumerable uses of participatory video in projects of empowerment around the world. The best practice case studies have been documented by various authors (see Braden & Huong, 1998; Gumucio Dagon, 2001; Johansson, 1999a; Riano, 1994; Rodriguez, 2001; Satheesh, n.d.; WACC, 1989; White, 2003). There are also hundreds of PV projects, which have gone undocumented.

Activism: Video is used as a tactical tool to bring about social justice and environmental protection. Early examples

include the use of video by the Kayapo Indians in Brazil in the 1980s to record their protest against the development of Amazonian rainforest thus “controlling news about their situation” (Ogan, 1989:4).

Harris (2008) further suggests that when a video professional goes into a community and makes a video about issues facing that community, it is not deemed a PV process. However, when a video maker goes into a community and actively engages the community in the process of story development about the issues facing their community and the resultant programme production, then that process is considered to be PV. The video professional’s role here is one of a facilitator rather than a producer.

As a tool for constructive and progressive social action, PV has the following characteristics: process oriented, participative, uses local setting and local knowledge, utilises small media, empowers individuals and communities (Harris, 2008). PV has been given a variety of labels such as community video, alternative video, grassroots video, process video or direct video. We adopt Harris’s definition.

2.2 What does participation mean?

A key element of the production process is participation of communities. It is clear that outside experts cannot ‘develop’ grassroots people, but they must be in a position to develop themselves, becoming conscious of their own potential to bring about changes which they themselves feel are important (White & Patel, 1994, p. 363). The community’s involvement is required in the entire message-making process from the choice of topics and issues to the planning and production of media content, White and Patel contend (1994, p. 361). This active engagement or agency of individuals is the key to awakening one’s self-awareness and developing a critical consciousness about one’s circumstance, in what Freire (1984) identified as conscientisation. The action of producing the message becomes empowering in itself as participants develop a range of media competencies such as technical and creative production skills, analytical skills in reading mass-media texts, and a deeper understanding of their own communicative potential (Riano, 1994, p. 125). Through their engagement in message development, individuals also become empowered to find ways of solving problems in their own communities. Increased dialogue, collaboration and respect for others’ ideas become elements in community building and social cohesion. Participation thus becomes “a developed form of self management” and a “force towards a more participative society” (White & Patel, 1994, p. 361).

According to White, in reconciling differences, subjects need to identify what these differences actually are, then “own” the differences and be willing to resolve them through constructive dialogue. They should also recognise that it is expected and normal to have differences within a group, and respecting each other’s differences is a part of the process of transformation. The key is to cooperate, despite these differences, to achieve the task at hand (2003, p. 79).

The role of facilitator

The facilitator of the video workshop is also an active participant in the production process and as such needs to be critically aware of the values he/she may impose on the process and the finished product. It is worth heeding Kawa-ja’s cautionary advice here:

The facilitator experiences a constant struggle to find a balance between being directive and letting participants take initiative, between structuring and planning and letting things evolve spontaneously, and between authoritarianism and nondirective dialogical approach (As cited in Riano, 1994:141).

Braakman and Edwards (2002) warn that the facilitator should be ‘content neutral’, thus not having a stake in the outcome, yet strong enough to ensure a process which invites the participation of all involved and moves the group towards a common goal. As such the facilitator’s role is one of “enabling others” while maintaining the flexibility to relinquish his/her expert role and “become co-learners in projects” (White, 2003, pp. 39, 45).

Shaw and Robertson (1997, p. 34) warn that an unstructured learning environment can be “disempowering” for the participants and can become “chaotic and meaningless”. The facilitator plays an important role in designing the workshop and bringing focus to group activities, especially during the training phase. The researcher/facilitator is an important variable in the participatory message development process and as such must develop personal style and competencies to interrelate with people, as well as being willing to adapt and change direction, be able to function as a facilitator and have effective interpersonal communication skills.

Workshop facilitators have to be constantly aware of their impact on the group and maintain an on-going dialogue with members of the group to interpret their needs and motivations.

2.3 The PV process with the Mamas

Participatory video is an open process within the bounds of each production and its implicit functions, purposes and aesthetics. Towards this end the workshop is open to a range of participants who want to become involved, without being exclusionary of those lacking in skills or talent; it is open to the ideas, voices and needs of the community so they have ownership over the product; it observes an open process of production which is not scripted and uses production values which reflect the norms of the community. Besides the production process, the final product itself can become a valuable information resource. It can be shared with other communities who can model their own initiatives on the project, and given to decision makers to influence policy decisions (Harris, 2008).

By studying process we begin to understand what elements of people’s involvement in media production are empowering, the way they go about determining their message production and how they reflect their worlds through mediated communication. The engagement between facilitator and participants can also influence the process. Galbraith further highlights this aspect:

The most common elements of the transactional process are collaboration, support, respect, freedom, equality, critical reflection, critical analysis, challenge, and praxis. These features of the process hold true for both the facilitator and the adult learner who comprise the learning encounter. To incorporate these elements is to require facilitator and learner to scrutinize held values, beliefs, and ways of acting [...]. Another element in the transactional process involves accepting responsibility for our actions and beliefs. (1991, p. 3).

PART THREE: The PV Training Process

The research team attended a three-day workshop on participatory video (PV) ahead of carrying out the pilot project on location with the Pacifica Mamas. The Mamas also attended the training, as building capacity within the community is a key feature of PV.

As such, a key element of the pilot phase was the training workshop. The main objective was to train the team members on PV concepts, processes and practices and then to test these on the community (the Mamas). Pivotal to PV is building and maintaining a strong relationship with the

community from start to finish. We developed our relationship with the Mamas several months prior to the workshop, which involved visiting the Mamas' centre, meeting with the centre director and other members and sharing meals together. These times led to establishing trust and a stable platform on which to pilot PV.

We used the following steps to guide our methodology :

1. Setting up the PV project
2. Getting started
3. The training workshop:

Workshop schedule

Wednesday 28 to Friday 30 August

Day 1. Sessions 1-5 (at Unitec Lab)

Day 2. Session 6 (offsite with the Mamas and/or at Unitec)

Day 3. Session 7 (offsite with the Mamas and/or at Unitec)

Equipment

Basic (low to medium range) digital camera/video with features for tripod and microphone usage.

Participants

3 x groups of 4. Each group to consist of 1 x Pacifica Mama, 1 x research team member, 1 x student or production assistant and 1 x experienced with video/production

Post workshop and production/project completion

Undertaking from research team to complete all activities required, keeping Pacifica Mamas fully informed and seeking their input throughout these last stages of production and delivery of the final product to agreed expectations and ready for their use, etc.

4. Reflection and analysis
5. Organising regular screenings of footage
6. Editing footage

The training workshop

The workshop was held from August 28-30, 2013. This was facilitated by Dr Usha Harris, our team PV expert from Macquarie University, Sydney. The trainees were members of the research team and two members of the Pacifica Mamas, Jarcinda Stowers-Ama and Pat Williams. The workshop was also attended by staff members from other Unitec departments such as Design and Visual Arts, and Communication Studies, from the Faculty of Creative industries and Business. A Masters of Design student also attended the workshop.

One of the key components of PV and PAR requires the research team to go on location in order to film content/material (determined by the Mamas) using their newly acquired PV skills. The film location was the Pacifica Arts Centre at Corban Estate. It was a constructive and fun day, which started with a warm traditional welcome from the Mamas, with a song and dance accompanied by the Cook Island drums.

Deane-Rose Ngatai, a masters student from the Department of Design and Visual Arts responded on behalf of the team in te reo Māori, followed by a waiata (a Māori song), sung by the research team. The filming on location was largely carried out by Pat Williams representing the Mamas. Pat used a combination of newly-found PV skills and his existing knowledge and experience in video work. According to Usha Harris, the team's PV expert, a major difference when compared with other PV projects in the Pacific she has led is that trainees there were generally not familiar with the technology and equipment. Those groups



Image 3 & Image 4: Dr Usha Harris facilitating the PV workshop opening sessions at Unitec, Mt Albert Campus, Auckland, NZ, 28 August, 2013. Photo courtesy of The PV Team.



Image 5, Image 5 & Image 7: Usha Harris training members of the PV team and the Pacifica Mamas, Pat Williams on left, Marcus Williams on right, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team.



Image 8 (left): Munawwar Naqvi, Usha Harris, one of the Mamas and Jarcinda Stowers-Ama, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team. **Image 9:** Evangelia Papoutsaki in discourse with a Mama, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team.



Image 10 (left). Mamas displaying tivaevae, being filmed by other Mamas, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team. **Image 11.** Usha Harris, Jarcinda Stowers-Ama and Mamas discussing the project, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team.



Image 12 (left): Mama Mary Ama, Founder of Pacifica Arts Centre & **Image 13:** Papa Pat adding PV training to his media skills, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team.



Image 14 (left): The Mamas interviewing the Mamas with PV Team looking on, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team. **Image 15 (right):** The Mamas reviewing footage, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team.



Image 16 (left): The Mamas reviewing footage, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team. **Image 17 (right):** PV Team member reviewing footage with Mama, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team.

have needed approximately two days' extra time for their training, whereas the Mamas had varying degrees of media/technology literacy.

The Mamas responded enthusiastically to being involved in the project. The idea of giving them significant involvement in the choice of material to film and then taking part in shooting the footage was empowering for them. The majority of the Mamas demonstrated that they had prior experience with photography, video recording and filming but only as subjects rather than producers. Most of them needed a lot of training in technical areas – for example, equipment handling and interviewing skills.

PV promotes showing the footage and images to the community at the end of the shooting. This is an integral part of the process, allowing the participants to see immediately the fruits of their labour. Normally, at this point, the trust between the researchers and the participants is strengthened. This can be attributed to watching the footage immediately after shooting, without delay, and the inclusive nature, features which are instrumental in the success of a collaborative PV process. In this case, observing the immediate responses of the participants to raw footage was an enjoyable and fascinating experience. This stimulated a lot of lively discussion and laughter.

After filming on location the team returned to Unitec to resume skills training in assessing the visual and oral material to be used, in accordance with the PAR cycle/approach of “observe-reflect-plan-act” (Thomas, Iedema, Britton, Eggins, Kualawi, Mel, & Papoutsaki, 2012). In this phase the Mamas played a significant role in determining their content.

PART FOUR: Reflecting on the Process and Impact

Reflexivity is an essential aspect of visual participatory research processes. The team members made an attempt to engage in a reflexive manner throughout the process of this project including a session at the end of the participatory video workshop with the Mamas and during the writing stage of this report. To that extent, the thoughts of the team members about their experience of interacting with the Mamas over the transferring of the PV skills, and their preconceptions of what this might entail, along with the challenges of overcoming those preconceptions, are valuable insights into the PV processes. These are shared below, grouped thematically around emerging issues using a di-

rect quoting style that allows the individual voices to stand alone without the temptation of over-analysing them.

4.1 Addressing the research ethics challenge

Sultana (2007) argues that “it is critical to pay greater attention to issues of reflexivity, positionality and power relations in the field in order to undertake ethical and participatory research” (p. 374). She also calls for the need to recognise and work with multiple positionalities of researchers and research participants that are constantly negotiated in creating ethical relations:

“Attempts to institutionalize ethical frameworks are not sufficient to address or ensure good practice in the field. There are critical disjunctures between aspects of everyday behaviour in the field and the University's institutional frameworks that aim to guide/enforce good ethical practice, as the very conduct of fieldwork is always contextual, relational, embodied, and politicized.” (p. 383)

Seeking ethics approval to undertake participatory video research proved challenging. Just as this approach to media turns the tables on the filmmaker/subject relationship, it does so too for researcher/subject. In participatory video, the researcher is facilitating a set of techniques and analytical tools for the participants. How the participants are deploying these is the subject of the inquiry, but the fundamental objective of the method is to turn the participant into a researcher – one who is self-reflexive, analysing the process, observing the effects of the media on the group and ascertaining the potential of the medium to effect positive change.

The really interesting moment in the ethics application process was the question of consent for the subjects to participate. Should we seek consent from the Pacifica Mamas who are going to be facilitated in media production and analysis, or should we seek consent from those who the Pacifica Mamas are going to document and analyse, using their new-found media skills.

Interestingly, the ethics application process highlighted the paradoxical nature of the researcher/subject relationship not just for participatory video, but also for all situations where social change is a motivating factor in the research. The underlying premise in an ethics process is that there is a power imbalance, which is intrinsic to research, requiring that a code of practice be adhered to, in order to ensure that the subject is safe. This is perfectly sensible and this line of reasoning in no way suggests things should be oth-

erwise. However, if a primary objective of the research is to empower the subject with information, rather than to simply extract information in order to use it elsewhere, the previously mentioned researcher/subject power relationship has been changed. This was a challenging approach for an ethics committee to accept. To underscore the dilemma very clearly, the Pacifica Mamas were documenting the Pacifica Mamas. Should, then, they seek consent from themselves, to document themselves?

4.2 Reflections on the process by the research team

The challenge of managing quality

The question of quality is highlighted when PV is applied in its pure form. As consumers of media, we all have certain expectations. PV has a mechanism that will self-regulate this problem; in the reflective process, PV allows for any quality deficit issues to be seen by the participants themselves.

I have been teaching photography for over 20 years, and I have freelanced as a professional. I understand what is required to make a quality image and the high level of focus that professionals have on this aspect of the craft. I also know what is required in teaching somebody else how to make a quality image and the degree to which this process subsumes the more human aspects of photography and documentary. With respect to this issue of quality, which in turn relates to consumer or viewer expectation, the documentary subjects quite naturally have less concern, at least until they see the result. They just want to get on with the interview or the activity which is being documented. For these key reasons my inclination, when I come into a documentary situation, is to take control. I always felt that the key is to create a situation where the protagonists can do their thing, within an environment, which has a degree of technical control, allowing for a balance of production quality and ease for the subjects. What I have realised over the last few days, and Usha very patiently continues to remind me, is that you start to get people used to the technology, you get them involved, confident and relaxed, whatever the quality and you do not worry about technique, at least at first. Another realisation is that you still have to get back to that quality because at the end of the day if you want to communicate clearly you need audible dialogue and you need reasonably clear pictures. Part of the reason is that we all consume media, so it doesn't matter if we are a Pacifica Mama or an experienced director – we have cer-

tain expectations. What I discovered through this workshop is that participatory video has a mechanism that will self-regulate this problem, which might be seen as a bit of a paradox. The reflective dimension of the process ensures that the protagonists see the quality, and any deficit issues, for themselves. This then creates the motivation for technical improvement in them. It takes time and you have to be patient and allow that learning to occur rather than just to come in and take control, but ultimately, the objective will be achieved because media is now a shared language and we are all a great deal more expert than we realise. By acknowledging this through the participatory video methodology, far greater insights into the subjects, community or issue at hand are possible. (Marcus Williams)

The challenge of transcending gender roles and technology

The use of experts can reduce the possibility for negotiated visual outcomes. In the PV project overall, the dominant voices were gender driven. It is important not to underestimate the dominant discourse in Western image making because the focus within PV is the communication and shared/contested knowledge rather than the visual outcome or product.

Pat, one of the Papas, a group of men closely associated with the Mamas, is a confident filmmaker/archivist and has trained himself and gathered various skills experientially with the support of younger (male?) relatives. He has a long-term commitment to the Mamas and their work. In an attempt to be involved in a participatory process, this prior skill level tends to reinforce traditional hierarchical production processes and the more technologically competent individual functions to some degree as a director (Pat in this case). This role historically has tended to be held by men in traditional Western production. In saying this, the focus of the women's production in this context was cloth artefacts and it would be unfortunate to detract from this. However it remains that the relationships between men and technology need to be questioned/challenged. Reinforcing this, our technological experts (and this is not unusual) tended to be male; Pat, Mun, Marcus and Venusi for example. I was grateful to have Sandra Kailahi participate, with her vast media experience and of course the specific perspective of a woman, and of Tongan descent. Sandra's participation was significant for many reasons and this was reinforced with Pat's later comments to me about how valuable her



Images 18 & 19: PV Team member sharing their experiences on the second day, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 30 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team.

understanding of the filming process, in particular of interview shooting and cutting, was and how much he had gained from this. It would have been good to have Sandra work with the Mamas more so they could have greater involvement and voice in the selection of material and understanding of the process of filmmaking, and the broader production process in general. The editing process is a communicative one and can be shared in this context to broaden the participants' understanding of the work they do, and unexplored potential via story and representation. An expert reduces the possibility for negotiated visual outcomes. In the project overall, the strongest voices remain gender driven. This was further reinforced in Marcus's comments about his subject position as an artist and lecturer and professional expert in photography. [See above for Marcus Williams's reflection.] It is important not to underestimate the impact of this dominant discourse of the Western tradition of image making in the participatory process, as he says, as the focus is on communication and shared or contested knowledge rather than the visual outcome or product. When resources are scarce, and time short, it is easy to revert to a concentration on the material outcomes of the final product and its 'marketing value' for promoting the Mamas, rather than the process of participatory filmmaking and what that offers the wide range of members. (Catherine Davis)

I think the process of filming creates this tension around the technology and the technical quality which in PV relies on the personality, the characters..., the stories that can emerge, or just the conversations. So we put the technical quality for the moment aside and say, actually it's the person and their story that is important...and I think that is the difference with PV, you start with the person. (Evangelia Papoutsaki)

Managing expectations and assumptions

PV is a platform from which experts and participants can transition into a space where they should end up on the same level. There was an expectation that the technical knowledge would be minimal among the group, so the way the Mamas engaged with the technology was surprising. There was familiarity and a wonderful confidence in front of and behind the cameras. Also, the underlying assumption that the trainers/experts would not be recipients was disproved by the many times the roles were reversed and the trainers acquired new knowledge in cultural capital.

For me, before the PV workshop, my expectations were quite simplistic and hopeful. Mainly that PV would be ideal for the Mamas so that they could have control of all the key processes and be empowered by the experience. A big driver for me was enabling the community to find new solutions for marketing their cultural products and to increase their access to markets through technology. I had some idea, but did not fully understand, the extent of what the Mamas could do with camera and video technology. During the shooting phase I was really surprised by the way being part of this process actually made me feel. I felt emotional, especially during the welcome by the Mamas at the centre; a warm sense of being deeply connected to my mum (a founding Mama). Seeing my mum as part of the welcoming group, I felt her passion for her culture and what it means for her to keep it alive by being part of the Mamas movement for over 20 years. I really enjoyed watching her and the other Mamas perform and respond to being interviewed, and participate in the handling of the equipment. They looked cute, whilst eager to be good students. The process was more important to me than the output. I think whatever the outcome,

the fact that they were the producers of their own story was important and significant. The aim of the workshop was not to turn them into experts or professionals but to hand over some control and knowledge. I think it was a very successful outcome. (Malama Saifoloi)

I was interested in the sharing and embedding of the cultural capital of Unitec and the research team with the Mamas. The conversations about long-term commitment to the group were refreshing, but an ideal at this stage. The goal was to engage fully with the group rather than act as documentary makers who capture video material then leave to construct the text outside its original context. Much greater time commitment or fuller engagement is necessary to really achieve this. (Catherine Davis)

The richest stories already exist within the culture of the Pacifica Mamas and the way they work. They make great talent and the potential for them to be involved in various television or film work was obvious. I was excited by the broader potential for understanding 'talent' that includes older people who tell great stories, laugh and dance. This has particular potential for a Pacific audience but also the wider mainstream audience. The Mamas are multitalented and thoroughly entertaining. We became participants in this work rather than merely watchers. I carried an initial assumption that we were going in with structures that would assist the existing project, but in many ways we can really only become part of the project that already exists and works. (Catherine Davis)

The challenges of coming from a mainstream media background

PV challenges current approaches used by the mainstream media to collect, produce and air community content and news. PV allows the community to have an active participation and control throughout the whole journey. PV does not undermine existing capabilities of the community, rather it allows for these abilities to be recognised and maximised.

Mainstream media outlets in New Zealand do not use a participatory video approach when reporting on issues or communities. It is not standard practice because the community does not dictate 'what is news' or 'how the news should be reported'. News organisations aim to be objective and unbiased. Mainstream media enter communities with a set frame of mind based on what the main news producer has decided is the best angle for the story. In the case of broadcast media, the journalist will use a cameraperson to film the story, then edit the piece without any direct contribution from the community oth-

er than being interviewed. There is a chain of editorial command before the final story goes to air and at no time is the community consulted over what actually goes to air. This is the complete opposite to the participatory video approach, which involves the community from the beginning to the end and it is indeed the group that decides on the final product, as they are involved with every step of the process. (Sandra Kailahi)

Understanding pre-existing knowledge and skills

I was not aware of the independent technical skill that existed prior to the PV team arriving. The Mamas already had a complex process in place for archiving/filming but the PV process provided reassurance to members of the group that they could do more with their existing skills and processes in terms of communicating the story/stories associated with the Mamas' work. Given the ubiquity of digital technology, it would be useful to develop more sophisticated ways of working with and understanding pre-existing skills in groups so that we can spend less time training with technology or at least attempt to tailor training as focused, structured and based on specific requirements. This would free up more time to work with people and use the technology to merely facilitate communication and understand further shared, contested and negotiated representations and discourse. (Catherine Davis)

Overcoming the tendency to see oneself through the mainstream media lenses

PV has provided a platform for the Pacifica Mamas' real voices to be heard. The PV approach works with the Mamas' natural ability as storytellers, in a way mainstream media can never do.

My experience with mainstream media and the Pacifica Mamas has been mixed. Journalists and documentary makers often approach me, wanting to capture the Mamas on film and get an insight into the workings of the group. The end product is normally a nicely edited interview, accompanied by the Mamas smiling to the camera. Stories normally skim the surface of the art, culture and personal stories of the group members. When asked to be a part of the PV project, I wasn't sure what to expect. During the first workshop day with Usha, I realised the PV method was in line with the Mamas' way of life – their way of being. The process requires time, patience and getting comfortable both behind and in front of the camera. The Mamas have embraced this process and the

films produced so far have been honest and intimate looks into their stories. What they've captured on film is something that could never be done using mainstream media techniques. Every story has shown the real Mamas, tears and laughter included. (Jarcinda Stowers-Ama)

In training the communities to use audio/video equipment like cameras and audio recorders (or any accessories) should we keep to the basic functional use of the equipment? Quite often, mainstream media elements like 'carving out the imagery' and the idea of the 'narrative it puts forth by virtue of itself or by mixing with other text', easily get contextualised in these training sessions. However, many of these elements are influenced by trainers' tested techniques of creating representativeness and acceptability of content in a variety of media. I believe that if these get overstated in the PV training environment they will affect the way the trainees will eventually utilise the video equipment and associated communication technologies. I think trainers need to be aware of this so as not to have encouraged conformity to the current mediation reality. (Mun Naqvi)

Participation that goes two ways?

The most significant moments for me were when the Mamas told us what to capture with the camera (actually performing a story intentionally with agency) or when they were physically associated or engaged with the technology. I question the potential for the type of dialogic engagement that was discussed in our time training with Usha. The research team in the PV context acts as facilitators and participants in an already complex communication environment. I would have liked to participate in or observe more discussion around selection of footage and choices made in editing the material. (Catherine Davis)

Self-reflecting as part of the process

I was like coming in and thinking, am I directing this too much or should I be doing this, or how is this working? I'm really enjoying it because it's challenging our whole perception and experience about what I know. (Sandra Kailahi)

It's wonderful because you are being self-reflective and



Image 20: Pacifica Mamas, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV

that is the whole thing about this process, that you are constantly self-reflective. It's not about going in with a preconceived idea and quickly shooting, editing and putting on air, but it's about the way one engages with the process...how am I doing it? you are not the expert anymore. And so I was really glad that you were asking those questions of yourself. And there's no real right and wrong question, it doesn't mean that because we are doing participatory video that suddenly we have to let go of the quality or stop doing picture overlays, all that can be done. What we have to learn to do is to stop controlling the moment, let the subject control the moment, so to speak. (Usha Sundar Harris)

Context is important

It won't be happiness and sunshine with every community, every participatory video that you do. Some will be very, very hard. These ladies have been together, the relationships have gelled, over many years. But if you bring communities together for this kind of experience in a forced way, which a lot of funded projects tend to do, it is much harder to make it work smoothly –things can fall apart in terms of communication, and conflicts emerging. So as a facilitator it is really important to keep in mind that you will have to adjust for different contexts, different communities. In many participatory videos, people highlight the empowering bits; there is not enough discussion of what doesn't work. Personally, this experience was similar to the experiences I have had when working with other Pacific communities. One of the positive things about Pacific communities is that they are very open to having cameras. That's really part of the culture, and they are very open to the whole experience, very hospitable. So for me, it has been very affirming and I really enjoy working in this context. I have worked on one or two other participatory projects where it was difficult because of the nature of the project, the nature of the participants, as well as the funding organisation who came up with the idea. People were brought together in a forced way and they didn't really want to be there. So as a trainer it's a gift to be working with communicators and an enthusiastic community, which recognises the value of PV. (Usha Sundar Harris)

Overall for me, it was great to see the self-reflection of individuals. That you were really thinking what you were doing, and thinking of the consequences. I really saw a breakthrough with Marcus where he kind of stopped in the midst of directing a scene, which is his professional training, and instead he gave control to the Mamas and then walked away. And I think that is a really, really important step. It's amazing how quickly participants take

over when they are given that little bit of skill and space. (Usha Sundar Harris)

I know we are here for participatory video but it's what life is for me, in the moment, the Mamas just being who they are and enjoying what is around them and us being able to experience that, and we are really lucky that we have the camera that can capture that. I think about my own grandmother –who is now gone, but I see the Mamas like that and it reminds me of my grandmother in those moments that you had, and how precious they are. And if we can do this to help them with their families and have those moments captured, I think that I really like that and the fact that you get them to tell their stories. (Sandra Kailahi)

4.3 Pacifica Mamas' response to PV

When asked if PV is a good way to record their stories and preserve their cultural heritage, some of the the Mamas had this to say:

Mama 1: I think it's very important to [be] recorded on film because if I'm not going to be here for much longer and if I happen to be passed away I have something about myself and what I do for my grandchildren to look at and learn from, what I do and I think...I really believe it's very good to put it on camera...on film.

Mama 2: I think when we are in a modern world we need to learn what are other ways of actually promoting ourselves and getting other people to learn, apart from the news, the newspaper...and I that I think this is one excellent part. We need to actually utilise this as a way of getting the outside world to know what else we [are] doing!

Mama 3: Absolutely it's great for the Mamas and the Papas – it's an opportunity for them to work with modern technology, to express themselves and know that what they are teaching will be seen for now and for another fifty years, a hundred years, another two hundred years.

The Pacifica Mamas response to PV has been very positive. They embraced PV from the outset. They showed eagerness and confidence in using technology beyond the project team's expectation. The fact that they are very experienced storytellers and cultural performers enabled them to adopt the technology as another tool in their armoury of cultural expression.



Image 21: Deane-Rose Ngatai with the Mamas, Pacifica Arts Centre, Corban Estate, Auckland, NZ, 29 August 2013. Photo Courtesy of The PV Team.

Since the original workshop, the Mamas have worked on a number of personal videos, including basic weaving tutorials. ASB Community Trust has kindly funded high-quality video equipment and a Mac computer for the Mamas. In the words of the Pacifica Centre's director, Jarcinda Stowers-Ama: "The Mamas have the basic technical know-how and confidence to capture their stories and culture on film. PV is now part of everything the Mamas do."

It is seen as a modern way to document, share and pass on each of their unique stories to the next generation. PV has provided the Mamas with a platform for their voices to be heard, that they can control. Mama Soia sums up the general feeling of the PV experience for the group: "If I happen to pass away, I have something about myself and what I do for my grandchildren to look at and learn from."

The Mamas have received ongoing support from Unitec, as well as equipment from the ASB Community Trust. This equipment will be used to produce a series of basic Pacific art tutorials. Filming will follow the PV method. Everything, from content filming to editing, will be controlled by the Mamas. In their own words, the Mamas have captured their responses on film, the PV way.

PART FIVE: Concluding Comments and Research Implications

The purpose of this pilot study was to trial the use of participatory video (PV) with elderly female Pacific migrants as an appropriate and enabling tool to support their content-creation needs. We can reasonably conclude from events and projects organised subsequently by the Mamas group that PV is a suitable tool for them. This is especially the case when we think of the key elements of participation, facilitation and 'open' process that PV enables: the PV approach allows for a safe and creative space encouraging stimulating, meaningful and effective discourse about what is important to the lives of the participants.

The training of the community is an important aspect of PV, and based on our experiences we can further conclude that our collaborative training, as researchers working alongside the project participants, was successful. However, we are also aware that this concept of co-creation was (and is) not always easy to follow because PV challenges mainstream thinking and training in photography and filmmaking.

ing, especially in the areas of content, control and structure. Thus, for those of us trained as professionals and experts in these fields, it was an interesting process to experience.

The guiding research question for the pilot study was “How do elderly female Pacific migrants in NZ respond to PV?” with particular focus on the use of PV as a tool for their individual and collective pursuits, plus cultural heritage preservation and promotion. Overall, our pilot study demonstrated that the Mamas embraced the PV approach with enthusiasm. Huber (1998, p. 19) delineates three types of participatory video approach: therapy, empowerment and activism. Although our study did not focus on any one approach specifically, it was observed that whilst empowerment was a strong motivator, one could expect the activism and therapeutic aspects to be worthy causes too, and a natural overlap could exist in a lot of PV projects. More research into this aspect of the PV training would provide valuable feedback as to its impact on such groups as the Pacifica Mamas. The Mamas future uses of PV will determine different outcomes for the group.

The KTP process needed shortening to reflect the size and nature of our project, including, for example, feedback. The number of times we sought feedback in the pilot study was reduced, but we could also confidently say that the KTP methodology was appropriate for the Mamas project because it embraces indigenous research practices.

As Harris (2008) has shown, video footage and images can act as agents to remove normal barriers associated with language, literacy, culture and status. Based on our pilot, we believe PV could be further used as a capability tool for the Mamas to market their products in an innovative way. PV capability and visual tools have the potential to empower the Pacifica Mamas as Pacific entrepreneurs and support the voices of the women. However, as the reflections show, one needs to be mindful of the dominant voices of experts – such as trained creative arts professionals – that can dilute the voices of the subjects. This can happen when the focus becomes about the outcome and not the product. By contrast, a strengthening of community confidence and pride takes place through viewing images and footage of themselves and reflecting on their progress.

PV seems to have empowered the Mamas in many ways. It has encouraged the group to explore ways in which they can continue with their storytelling abilities using new media and technologies. New projects they have since been involved in include an oral history project and a photography project with postgraduate students from the Unitec Department of Communication Studies. Another project

the Mamas were invited to participate in was a collaboration involving six community organisations, whereby their stories were to be aired on Face TV. Halfway through this process the Mamas withdrew their involvement, believing the traditional Western production approach did not meet their needs. The PV experience helped them make this empowering decision. The Mamas chose instead to work with the chief investigator on a separate project more aligned with PV ethos.

Further research could look at the application of PV and traditional methods in diverse settings, to understand when they can complement each other. Also, a study to understand when PV is counterproductive in storytelling or other modalities, when employed in community-based productions, could be helpful to relevant audiences.

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