



Creating Mentorship Metaphors: Pacific Island Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The authors facilitated three inter-professional mentorship workshops in Fiji and Tonga, which were part of a series of such events that they recently conducted across the Pacific region. These workshops, in turn, formed part of a larger, ongoing leadership initiative co-sponsored by several local, regional, and international organizations. The purpose of each workshop was to facilitate each multi-disciplinary cohort of leaders in attendance to begin to create an adaptable mentorship model that would fit their unique Pacific contexts. One task within these model-development sessions was for each cohort to create metaphors that they believed best encapsulated the essence of their specific mentorship approach. In this article, the authors summarize aspects of that creative process, present several metaphors that the three cohorts generated, and raise implications regarding future mentoring initiatives.

Introduction

Interest has expanded worldwide regarding the role of leadership development within educational and professional organizations (Allen & Eby, 2007). Furthermore, the practice of mentorship has also been recognized as a key component in this developmental process (Rombeau, Goldberg, & Loveland-Jones, 2010); and as such, mentorship has spawned a considerable body of research (Rose Ragins &

Kram, 2007). Within this research, the ability to be creative has been identified as an indispensable attribute of effective leaders and mentors in any context (Chang, 2011b; Gardner & Laskin, 2011).

In our own recent research on the mentorship process (e.g., Johansson-Fua, Sanga, Walker, & Ralph, 2011; Ralph & Walker, 2011a; Ruru, Sanga, Walker, & Ralph, in press), we described the series of mentorship workshops we facilitated, in which several cross-disciplinary cohorts of educational and professional leaders began to develop mentorship models to suit their unique cultural contexts in the Pacific region. A key activity in the workshops we conducted was for participants to create and refine relevant metaphors to further clarify the particular mentorship model they were developing. In this present article, we describe that metaphor-creation initiative.

Purpose of the Study

Our purpose in this study was to (a) summarize key aspects of the creative process that workshop cohorts from Fiji and Tonga demonstrated, and (b) describe some metaphors they created to conceptualize the mentoring process in their respective cultural and organizational environments. Participants represented a variety of educational, governmental, business, and religious organizations; and they attended one of three mentorship workshops (one of which was held in Tonga and two in Fiji). The complete series of 11 mentorship events, of which these three workshops were a part, in turn formed one segment of a larger, previously established leadership initiative that had been organized and/or co-sponsored by several local, regional, and international organizations (see Johansson-Fua et al., 2011; Ruru et al., in press).

Literature Review

Mentoring Processes

Universally, there has been a growing attentiveness to the quality of the mentorship process conducted in all professional disciplines and occupations (Carnegie, 2011; Rose Ragins & Kram, 2007), which in turn has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of related research efforts, publications, conferences, and websites that have appeared during the past three decades (Chun, Sosik, & Yun, in press). At the same time, however, concerns have been raised (Allen, Eby,

O'Brien, & Lentz, 2008) about how much of this new mentoring research has been overly dependent on such elements as: cross-sectional designs, self-reported data, single data-gathering methods, and quantitative/correlational approaches conducted in field settings.

Consequently, we decided to address some of these limitations by conducting several inter-professional studies in which inter-professional leaders designed their own mentoring models tailored to their local contexts. This research also investigated the extent that the leaders found *Adaptive Mentorship*[®] (Ralph & Walker, 2011a, 2011b) useful in helping them accomplish that task (Johansson-Fua et al., 2011; Ruru et al., in press).

Many mentorship scholars and practitioners have conceptualized mentorship as a developmental process by which an individual with more knowledge and skill in a field (i.e., the *mentor*) assists a person with less knowledge and skill (i.e., the *protégé*) to develop in these areas (Ralph & Walker, 2011a). Regarding the *Adaptive Mentorship* (AM) model, we have shown that the mentor must first adjust his/her leadership response or style to appropriately match the task-specific developmental level of the protégé. We derived the AM model from early contingency leadership approaches (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988), cognitive developmental theories (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), and situated and experiential learning models (Kolb, 1984; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Subsequently, as the protégé increases his/her *competence* and *confidence* in performing the skill-set being practiced, the mentor must adapt/adjust, in inverse proportions, the corresponding degree of *task* direction and *support* given to the protégé (Blanchard et al., 2010; Ralph & Walker, 2011b).

The quality of mentorship will be influenced by the characteristics not only of the work setting or professional culture, but also of the broader society within which the mentorship process occurs (Allen & Eby, 2007). However, the related research has repeatedly confirmed that the core element undergirding successful mentorship practice, universally, is the prevalence of positive interpersonal relationships between/among the mentorship participants, whereby partners' mutual needs for acceptance, affiliation, and belonging are fulfilled (Fletcher & Rose Ragins, 2007; McManus & Russell, 2007).

Creating Metaphors

In this report, we have conceptualized creativity as an intellectual process by which individuals incorporate cognition, originality, flexibility, and imagination to both frame and solve problems (Gardner, 2011; Lindsay & Davis, 2012; Robinson, 2011; Sternberg, 2003). Creativity has always been part of human activity; and it has been studied and promoted by leaders in all contexts for centuries (Gardner, 2011; Sternberg & Kaufman, 2011). Today, social, political, and commercial organizations in every sector not only espouse creativity and innovation as essential to all facets of human existence, but they also commit considerable resources to educate/train their members to develop their inventive thinking abilities, and their imaginative and problem-solving capacities (Chang, 2011a; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Medina, 2008; Osborn, 1993).

With respect to promoting creativity to enhance human cognition, people in all cultures have created metaphors to describe and explain phenomena and events in life (Danesi & Mollica, 2008), and to help them clarify meaning and deepen understanding of their lived experiences (Costa, 2001). Metaphors have been defined as “comparisons that create mental images by connecting the familiar with the less familiar” (Cornett, 2011, p. 99). Moreover, related research-literature (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), as well as individuals’ personal communicative experiences, have confirmed that metaphorical and figurative language has not only been an integral component of human discourse, but that people are also often unaware of its prevalence in regular communication (Levin, 1988).

Kovecses (2002) surveyed the research literature on conceptual metaphor to ascertain the sources that were most often used, and he identified six source-domains: the human body, living things, manufactured objects, human activities, the environment, and processes from the field of physics. Over the years, people have used metaphorical language to create and/or elaborate meaning, to expand understanding (Boroditsky & Ramscar, 2002), to shape public opinion, and/or to influence decision-making behavior (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). In more recent times it has been included as part of narrative inquiry within the qualitative research paradigm in the social sciences and humanities (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Tompkins & Lawley, 2006).

Research on the use of metaphors has appeared in the literature of several professional disciplines, such as: Architectural Design (Casakin, 2007); Education (Mewburn & Pitcher, 2011); Geography (Reed & Peters, 2004); Management (Gray, 2007); Nursing (Streubert & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2010); and Psychology (Newell, 2008).

Moreover, some sources (e.g., Jensen, 2006) have suggested that metaphors have been identified, at least in some form, in the research literature of nearly all professional fields.

Our search of the literature (e.g., Casakin, 2007; Garner, 2005; Gray, 2007; Ortony, 1993; Tompkins & Lawley, 2006) identified several advantages of employing metaphorical and figurative language in research: metaphors provide a vivid, compact, and expressive way to convey complex information; they help reveal hidden assumptions and unarticulated beliefs; they enhance comprehension and retention of complicated concepts/relationships; they evoke emotion and stimulate imagination, creative thinking, and innovative problem-solving; and they promote reflection and arouse action.

On the other hand, several authors (e.g., Carpenter, 2008; Garner, 2005; Jensen, 2006; Newell, 2008; Schmitt, 2005) have identified potential drawbacks regarding the inappropriate use of metaphors in research, such as: (a) metaphors may be incompatible with the reality of the situation; (b) they may distort, obscure, trivialize, or misrepresent events; (c) they may be confusing for parties from different cultures or backgrounds; (d) they may ignore some facets of a process; or (e) if used, they should be supported with triangulated data from other relevant sources.

With respect to these limitations, Reed and Peters (2004) advised scholars/practitioners to acknowledge possible caveats; to attempt to address uncertainties and ambiguities that may appear; and to be resilient when interpreting metaphors and/or discussing their implications. Moreover, researchers who study metaphor usage have identified several forms and have employed a variety of idiosyncratic terms. For instance, Jensen (2006) reported four metaphor categories (i.e., *active*, *inactive*, *foundational*, and *dead*); and Reed and Peters (2004) mentioned three forms (i.e., *landscape*, *spatial*, and *ecological*). Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011) studied how metaphorical language was powerful but often hidden, in that people generally did not realize that the metaphors within the messages they received actually shaped their subsequent reasoning and decision-making.

Researchers, themselves, have employed varying numbers of research metaphors. For example, Ph.D. students listed three basic research metaphors: spatial concepts (e.g., expressed in words like *field*, *region*, or *area*); travel expressions (e.g., *path* or *journey*); and actions (e.g., *design*, *construct*, or *build*, Mewburn & Pitcher, 2011). Moreover, post-doctoral researchers portrayed research in four metaphorical ways: *explorative*, *spatial*, *constructive*, and *organic* (Pitcher & Akerlind, 2009).

Thus, even though researchers generally acknowledged the value of using metaphor, we found that there was little uniformity.

With regard to relating metaphors to mentorship, Ganser (2008) found that mentors, themselves, represented their mentoring practice in a variety of ways, such as: *family or relation* (e.g., serving as a parent, counselor, or friend); *sports* (e.g., serving as a coach or a lifeguard); *directive* (e.g., serving as a navigator or a pilot); or *nurturing/developmental* (e.g., serving as a gardener or a tailor). By contrast, Busen and Engbretson (1999) had indicated nearly a decade earlier that some of these same metaphors could also be used in a “toxic” sense, whereby the protégé would have little or no input into his/her professional development, but was merely a passive recipient in the process. Some of these toxic metaphors were: (a) being *sculpted*, whereby the protégé lacked any voice in his/her growth; (b) being directed by a person who behaved like a “*show-business parent*,” in that the mentor was an overbearing choreographer of the protégé’s performance; (c) being a *slave*, whereby the protégé subserviently obeyed “the master,” or (d) being nurtured in a *garden*, whereby the mentor was the nurturing agent doing everything for the protégé.

We found that Edelson (1999) presented one of the most incisive explorations of adult creativity. He reviewed the contributions of prominent scholars (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Boden, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Drucker, 1993; Osborn, 1993; Rothenberg, 1990; Wallace & Gruber, 1989), who studied how creative adults functioned within work and educational settings. Edelson’s synthesis of the related research confirmed that all humans have creative potential, and that creativity will be enhanced in organizational environments when leaders actively support imaginative and innovative thinking/action among group-members.

In our literature review, we observed that although there was nearly universal recognition of the importance of promoting creative thinking to solve local, national, and global problems, there was also a lack of agreement among practitioners and scholars with respect to common terminology and uniform strategies related to these solutions. It was clear that when creating mentoring metaphors, each society, culture, profession, occupation, or organization reflected its own history, traditions, and ways of knowing (Huffer, 2006).

Methodology

Participants

The 94 leaders who attended our three workshops represented universities, colleges, schools, government ministries, private businesses, international aid agencies, and church/religious organizations from Fiji, Tonga, New Zealand, and Canada. Thirty-seven leaders attended the Tonga workshop, 35 attended the Lautoka (Fiji) workshop, and 22 attended the Suva (Fiji) event. The three cohorts were drawn from a broad cross-section of disciplinary and inter-professional backgrounds (e.g., managers, teachers, school principals, professors, social workers, nurses, police officers, government ministers, church ministers, or NGO administrators). These cohort-members had been previously recognized by the sponsoring organizers as being mentorship leaders in their respective fields; and these mentorship workshops formed one segment of a broader leadership-development program that had been organized across the Pacific region. Therefore, the workshop planners had formally invited these individuals to attend the workshops.

Method

To collect data regarding attendees' creation of mentorship metaphors, we used a qualitative research approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), and wrote verbatim notes of delegates' comments during the metaphor-creation process, especially during *talanoa* (or discussion/debriefing, Halapua, 2008) sessions. Two members of our research team triangulated these comments with data we collected both from (a) semi-structured conversations with individuals and focus-group before/after several sessions; and (b) field-notes we kept of our observations of pairs and groups who were engaged in the workshop deliberations.

We organized the workshop activities according to our prior understandings and assumptions, which we derived both from Pacific island cultures/values/epistemologies, and from the broader research literature related to effective professional development (e.g., Fullan, 2007) and facilitating creativity with adult learners (Edelson, 1999). For instance, we offered a variety of workshop sessions, such as: individual reflections (e.g., "What does mentoring look like for you?"); paired discussions (e.g., "Share a story with a partner regarding a powerful mentoring experience you had."); small-group interactions (e.g., "What metaphor best captures these themes of effective mentorship?"); and whole-group syntheses (e.g., "In the light of our deliberations, what might effective mentorship look like?"). We built into these sessions an ongoing, reflexive, and iterative dimension, in which participants were invited to respond (and to suggest modifications) to the deliberations.

Findings

As we have reported elsewhere (Johansson-Fua et al., 2011; Ruru et al., in press), we were pleased with the overall results of the mentorship workshops, in that: (a) all attendees evaluated the workshops as valuable; (b) an authentic spirit of trust seemed to pervade the sessions, not only among the attendees, but also between the attendees and the facilitators; and (c) participants created several mentorship metaphors, which not only incorporated many of the generic attributes of effective metaphors as mentioned earlier in this article, but which also reflected specific cultural, historical, and traditional values and beliefs of the *Pacific Way* (Lawson, 2010). Because of space limitations, we have selected and summarized only a representative sample of the metaphors that the participants created.

Fijian Metaphors

Bure. The *bure* is a Fijian house that shelters people from rain, wind, and sun. Its interior is cool in hot weather and warm on cooler days; and in the safety of the *bure*, teaching, learning, and nurturing of the young takes place. Stories of inspiration, imagination, and motivation are shared; and laughter and crying are permitted and encouraged. It is a metaphor for the environment within which effective mentorship occurs in any setting.

I ketekete. In Fijian, *i ketekete* is a metaphorical basket of wisdom, within which are stored the values and customs that Fijian society deems important. In the basket are the heritage, histories, songs, and dances of clan and tribal groups, which are guarded by clan trustees who rank highest in the clan hierarchy. From this basket, mentors draw out needed wisdom and skills to pass on to protégés in their development.

Kava pounding. *Kava*-making is a daily activity in Fiji, in which the kava root is pounded into powder, in preparation for mixing and drinking the beverage within the traditional *kava* ceremony. In this metaphor, the pounder represents the mentor who shapes/challenges the protégé to achieve worthy goals and fulfill responsibilities. The *kava* root represents the protégé, who is "influenced" towards positive change. The grog pot, in which the roots are ground, constitutes the environment within which mentorship occurs.

Loloma. *Loloma* is Fijian for love, and this metaphor conceptualizes selfless love as the connector between/among everyone within a mentoring relationship.

Love is the foundation for a caring relationship in family, school, work, and community. Every participant is considered unique, made in God's image; and each one needs to receive/give love and guidance to develop optimally.

Noqu salusalu. In Fiji, *salusalu* (an intricately woven flower garland) is used to honor dignitaries, guests, and designated citizens. The *salusalu* makers' good intentions and character are also represented by the different blooms and fragrances skillfully designed and woven with a desired pattern and purpose. The plaiting process requires the *salusalu* maker's patience, skill, and creativity, which symbolize a mentor's care and integrity, who seeks to promote and enhance the protégé's development.

Another aspect of the *salusalu* metaphor is that parents often refer to their children as *noqu salusalu* (my garland). In this regard, children are expected to honor their parents and grandparents. In a further meaning, Fijians also refer to people as *salusalu ni vanua* (garlands of the land), or as guardians of the integrity of their family heritage by gracing the "shoulders of the land." Each new generation is expected to conduct themselves honorably in morally responsible and ethical ways. In like manner, the ultimate mentorship goal is for protégés to grace their communities, after undergoing a process of purposeful shaping by their mentors.

Ulu ni vanua. *Ulu ni vanua* refers to a mountain, and metaphorically, to one's formation, growth, and maturation. In a similar way that a mountain depicts strength, resources, constancy, and protection, a mentor is expected to create a protective atmosphere, within which a protégé will ultimately develop into a *ulu ni vanua*. Because the *ulu ni vanua* is elevated, humans look up to it and emulate it; and the mountain simultaneously is considered to view all creatures under its protection with an outlook of care. The *ulu ni vanua* is also able to produce its own resources, such as rivers, streams, and forests that provide plant and animal life for the sustenance of people in its jurisdiction. Likewise, mentors will provide necessary support and guidance for protégés under their watch.

Vakai sulu. The Fijian *masi* (tapa cloth or bark cloth) is significant, in that it was used traditionally for ceremonial purposes such as weddings and conferring recognition. On such occasions, the *masi* symbolized the person being clothed with the honor that he/she received. For Fijians, *vakai sulu* or being clothed by one's family with a Fijian *masi* signified receiving the family's blessings and treasures. Being clothed upon with the *masi* of different *tapa* patterns and multiple layers of wrappings, the honoree was acknowledged, affirmed, appreciated, and respected.

Upon being clad with Fijian *tapa*, the honored person was also deemed to have been endowed with the gifts of leadership, and was expected to perform that role competently and judiciously. Regarding mentorship, the *vakai sulu* metaphor depicted an achievement in the mentoring process, in which the protégé was receiving “treasures” to be used, enjoyed, and celebrated in the public arena and for the community’s benefit.

Va vakada. In the process of growing yams, Fiji farmers would erect a bamboo scaffolding (*i vakada*) to support the developing plants. Because yams are of the creeping variety, they need a structure on which to grow and entwine. The scaffolding acts like a bridge along and across which the yams creep and weave their way toward the natural sunlight. The *i vakada* assists the plants to develop in a productive manner, to avoid over-crowding around the roots, and to obtain sufficient sunlight. In like manner, the *va vakada* or scaffolding metaphor depicts adaptively mentoring protégés within a nurturing environment.

Veiyacani. Naming is of considerable significance in Fijian society; and being named after another person is a privilege of honour. A child is commonly named after a senior person, usually from within the extended family or clan. The namesake then is expected to carry on the heritage, legacy, and identity of the named person’s family, together with the dignity and respect associated with the family name. The younger person is entrusted to extend and preserve the reputation of the inherited name. In turn, the senior person assumes a mentorship responsibility for the bearer of his/her name. From the time of naming, the mentor takes responsibility for his/her namesake, as adviser, counsellor, and provider of care.

In Fijian society, the mentor often helps finance the protégé’s education and sustenance, and may show the protégé a biased degree of favouritism. The protégé’s parents may also seek the mentor’s advice in cases where disciplinary guidance is needed for their child. This entire *veiyacani* relationship typifies an effective mentor-protégé relationship.

Vinaka Vaka Niu. In Fijian, *lutu na nui lutu ki vuna* means “coconut fruits will fall around the coconut palm.” Once a dried coconut fruit has fallen to the base of the tree, it will become a vara (seedling), provided that the necessary elements are present to promote germination: fertile soil, spacing, transplanting, and mulching.

All parts of the coconut palm are used: its leaves for *sasa* for weaving baskets, fans, and roofing; its stem for furniture, doormats, and house-posts; its husks for

magimagi (sinnet), scrubbing brushes, or firewood; its flesh for food, medicine, and oil; and its shell for containers, eating utensils, or ornaments. With respect to mentorship, the *vinaka vaka niu* metaphor also has several related idioms. In Fiji Hindi, *Jaisa bees boge waisa paoge* means “you reap what you sow”; *o na seva gia na bua ko a tea* means “the fruit doesn’t fall far from the palm/tree”; and *na vutu ka lakikasa* means “your mentoring may not come to fruition immediately, but one day the protégé will eventually actualize the teachings that will have made mentor’s mentoring all worthwhile.”

Vunilagi. In Fijian, *lagi* means *heavens*, and *vu* means source. In some parts of Fiji, *vunilagi* refers to the horizon or the heavens where the sky begins. This concept can represent the goals of mentoring the protégé, who pursues aspirations, ideals, achievement, and success. The *vunilagi* model could therefore emphasize promoting the protégé’s quality and sustained excellence. In an educational or professional development context, the *vunilagi* image could highlight the purpose of mentorship as the protégé’s achievement, both in its specific and general senses.

Tongan Metaphors

Pununga. The *pununga* metaphor represents a bird’s nest in which the mother bird (mentor) nurtures the baby bird (protégé), by bringing to the nest the necessary materials to enhance the latter’s development (i.e., the experiences, feelings, insights, values, and beliefs that promote protégés’ success). The nest (environment) is a safe haven for the neophyte, where he/she is free from stress and danger, and where protégés’ problems are not compounded, and where they can find privacy and time to reflect.

This environment is safe but not stifling, and caring but not intrusive, where the mentor helps the fledgling learn to fly. Other processes in the nesting process with implications for mentorship are: selecting the location of the nest (tree, water, land); constructing it (as coarse on the outside, soft on the inside); sharing it with other protégés; and eventually leaving.

Fale-lalava. This metaphor represents Tongan house-building or *faletonga*. A *faletonga* begins with sinking pillars (*pou*) or coconut trunks into the ground. The *faletonga* frame has a structural frame (*kahoki*), upon which the roof (‘*ato* made from coconut leaves) is set.

The quality of the connections between the pillars and the roof shows builders' construction skills (*tufunga lalava*). In earlier times, Tongans used coconut ropes (*kafa*) to connect (*lalava*) each part, thereby linking each frame with the pillars. House builders were identified by the *lalava* designs that connected each linkage of the frame with the pillars. With respect to the Tongan mentorship process, the four golden values of respect (*faka'apa'apa*), loyalty (*mamahi'ime'a*), reciprocation (*tauhivaha'a*), and selfless service (*lototo*), together with explicit Christian moral values, were qualities of successful Tongan mentors.

These virtues are represented by the supporting pillars of a *falelalava*, and the *faletonga* roof includes Tongan traditions, cultures, family histories, and certain western values. In this metaphor, a Tongan mentor is one who integrates/balances these elements, by guiding the protégé toward an outcome of excellence, in the same way a *lalava* connects/links the pillars with the frame and the roof. Similarly, just as the *faletonga* (Tongan house) is a place of hope, belonging, and acceptance, the effective Tongan mentor is able to create an environment that is welcoming to protégés, who may have previously experienced coldness and separation in the outside world.

Fetākinima. *Fetākinima* is to lead by taking a person's hand and encouraging or gently pulling him/her to come along. A common sight in Tonga is young people holding each other's hands, or putting an arm around one another when walking. It shows a bond between two people that runs deeper than mere physical contact. Feeling safe in the immediate presence of another means that trust, respect, love, and honesty exist between them. This bond is critical in the *fetākinima* metaphor, because partners experience more safety together, and they can move more securely than if they were alone.

When forming the *fetākinima* bond, the partners can each learn about the other. As depicted in the *Adaptive Mentorship* model, the person in the mentoring role learns how to adjust to the protégé's particular developmental needs. A related strength of the *Fetākinima* metaphor is that both partners walk side-by-side: at certain times in the mentorship journey, the mentor may take the lead, but at other times the protégé may lead. As the relationship matures, they will work together, take turns, and even exchange roles as peer mentors.

Discussion and Implications

With respect to the creative *process* exhibited by attendees during the workshop-sessions, we observed that—whether interacting in pair-, small group-, or whole group-settings—they appeared to be sincerely involved, enthusiastic, and often animated in expressing/critiquing the ideas presented. We also noted that participants not only quickly engaged in each activity, but that they were also able to maintain this intensity of interaction throughout the deliberations (Johansson-Fua et al., 2011; Ruru et al., in press). We attributed this high level of engagement in the creative process to the characteristics of the participants and the organizers. On the one hand, the attendees were motivated, uninhibited, and eager to contribute and collaborate. On the other hand, the workshop leaders (particularly the Pacific island team-members, Professors Johansson-Fua, Ruru, and Sanga) had previously established (and had maintained during these workshops) the pre-requisite conditions conducive to fostering such creative energy among these cohorts. Three such conditions that had been identified by the scholars cited in our preceding literature review were: (a) evidence of sustained support of such efforts by recognized leaders (e.g., by providing attendees with release time, resources, and recognition); (b) promotion of participants' professional development and self-efficacy; and (c) allowance for participatory flexibility, unpredictability, and personalization of members' idea-sharing and feedback-interchange.

Regarding the *product* generated from the creativity deliberations, the cohorts produced several metaphors that fit largely into the organic category related to the processes of biological growth and nurturing (Ganser, 2008; Kovecses, 2002; Pitcher & Akerlind, 2009). Each of these organic metaphors not only reflected the cherished values and experiences of the regional and local cultures, but the metaphors also exemplified the generic, positive traits attributed to research metaphors, which we highlighted earlier in this article (e.g., clarifying meaning, evoking emotions, guiding action). Moreover, these metaphors helped to broaden participants' understanding, to clarify complex realities, and to suggest creative solutions for adapting mentorship to match the developmental levels of individual protégés across the disciplines (e.g., Carpenter, 2008; Ralph & Walker, 2011a).

The predominant themes in both the Fijian and Tongan mentoring metaphors reflected the peoples' connection to their families and to nature. Citizens of Pacific island nations are typically devoted to close-knit community relationships, to the tradition of recognizing the sea and land as essential to their livelihood and well-being, and to the *Pacific Way* (the latter referring to their emphasis on collaborative

dialogue, respect, inclusiveness, flexibility, adaptation, and balance, Huffer, 2006). Yet at the same time, citizens of each country also identify particular aspects that characterize their respective unique cultural, linguistic, historical, and traditional contexts (Sanga & Chu, 2009). These facts were demonstrated by the similarities and the differences among the metaphors described above.

At the same time, we noted that the workshop attendees readily recognized limitations in the metaphors, such as: (a) the possible misinterpretation by outsiders; (b) an emphasis on certain elements but neglecting others; and (c) the presence of culturally biased subjectivity (Carpenter, 2008; Ganser, 2008; Garner, 2005; Huffer, 2006). Nevertheless, we wholeheartedly agreed with the following statement from a participant, who responded to our invitation sent to all attendees a few days after the workshops, soliciting their input to our initial workshop-report that we had e-mailed to all attendees shortly after each workshop:

Any of the metaphors suggested by the participants in the workshop can be adapted to fit our settings. What's important for me is that the selected model must be guided by those Pacific values we articulated in the workshop: responsibility/loyalty, maintaining reciprocal relationships, and compassion/humility/willingness.

We found that the attendees intently engaged in creating mentorship metaphors that were relevant and realistic to their particular cultures and daily lives. Because two members of our workshop team were from Canada, we Canadians initially thought that attendees might resist our efforts, perceiving us as “external agents” somehow trying to force them to accept a foreign model. However, our concerns were alleviated when the attendees openly and candidly considered and critiqued the AM model, and subsequently adapted/incorporated the portions of the model that resonated with their own contexts and values. Participants also ignored those parts of the model that did not fit with their contexts. In fact, in one concluding session, an attendee thanked the team for the opportunity to assess the AM model and to preserve what was helpful. “After all,” she chuckled, “Your model is called ‘adaptive.’”

What we found most impressive in all three venues was not only how readily all participants engaged in the creative process of adapting generic mentorship principles to fit their unique contexts, but also how helpful they reported seeing this collaborative, cross-disciplinary process. It is the sincere hope of our entire team that the momentum generated by this initiative might be sustained by the cohort members as they continue their quest, in turn, to mentor a new generation of leaders in their respective settings across all sectors in the Pacific region.

Overall, we believe we achieved our objective of facilitating an interdisciplinary group of interested mentorship scholars and practitioners to evaluate one mentoring scheme and to adapt it by creating innovative approaches to meet the contextual needs of their unique settings—across professions and across cultures. Based on the written and oral comments (including invitations to the team to conduct follow-up events) that we received from the workshop attendees (Johansson-Fua et al., 2011; Ruru et al., in press), we, at the time of this writing, are preparing follow-up initiatives for these venues and are planning new workshops for other international locations.

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