Chapter thirty nine

Wayfinding the “Tapu” in Critical Autoethnography
Fetaui Iosefo, Haami Samson Hawkins, and David Taufui Mikato Fa’avae

INTRODUCTION
Wayfinding, as Hoturoa Barclay-Kerr (2016) acknowledges, is the ability to rely and draw from traditional methods and sources to navigate safely across the ocean. Such methods and sources are associated with indigenous ancestral knowledges. Across Moana-nui-a-kia (Pacific Ocean), ancestral knowledges are recognised as tapu (sacred). The artwork in this chapter is representative of three separate wakas (canoes), symbolic of us—three authors from diverse ethnic communities in the moana, coming together, writing together, honouring the tapu—together. The piece threaded through the back of the three panels represents the tapu that connects us.

In this chapter we wayfind collectively. First, we ground our foundations in Polynesia, highlighting our interconnectedness and relational positionalities within Moana-nui-a-kia. Then we invoke our stories and share our experiences by acknowledging and honouring our people, land, and spaces. We follow with a karakia (prayer) that covers this chapter and the readers that set eyes and soul on these pages. We then wayfind the tapu on our separate panels/canoe; unfolding what tapu looks like in critical autoethnography for a Samoan woman, Māori elder, and Tongan man. We do the same process on our panel/canoes with family and education and conclude this chapter as no longer separate but as one.

WAYFINDING OUR OCEAN

There are terms in Polynesia that share similar spelling and conceptual meanings that serve as the foundation of their collective cultural knowledge systems (Suaalii-Sauni, 2017). For instance, the words “mana” (power), “whakapapa” (genealogy), and “tapu” (sacred) are examples of such fundamental underpinnings within Aotearoa (New Zealand), Tonga, and Samoa. Although the word “tapu” is homogenous for most parts of Polynesia, it is negotiated differently within the islands of Aotearoa, Tonga, and Samoa. Being asked to contribute to this handbook is indeed a privilege and is viewed collectively by us as being tapu or “sacred” because it enables us to (re)claim the space as our status quo.

According to Tamasailau Suaalii-Sauni (2017), Māori and Pasifika have not collectively and critically unpacked Māori and Pasifika cultural knowledge. Our collective contribution honours our genealogical roots as Polynesian people from Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (Pacific Ocean). It is appropriate, therefore, that this chapter is our enactment of “tapu,” written within the shared collective spirits from the moana (ocean) yet honouring our distinct knowledges from Aotearoa, Tonga, and Samoa. Within this “tapu” and collective space, we honour our specificities—of age, gender, and ethnicity. Haami Samson Hawkins, a
Māori male represents the land of our cousins Aotearoa; David Taufui Mikato Faʻavae, a Tongan male born in Niue and educated in Aotearoa, and Fetaui Iosefo, a Samoan woman born and raised in Aotearoa. It is rare to share the same thinking and writing space with a Māori elder and a Tongan brother because such spaces are sacred in each of our cultures. Such spaces are culturally imbued and are often socially and politically sensitive. We, however, have found a space, as critical autoethnographers who are intimately interconnected by the moana. Representing and honouring our people and the lands of our ancestors within Polynesia/Oceania is our primary foci and the essence of our cultural engagement. With our ancestors, we use this chapter to navigate through the crashing waves and the howling winds and come together to critically tatala (open and unfold) the tapu in critical autoethnography.

“TAPU” AND WAYFINDING THE WA/VĀ/VA—HONOURING PEOPLE AND SPACE

Wayfinding is not only the enactment but the honouring of tapu. Wayfinding relies on the natural and material as well as the spiritual as sources. As we journey on the waka/vaka/vaʻa of critical autoethnography, we not only rely on the stars and the waves for guidance and direction, but we also intimately rely on each other, our relational ties for motivation and support. The wa/vā/va are socio-spatial concepts that are recognisable in the Māori, Tongan, and Samoan language. Wa/vā/va are associated with a relational space that requires deep understanding and engagement (Su’alii-Sauni, 2017). Va tapuia in the Samoan language is linked to sacred relationships (Tui Atua, 2005) and is derived from the root word va. To honour the wa/vā/va and va tapuia, individuals are required to position themselves within the relational space that shaped the past and the present. They also are required to intimately connect with the future by positioning their story in and amongst the collective aspirations and hopes. In this critical autoethnographic waka/vaka/vaʻa, we not only weave our diverse stories by honouring the people and aspirations from our past, present, and future, we simultaneously include and invite others to join and share their stories and honour the tapu within this vessel.

We, the authors, honour and draw from our tupuna (ancestors) and whanau/kainga/aiga within this space. As well, we acknowledge our connections to our forbears and allies in this movement of critical autoethnography. We have felt a personal and sacred connection with the following autoethnographers: Carolyn Ellis, Arthur Bochner, Norman Denzin, Stacy Holman Jones, Ron Pelias, Tami Spry, Anne Harris, David Purnell, Tony Adams, and Rosemary C. Reilly. Each of the autoethnographers has paved the way in academia for all marginalised voices to be heard, read, and validated as a legitimate means of research within the white dominant discourse of academia.

Through critical autoethnography, we, as brown-skinned indigenous scholars, are able to participate in the critical discourse within discursive and postcolonial scholarship. Critical autoethnography also recognises “tapu” scholars who have navigated the ocean of academia for our people—Māori scholars Linda and Graham Smith, Leonie Pihaama, Te Matorohanga, Te Whatahoro, Māori Marsden; Tongan scholars the late ‘Epeli Hau’ofa, Konai Helu Thaman; Samoan scholars Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efī, Sister Vitolia Mo’a, and Tamasailau Sualii-Sauni. We duly acknowledge as well all our families, extended families, and genealogical connections.

“TAPU” IN KARAKIA/LOTU/ TATALO (THE SACRED IN PRAYER-MEDITATION)

Karakia/lotu/tatalo (prayer) lifts and unfolds the tapu, bringing together the sacredness of engagement and practice. The waka/vaka/vaʻa (traditional canoes) are symbolic of our wayfinding in Polynesia, representative of our peoples’ ongoing navigation throughout the moana as we engage with our islands and peoples in Aotearoa, Tonga, and Samoa. When the waka/vaka/vaʻa are initially constructed they are “noa,” that is, not yet covered in the tapu. Only when the karakia is recited are the vessels “blessed” and accessible for all, thus allowing us to critically engage in discussions that are meaningful to the collective.

Our karakia is our shared way. People of the Moana nui akiwa (Pacific Ocean) begin everything with a karakia, tatalo, lotu. Prayer. Our karakia invites the reader to engage with us in the wayfinding of our talanoa tapu (sacred space) through critical autoethnography; through the interconnectedness within our whanau/kāinga/aiga (extended family); wayfinding our tapu within education; and wayfinding our tapu through the wa/vā/va (interconnectedness with each other). We warmly welcome you into our sphere of wayfinding the tapu through karakia.
**Karakaia**

_Haramai, haere e te kohinga raukura o te Moananui-a-Kiwa. Kua rākaitia koe me te manu nā te rau o Punaweko koe i tau, nā te rau o Hurumanu koe i hoka._

_I haramai koe i te hiringa-i-te-mahara, he mea tātai i te aro-ā-nuku, he mea tātai i te aro-ā-rangi. Kei te oreore a Rongomaitahanui, kei te areare a Rongomaitaharangi. Kua whitire re tō mārama, e, kua whitiki tō mārama. Tēnei te tuku ko te tuku i a koe, hōkai-nuku, hōkai-rangi, hōkai atu ki te ao-tūroa, ki te whaiao, ki te ao-mārama. Kia tau kei taku manawa, ka tau. Kia ora kei taku ngākau, ka ora. Rarau e. Rarau!_

**Translation**

Welcome and farewell my treasured collection of Pacific Ocean stories. You have been adorned like a bird, beautified by the feathers of Punaweko, enabled by the feathers of Hurumanu. You were born from the seed of thought and shaped by earthly and heavenly influence. Rongomaitahanui is stirring. Rongomaitaharangi is receptive. Your message here is recited, your message here is retained. So, we release you, go forth with vigour into the world of light, daylight, the world of the living.

To be unhindered my beating heart, be safe. To be alive my soul, be well. Let it be done. It is done!

**Explanation**

_Punaweko_ and _Hurumanu_ are two Māori deities of birds. In _Ngāi Kahungunu_ traditions, _Punaweko_ is the deity of land birds and _Hurumanu_ is the deity of sea birds (JPS, 1927). These deities have been used in this _karakaia_ to liken these autoethnographic stories to birds. Birds under _Punaweko_; land birds are coloured to blend into their environment or to stand out from their environment. Two things that is hoped of these stories. Birds under _Hurumanu_; sea birds are known for their ability to soar and travel great distances effortlessly. Something else that is hoped of these stories. _Rongomaitahanui_ and _Rongomaitaharangi_ are deities who give us the ability to understand (Ngata, 1948, p. 263). They represent our ears and our ability to listen and hear.

The following poem is shared to reflect wayfinding the _tapu_ from a decolonising stance, through _karakaia/lotu/tatalo_ (pray).

**KARAKIA, LOTU, TATALO**

To pray
To pray in our tapu (sacred)

To pray to our cosmos
To pray to our ancestors
To pray
Not to be prey
To pray to lift the tapu
To pray for guidance
To pray for discernment
To pray for aroha, 'ofa, alofa (love)
To negotiate with knowledge
To pray for strength
To uphold the values of our ancestors
To pray
To not be Prey
Pray
Karakaia; lotu; tatalo

**WAYFINDING THE TALANOA OF TAPU AND CRITICAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

With blessing from the _karakaia_ we wayfind on our own canoes/panel by negotiating the “tapu” that exists and is manifested in our engagement in dialogical interactions within critical autoethnography. In this part of the voyage the critical is demonstrated with the struggle of (re)claiming ancestral epistemologies and ontologies as _tapu_. We enact this through _talanoa_, a collective and dialogical practice linked to storytelling and the sharing of intimate memories of struggle as well as hope (Vaiioleti, 2006).

**Haami**

“What are you doing? It’s been 15 minutes and only a title,” asks my all-knowing indwelling spirit as I stare at the blank page on my computer screen. “I have been asked to write about tapu in critical autoethnography,” I reply. “What is that, critical autoethnography?” the spirit asks. “It’s... How can I explain it? It’s storytelling. An enquiry focused on gaining and sharing detailed understanding about one’s self,” I say.

“Ah, stories about ourselves. When Māori talk about ourselves in the present we often look to our past to direct our future. You descend from storytellers. Before writing, our wisdoms were taught through storytelling to tohunga, by the chosen ones in subjects pertaining to the nature of our reality, of our existence and of knowledge itself. I compare our tohunga to ancient Greek philosophers. They were very learned people. The twentieth-century Māori philosopher...”
Māori Marsden wrote that, ‘the tohunga was a person chosen or appointed by the gods to be their representative and the agent by which they manifested their operations in the natural world’ (cited in Royal, 2003, p. 14). So, what is the problem?” inquires my inquisitive indwelling spirit.

“I am stuck on the word tapu and what that means in this context, today. My understanding is that our ancestors believe that tapu and mana are both connected to the gods. Marsden’s explanation of both these components of mysticism is repeating itself in my subconsciousness,” I answer.

Marsden (cited in Royal, 2003, pp. 4, 5 & 7) said that, “mana means spiritual authority and power. In a Māori sense, since authority is derived from the gods, mana as authority means lawful permission delegated by the gods to their human agent to act on their behalf and in accordance with their revealed will. Since authority is a spiritual gift delegated by the gods, man remains always the agent or channel—never the source of mana. The Māori idea of tapu is close to the Jewish idea translated in the words ‘sacred’ and ‘holy.’ A person, place or thing is dedicated to a deity and by that act it is set aside or reserved for the sole use of the deity. The person or object is thus removed from the sphere of the profane and put into the sphere of the sacred. It is untouchable, no longer to be put to common use. It is this untouchable quality that is the main element in the concept of tapu. So, we may define tapu as the sacred state or condition in which a person, place, or thing is set aside by dedication to the gods and thereby removed from profane use. This tapu is secured by the sanction of the gods and enforced by endowment with mana.”

“Therefore, sharing my stories which draw from tapu ancestral knowing of the past seems to be my problem. Am I meant to be sharing them? I find myself questioning the tapu of this knowing because of its connection to the past,” I sigh. “Why do you question your work? The ancestral knowledge retold in your karaia and mōteatea, in your Māori poetry, has already been shared. It can be located within publications and existing research accessible to anyone who seeks it. It is the kurahuna (the wisdom) you get from using this knowledge that you are being asked to share. Remember autoethnography encourages you to make contributions to knowledge, to value personal experience, to critique cultural practice and share the insights.”

Dave

I feel overwhelmed with mālie (sense of joy) and māfana (warmth) (Manu’atu, 2000) because of Haami’s intimate descriptions of tapu. It was deeply spiritual. Haami reminds me of wise elders within my kāinga (extended family) who always spoke with mana (power) and a deep sense of sincerity and commitment to indigenous knowledge and our to’utangata (generations)—those who have left us, those that are still here in this realm, and those that are to be and have yet to come. I reply, “Haami, after reading your response, the idea of interconnectedness with each other seems to be the one that hit me the most.”

This chapter is my first experience writing together with a Māori elder and academic and my Samoan sister. A real privilege. In fact, it’s sacred! In Moana-nui-a-kiwa (Pacific Ocean), Māori and Pacific people are connected. Wayfinding our tapu interconnectedness, therefore, is appropriate and empowering. Our interconnectedness—as Māori and Pasifika (people in Aotearoa with Pacific heritages)—as tangata (male) and fefine (female)—as to’utangata (generations)—is sacred.

When the needs of Pasifika people in Aotearoa are strongly spoken and conveyed, it must not take precedence over the needs of Māori who are the tangata whenua of the land. Otherwise, Pasifika run the risk of breaking the wairua (spirituality). This I believe is not how we should operate, and it is not how we were taught to lead and share its valuable insights and wisdom so that we can find our place in it—the mālie and māfana. Throughout, we weave Māori words, with Samoan and Tongan words, as symbolic of the sacred space that binds the three of us. Moreover, we share the intimacies involved in enacting relational interconnectedness through a sacred practice that Tāngans learn from within the veitapui, the sacred and spiritual space of relational connection to god, people, and the land (Fa’avae, 2018).

So, I agree with Haami. What we have to share in this chapter will be of use to our own people, as well as non-indigenous. Fetaui and I have an opportunity to learn from Haami’s wisdom, and what we share together will also empower and sustain our young, our next generation of Māori and Pasifika academics.

I am reminded of “Koloa ‘o e to’utangata Tonga,” a Tongan framework that I used in my own PhD, which explored the kinds of cultural knowledge/
wisdom shared and transmitted from to’utangata to to’utangata as a means of cultural continuity and survival. Within “koloa ‘o e to’utangata Tonga” are the social and cultural ideals and activities that are tapu (spiritual). Learning from our tuakana, and learning to interconnect/interrelate to and with each other is a sacred practice because it ensures cultural survival and continuity. As autoethnographers, and as social and relational beings, we constantly learn to negotiate and make meaning of our “selves” in relation to others, objects, and places because it is central to our human survival and continuity. The understanding of “self” within the to’utangata, therefore, is a sacred engagement.

**Fetaui**

As I read through both my brothers’ responses, I agree that tapu is of the gods and our ancestors. Tapu has a sacredness that is supernatural and spiritual. It is quite complex to try and fathom or create a research framework around it as it sounds like an episode out of the Twilight Zone. Samoan philosopher His Highness, Tui Atua (2005) suggests that the va tapuia (sacred space) is beyond human reckoning. Therefore, there are some things that do not and will not fit into a framework or a model. Our spiritual connectedness to the tapu accesses our indigenous gods and ancestors. His Highness Tui Atua has often been criticized for sharing parts of our Samoan history that is deemed tapu. However, his argument for this was all tapu knowledge belongs to all of Samoa, not only those who have access to it. He also justified that unless this knowledge is shared, it will die with the person who holds this tapu knowledge. This has already occurred in Samoa—so much of our knowledge has died with the knowledge holders.

His Highness Tui Atua in his book Whispers and Vanities (2014) shared an example of our ancient ways of healing. Treating laoa: When choking on a fish bone on the different islands in Samoa the ancient healers had different chants that they would recite and rituals they would perform when laoa (choking) occurred. The chants and rituals would free the bone from the choking person. This was unfortunately deemed as witchcraft by the missionaries and therefore it was deemed evil and no longer practised. As I read through the different Samoan islands and the chants they used and rituals I noted that the island of my father was not recorded. My father’s island of Apolima. I asked my father if we had a chant or ritual around laoa. He replied “Fetaui, that is of the devil don’t talk about that” and brushed me off. This disturbed me and confirmed the assumption I had that this knowledge of laoa must have died with my father’s forebears.

This troubled me deeply, and I could not leave this story alone. How could all the other islands have their healing chants and rituals still alive and not our Island of Apolima? I then asked my siblings if they knew anything about the laoa (choking) because dad was being an ass. My siblings told me our nana my father’s mother was a healer, but our father didn’t like us talking about it. I asked about the laoa and my siblings looked at each other sharing a look that said they knew something I did not. Fadi, my sister, told our two siblings, Paul and Leah, to spill the tea (share the story). Both of them at different times choked on a fish bone. Our nana took a bone from the same fish and placed it on top of their head and positioned them to face the sea, she then said a chant and both siblings said they felt the bone turn inside them and shoot out of their mouths. I was beside myself and read the stories and chants from the other Samoan Islands. Fadi called out to dad and asked about the chant and the ritual. He said it died with his mother. I began to cry—I was so disappointed and asked dad why he didn’t write it down. Mum interrupted and encouraged dad to tell us his story. He said what happened to my siblings happened to him many times, as a child his mother saved him by reciting the chant and performing the ritual. However, now he is a Christian and his view of his mother shifted from being a healer to an evil witch. The tapu critical knowledge of our aiga was indeed buried with my grandma. Critical autoethnography avails the opportunity to (re)awaken past ancestral ways of being and once again breathes life into what was in essence buried.

**WAYFINDING THE TAPU WITH WHANAU/KÄINGA/AIGA (FAMILY)**

We continue our voyage and move to position ourselves within the collective by acknowledging our ancestors and relocate the place of our canoe/panel and wayfind the tapu with our whanau/käinga/aiga (families).

**Haami**

I have learnt to ask my indwelling spirit and to listen to this inner voice when I have had questions. Interrogating myself is how I find my way through the unknown. Questions and answers dot the pathway to
understanding. My indwelling spirit knows that I can’t separate past, present, and future when I work, speak, or write. The interconnectedness of these spaces when linked to whānau (family) and whakapapa (genealogy) give me purpose and demand I be critical; to get it right. For me bringing the past into the present requires one to be mindful of the tapu (sacredness) to keep our present and our future safe. Yes, our nineteenth-century Māori philosopher Te Matorohanga said that the ancient tapu is no longer. But he also said that a different tapu prevails. I call this tapu, the tapu of interconnectedness.

The interconnectedness that exists in relationships between people and culture is understood through whakapapa (genealogy). Genealogy transcends time and space and interconnects the past to the present and the future and confirms one’s place in the world. Marsden said that the tohunga whakapapa (the genealogy expert) knows and understands the power of relationships as the essential nature of all reality (in Royal, C. 2003, p. xiv).

Spirituality is central to understanding the interconnectedness of past, present, and future and for interpreting the inner voice messages. Spirituality is not a way of living in the sense of conducting oneself outwardly in relationship to other people, but rather it is a state of being, explains Swami Krishnananda (1975, p. 5). Spirituality is being, not doing, he says. I have learnt that reciting karakia is doing, and spirituality is a state that comes from this action. So, I agree that “being is what we are. Doing is what we try to manifest in order that this being may become more and more complete” (p. 13).

Being centred in what I know and do and why I do it is essential when connecting to the spiritual element. This centredness is my state of spirituality and the embodiment of this is my Māori poetry, my karakia, my mōteatea. It has become an inherent part of who I am. The opening karakia of this collective writing is an example of me centring myself in what I know to satisfy the spirit and to send these Pacific Ocean stories into the unknown with the belief that the deities called upon (Punaweko, Hurumanu, Rongomaitaharangi and Rongomatiaharangi) will direct the journey and appease any tapu.

So, wayfinding the tapu in this space is about wayfinding my inner self. This is both a challenge and a privilege as it opens doors to new understandings about cultural and self-identity. Like Tony Adams, Carolyn Ellis, and Stacy Holman Jones (2015), I tell stories to live—I “embrace [Joan] Didion’s call, believing the stories we tell enable us to live and to live better; stories allow us to lead more reflective, more meaningful, and more just lives” (p. 1).

My work is committed to learning and retelling the celestial stories of my ancestors through my Māori poetry (Hawkins, H. 2018). This work began as a means to connect myself to my culture, something that I was disconnected from in another time and space. When I talk about being disconnected, I am referring to a time when I could neither speak nor understand my mother’s tongue. This was motivated by an environment change that separated me from my ancestral language and culture. Thankfully, I discovered my indwelling spirit who has, for the past 27 years been connecting me to myself. These are the stories that I am yet to tell. So, my work has been and remains a journey that examines and critiques culture through personal experience. This journey introduced me to critical autoethnography. Critical autoethnography has become the guiding light in the darkness, the comforting voice in the background, the reassuring philosophy that encourages me to accept that my work has value and purpose for my family and the communities I serve.

Dave

The indwelling spirit, that is, my inner voices, are telling me and showing me who to be and to become. From the eternal realm, the spirit leads me to who and where it wants me to be and become. I am a father to a nine-year-old boy, Daniel, who is full of life and spirit. I am drawn by his spirit because he is a part of me. My wife, Elenoa, is my life partner. Through her spirit, she strengthens me. The spirits of my kainga, both the living and the dead, constantly remind me of who I am to be and become. Because of them, I am who I am today.

As we engaged in talanoa, I am thankful to Haami and Fetaui for sharing their understanding of “spirituality” and what it means to wayfind together through the boundaries that govern our engagement not only in constructing this chapter but also in how we will continue to interact within and beyond academia. I thank them both for teaching and reminding me that “spirituality” is tapu and it requires me to be “still” in mind and heart, and to pay attention to how it is embodied in our indigenous languages, lotu (prayer), and poetry. Through autoethnography, discovering one’s self is intimately related to understanding others (Chang, 2008). Reflecting on the sacredness of the relationality between Haami, as my tuakana, and Fetaui, as my Samoan sister, it is through this process that I find my place and positionality as the teina. When engaged in the relational activity, we engage in autoethnographic reflexivity, a rigorous practice.
because it is appropriate and relevant to us as cultural wayfarers (Fa’avea, 2018). As we continue to wayfind the tapu, I turn to the spirits for strength, for guidance, love, and peace for my Māori tuakana and Samoan sister, as well as their whanau/aiga.

**Fetaui**

Our aiga (family) is tapu. There is no such thing as “I” within our family. Everything is about the collective. This is the tapu of the family. You are never alone. Whether we are in Samoa or in Aotearoa the sacredness of our aiga is in our bones. In being asked to contribute to this handbook I first sought counsel from my aiga (family). They asked: What is the purpose? And, who would this benefit? I shared with them about Haami and Dave and my desire to write with them. Before I finished the sentence, my sister Ema Siope (who is also a chief in our family and traditional sailing master) said, “Baby sister you know what you have to do.” She nods at me. I look rather puzzled, as she continues.

This is a handbook, which means it will get great readership. You have no choice. You must include Haami in honour of the indigenous lands that we have migrated to as the land of our cousins and also include Dave as we are connected to Tonga. You are all meant to wayfind the tapu together.

The family kindly remind me that by serving the collective we serve the individual not the other way around. Our Samoan proverb “o le ala i le pule o le tautua” (“the way to lead is to serve”). We are taught that we serve our family and out of the overflow of service to our family we serve humanity collectively. The tapu is in the collective of the aiga is in our bones and DNA. So, when the aiga shares their perspective and counsel, it is deemed tapu and therefore the service to the tapu counsel is emanated.

**Haami**

I am thankful to my Pacific Island brother and sister for inviting me into this space. They have helped me realise that there is a bigger audience beyond our own people who will benefit from what we are doing. The academy also needs to hear from our voices, from our philosopher’s voices, our tohunga voices. I have come to realise that critical autoethnography has been practised by our ancestors and amongst our people for centuries. We are descended from storytellers, storytelling is how kurahuna (wisdom) was passed on from one generation to the next. Traditional karakia and mōteatea were chanted, not written, and are forms of Māori poetry. They contain celestial and terrestrial tribal and cultural knowledge still used today to give voice to ancient understanding. The oriori (lullaby) composed some 450 years ago for Tūtēremonoana is an exceptional example of this form of performative storytelling (Ngata, 1948). My modern-day compositions of karakia and mōteatea attempt to do the same thing—to give voice to ancient knowing and pass on wisdom learnt and gained through critical theory in action.

The challenge for indigenous people when wayfinding and sharing our stories and embodying our spirituality within academia is that we are constantly asked by our indwelling spirit to determine the tapu. I can now see that our own work is as tapu as we want to make it. If we have dedicated it to the gods, to speak, then don’t share it. If we want to share our work don’t make it tapu. In speaking about Māori Marsden’s writings, Charles Royal (2003) states,

[Marsden] urges students to embrace scholarship and tells them that they need not fear to create and to expand the traditions and knowledge of their ancestors. If there is one overall theme in [Marsden’s] writings it is his urging of us to be free and to admit no oppression in our lives, whether from our own internal limitations which deny us knowledge and experience of our ‘authentic being’ or from external forces which conspire to deny us social justice.

(p.xi)
Dave

Hearing voices in Western culture is sometimes associated with mental illness. I draw from the inner voices of my ancestors, whose words and actions continue to live and yield hope and passion within me and my memories, the desire to serve others. As I drew strength from my inner voices, they led me to a time when the voices of “others” were perceived as the voices of authority. In 1992, my mother came in to meet with my teachers during parent–teacher interviews. My father never saw the need to attend parent–teacher interviews, so I knew not to expect him. When my form teacher, Mr. D, asked who was coming, I told him, “Just my mum.” All staff were placed in the school hall for parent–teacher interviews, and parents were told to visit all of their children’s teachers. Every single subject teacher that my mother and I visited said similar things about me. Behind all the interviews was an underlying message: I needed to study more and improve my attendance. Even more concerning was the persistent deficit message that my mother was not fulfilling her responsibilities. Not a single teacher acknowledged my mother’s strength; a strong woman who sacrificed so much for her six children. Consequently, that day was my mother’s last parent–teacher interview. Though other people’s voices and deficit conversations linked to what Pasifika students cannot do at school can sometimes be overwhelming, when wayfinding the tapu, we learn to counter others voices by drawing from our own ancestors’ voices that are often filled with love and hope.

In 2006, when I returned to teach at my former high school, and later became a dean, I noticed that the same pattern continued to perpetuate with teachers’ deficit views of Māori and Pasifika students, boys in particular. The sacredness in teachers’ roles with the kāinga is vital to the success of our young people in the education system. It goes beyond just being aware of culture. The sacredness is an obligation based on loto ‘ofa (love), a higher principality, as described by Aluli-Meyer (2017) and a real and genuine commitment to the child’s success.

When I entered university during the late 1990s, one of the first things I noticed about the environment at the University of Auckland were the “white spaces, lonely spaces, and strange spaces.” I remember sitting in a massive lecture theatre in the city campus, where hundreds of new and eager students sat awaiting our General Psychology lecturer to arrive. I had used my student loan to buy new clothes for University. I wore a pair of red mesh sports shorts, black sports sandals, and a blue jumper. As I looked around the room, I felt an overwhelming feeling of loneliness.

Throughout my psychology degree, theories and approaches were systematically taught predominantly from Western views. No indigenous knowledge or indigenous approaches were used to understand “why people behaved the way they did,” which was a fundamental question in Psychology. Any mention of Pasifika people came through negative statistics linked to violence, abuse, and trauma. To treat and deal with such issues required theorising and implementing interventions from Western constructs of human thought and behaviour. Wayfinding through academia involved personal struggles to fit in, and it involved the absence of “tapu” that I was brought up within my kāinga (extended family). Autoethnography provided the space for me to reconnect with tapu by bringing to the fore my lived experiences as being significant to who I am and who I am to become.

Fetaui

When I think of the tapu in education, a tune from Sesanve Street springs to mind: “One of these things is not like the other.” Tapu is definitely not a dominant feature in education; it is the “other.” Tapu is placed in the margins along with those who embody this practice. When I discuss critical autoethnography with academic colleagues, the looks on their faces and the questions and comments that follow say it all: “Is this real research? Anyone can write about their lives; anyone can write a poem about themselves; it’s easy.” Comments and questions such as these position critical autoethnography as the “other.” Within critical autoethnography, being the other is sacred. It is often through the space of “othering” from the boundaries or margins that we realise possibilities and richness. Tapu, like critical autoethnography, operates from the margins.

One of my colleagues was like a dog with a bone and wouldn’t relent on pushing the issue of autoethnography being “easy.” So I asked, “Who is your favourite theorist? Tell me what resonates with you about their theory. Then write about the correlation of your favourite theorist to a particular moment in your life.” Instead of writing he began to repeat the ideas of his favourite theorists: bell hooks’ pedagogy of hope; Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed. “See, easy!” he exclaimed. I laughed and exclaimed in return, “Yes indeed, easy to spout off someone else’s thoughts! Now use that theory to explain a particular moment in your life, in written form, and send it to me when you’re ready.” A week later I caught up with him over coffee and he said he couldn’t do it. What he thought was easy was bloody difficult, but he was adamant that he would eventually do it and send it to me. It has
been three years and he has still not sent me any writing, but he no longer pesters me about the legitimacy or validity of autoethnography. Instead, he now asks me about my next writing piece and wants to read it.

*Tapu* and critical autoethnography are placed in the margins by the majority and are viewed as the “other.” However, because the storying of our people is *tapu*, it is therefore our sacred duty to honour our ancestors and our stories. We are “woke” to how we are perceived in the margins but through the *waka/vaka/va’a* of critical autoethnography we are guided by the stars and ride the waves and storms into a clearing, while always hearing and feeling our ancestors in the *tapu*. In our relational *tapu* connection with our ancestors, land, and sea we are able humbly to adhere to their calling to normalise our ways of being first in our homes with our children and family and then wherever our bodies hold space.

**WAYFINDING TAPU AS ONE**

Earlier in this chapter I referred to Haami and Dave as being my brothers. This term, “brothers,” is a term of endearment and acknowledgement of our *moana* (ocean) that we share as well as our collective ways of being. In Samoa, one of the most important relationships is between brother and sister. This is the “*va feagaiga*” (Amituanaifetoloa, 2007). In writing with my brothers Haami and Dave, it is only fitting that my biological brother is also present in this chapter. Malaeulu, Nauma Faavagaga is our *aiga* (family) ethics artist.

Throughout this chapter we have been wayfinding in our own separate canoes/panels. We used our ancestors to guide our *talanoa* of the *tapu* in critical autoethnography; then the *tapu* within our families and within education. Each of the canoes had different experiences within these different spaces. However, all were guided by the constant *tapu*. Each of our canoes are saturated in the spirituality of the *tapu* and because we are saturated with the *tapu* so also is critical autoethnography. At the start of creating this chapter we had the massacre in Christchurch with our Muslim community. Today, we are living through COVID-19 pandemic. Tomorrow we will be protesting in solidarity with the protests in the United States for Black Lives Matter. Now and forever we need to see each other as *tapu*, as sacred.

**Our Tapu—One**

Wayfinding tapu is sacred and spiritual
The sails, birds, stars and fish moving in sacred patterns.

The koru, representing new life both ends highlighting the beginning and end of time. Feel the current of the ocean the oneness despite the intermittent turbulent and ravaging waves
Feel the wind on your face see the stars that guide and direct giving us light in our darkest nights.
Our *tapu* sacred/spiritual oneness Holds who we are we,
Our genealogical connections how we carry our people when people see us.
How we carry our people when we think no one sees us.
Our *tapu* sacred/spiritual oneness shelved not for when we need it it is without an expiry date.
We are we—our *tapu* sacred/spirituality is ever present. It is ultimately empathetic regardless of our differing beliefs.
Differing islands, Differing skin colour Differing gender, Differing sexuality Differing canoes Regardless
Our *tapu* sacred/spiritual oneness Holds who—we are we, Our sacred spirituality We are we
Humbled— to freely believe in karakia/lotu/talalo/pray Not prey— we are we *Tapu*— sacred and spiritual oneness no longer separate canoes no longer separate panels one canoe one panel Our *tapu* ONE
REFERENCES